

# NET ZERO

## & agriculture

**A guide for local authorities**



# Working together to achieve Net Zero

Farmers and growers are central to a zero carbon economy.

We ask that local authorities work with farmers and growers, to include the measures outlined here in their Climate Change Emergency plans, local plans, economic development strategies, own procurement strategies and how they develop funding bids with LEPs.

National predictions are for the low carbon economy to grow four times faster than the rest of the economy. Farmers and the land they manage can play a part in this clean growth through decarbonising agricultural production, as well as delivering products and services which replace fossil fuels and remove or store carbon.

The NFU is committed to achieving net zero agriculture by 2040. The UK can enhance its status as a world leader in climate-friendly food production, ensuring a sustainable food supply within the UK, and at the same time strengthening the economy. To do this agriculture needs the support of all policymakers to provide an enabling environment in which farms can provide GHG mitigation and other services.

Our aim is for a productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture sector, with skilled, capable and innovative farmers accelerating our national transition to a net zero economy.

*Stuart*



**Stuart Roberts,**  
Deputy President NFU

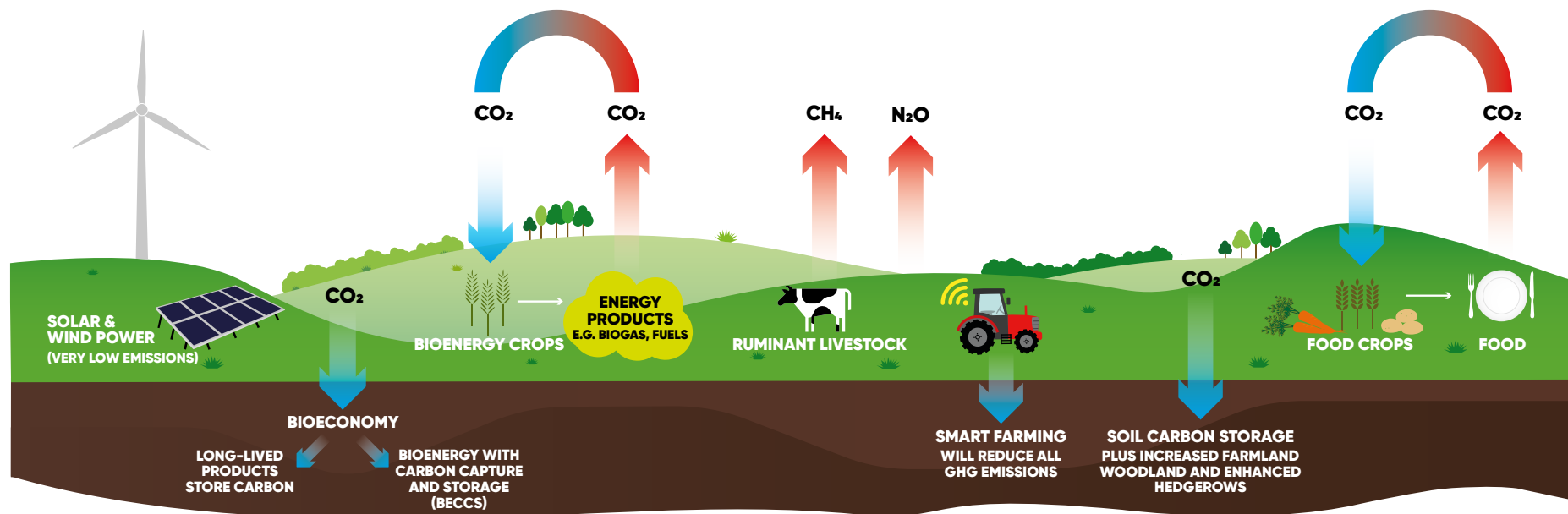


## Part of the solution

Agriculture is uniquely placed as both the source of 10% of UK emissions as well as a sink. Farming captures carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the air and turns it into a wide range of foods, fibres, and fuels. By capturing and storing carbon, we can generate negative emissions – actively removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere to balance the CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O emissions from food production. Farmers also manage substantial carbon reserves already present in soils and vegetation.

## Local authorities

Local authorities have an essential role in supporting agriculture with strategic policies for clean growth in the rural economy. An agile planning approach linked to funding opportunities will help farmers and growers plan, innovate and deliver a net zero future.



# The NFU's net zero aspiration in three pillars:

## Pillar 1



### **Boosting productivity to reduce emissions:**

Improving farming's productive efficiency will enable farmers to produce the same quantity of food, or more, with less inputs, in smarter ways. This, in turn, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

## Pillar 2



### **Storing of carbon on farmland:**

By conserving what's already there and changing land management and use we can capture more carbon – in soils, bigger hedgerows and trees.

## Pillar 3



### **Renewables and the bioeconomy:**

To displace greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels and to create GHG removal through photosynthesis and carbon capture.

# PILLAR 1

## Reducing emissions through productivity

**Actions for net zero**  
**and where the Local Authority can help**



*Click the links  
to find out more...*



**Agriculture**

**£10.4bn**

bedrock of food  
and drink sector  
£121bn to UK economy



**£261bn**

rural economy  
3.6m employees, 550,000  
registered rural businesses  
(549,000 are SMEs)

## PILLAR 2 Carbon storage

**Actions for net zero**  
**and where the Local Authority can help**



*Click the links  
to find out more...*



**65%**

of UK farmland is best  
suited for growing grass  
for animals to eat



**71%**

of the UK  
land area is  
managed by the  
agricultural sector

# PILLAR 3

## Renewables and the bioeconomy

**Actions for net zero**  
**and where the Local Authority can help**



*Click the links  
to find out more...*



**65%**  
of farm businesses  
have diversified



Around  
**1/3**  
of farms  
have solar energy  
(rooftop or ground-mounted)



## Local solutions for a green recovery

The agricultural sector is facing change from every side driven by forthcoming changes in the post-Brexit policy and support environment for the industry, disruption in the food and drink marketplace, the accelerating pace of technology development, the fallout of COVID-19 and climate change.

A green recovery should be through place-based actions, addressing climate change at the same time as levelling-up inequalities across regions with innovative thinking to scale solutions. Food production is essential to the local and national economy and must be the focus of supportive policies.

## A new funding environment

The phase out of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) from this year, including the direct payment to farmers will mean on average, approximately 60% of the total farm business income will be lost by the end of the agricultural transition. This will restrict cash flow as well as opportunities for investment in net zero measures. Previous forms of rural development funding such as LEADER and EFRD have been phased out, and new forms of rural development funding are uncertain but likely to be linked to the Local Industrial Strategies administered through



LEPs. To address this, **funding for agricultural and rural projects needs to be ring-fenced and maintained at least at existing levels**, or we need proportionate funding to be made available to rural areas. There needs to be a legally binding guarantee that rural communities and farms will get their fair share of funding. LEPs have an obligation to deliver the UK Industrial Strategy which is about maximising UK productivity in cities, towns, and rural areas through the distinctive strengths of each area. To achieve this, funding must reach rural areas. The rural economy is rich and diverse but cannot flourish without sufficient resource investment.

Farmers and land managers will continue to need access to capital funding and grant aid to secure business change. In the longer term, private capital investment may become available for carbon credits and offsetting. Existing forms of economic activity within each local authority area will need to find mechanisms to offset and reduce carbon.

The main replacement scheme, Environmental Land Management Scheme (E.L.M.s), from 2024, will provide public money for public goods. E.L.M.s is still in development. Until the scheme detail is available it remains unclear whether E.L.M.s will be accessible to farmers to support a reduction in their GHG footprint.





## Skills and training

We estimate that agricultural emissions can be reduced by approximately 25% through introducing better agronomic practices. To do this, new technology and new skills are needed in the rural economy.

But farmers are busy people and may find it difficult to access training and business change advice. Where some colleges provide relevant training, this can be expensive and hard to reach from remote rural locations. Most farmers tend to develop an understanding about new ideas from their friends, family, peers, trusted advisers and any clusters or groups that they are involved with. They also attend agricultural events to learn about new technology and new opportunities.

### There are many ways local authorities can support farmers and growers:

- Support net zero champions in your local authority area – farmers and advisers – who can build consensus around low carbon and

net zero approaches.

- Work in partnership with existing training providers to create training and educational opportunities for existing rural businesses.
- Hold and support farmer focused events to share knowledge, understanding and local buy-in for new technologies and new ways of working.
- Fund and promote demonstration sites and initiatives throughout your local authority area.

## Tourism

Domestic tourism has the potential to increase as people take fewer international flights and focus on domestic holidays. In 2017, the UK received **31 million** visits from international visitors, while almost **47 million British citizens**

went abroad for their holiday. If more people remain in the UK for holidays, the benefit to rural areas would be greatly felt through tourism and increased purchasing of local goods and foods, and reduction in GHG contributions from planes. In 2017, there were **433m day trips** to the British countryside, worth £11.7bn to the rural economy. Farming and land management provide the iconic British countryside which tourists enjoy.

## Progress together

We have an unprecedented chance to embrace a green recovery to ensure the best transition to a net zero economy. There are ample localised opportunities for rural communities and farmers which will need mechanisms in place to level up.



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