

National Test Programme

Equality Impact Assessment – Results

October 2022

Equality Impact Assessment – Results – National Test Programme

Title of Policy

National Test Programme

Summary of aims and desired outcomes of policy

The National Test Programme sits within the wider context of transitioning agricultural support from the previous EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regime to a domestic future rural support framework. The Programme recognises the need for urgency in addressing the climate change and biodiversity crises, as well as providing learning which will inform the further development of the future rural support framework and the new Scottish Agriculture Bill.

Directorate: Division

Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate
Agricultural Policy Division

Executive summary

The National Test Programme sits within the wider context of transitioning agricultural support from the previous EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regime to a domestic future rural support framework. As it is envisaged that some proportion of this future support will be made conditional on farmers, crofters and land managers undertaking certain actions and meeting certain requirements, the Programme is an opportunity for the Scottish Government to test potential options for some of these actions and requirements. The learning gained from this testing can then be used to inform the further development of the long term future support framework.

The Programme will consist of two "tracks". Track One, "Preparing for Sustainable Farming", which aims to encourage farm businesses to improve their knowledge of current environmental performance and efficiency by offering them support to carry out a carbon audit and/or soil analysis, and Track Two, "Testing Actions for Sustainable Farming", which will include detailed testing of how new conditions or activities could be applied to future support, to ensure delivery of environmental outcomes in a way that supports sustainable businesses.

Given the focussed nature of the Programme, the fact that it is short-term and transitional, and that participation is voluntary, it was determined that the Programme was unlikely to have a significant impact on the protected characteristics. As a result, the Scottish Government considers that only a minimal EQIA process is required at this stage, and that it will be more appropriate to focus the equalities analysis on the changes that will be made during the development of the longer term future rural policy framework (with further consultation and EQIAs as needed).

Background

Since the UK left the EU, the majority of agricultural support for farmers, crofters and land managers in Scotland has been delivered through the domestic continuation of schemes previously run under the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2014-2020 programme. This is part of the Scottish Government's commitment to maintain a period of stability for farmers, crofters and land managers in the immediate aftermath of the UK exit from the EU, in order to give them as much certainty as possible in terms of their operating environment.

This situation cannot continue indefinitely, however, and so the Scottish Government is developing a robust and coherent long term support framework that will deliver high quality food production, climate mitigation and adaptation, and nature restoration.

The National Test Programme sits within this context of transitioning agricultural support from the previous EU CAP regime to a domestic future rural support framework. It recognises the need for urgency in addressing the climate change and biodiversity crises, as well as providing learning which will inform the further development of the future support framework and the new Scottish Agriculture Bill.

Participation in the Programme will be voluntary, but as the longer term future rural support framework is developed, it is envisaged that some proportion of future support will be made conditional on farmers, crofters and land managers undertaking certain actions and meeting certain requirements. The Programme is therefore an opportunity for the Scottish Government to test potential options for some of these actions and requirements.

The Programme will be split into two tracks.

Track One - Preparing for Sustainable Farming

This aims to encourage farm businesses to improve their knowledge of current environmental performance and efficiency. Support will incentivise businesses to engage with and adopt measures that will create a baseline of information and understanding in sustainable agriculture. It will support activities that will aid transition towards a productive, highly resilient agriculture sector, based on the appropriate management of land and soils.

Every farmer, crofter and land manager in Scotland will be offered support to undertake a Carbon Audit. Once they have completed a Carbon Audit, or if they have already completed one, they can receive support for soil analysis. In addition, farmers and crofters with cattle will be provided with access to performance data relating to their herd.

Track Two - Testing Actions for Sustainable Farming

Track two will include detailed testing of how new conditions or activities could be applied to future support, and to ensure delivery of environmental outcomes in a way that supports sustainable businesses. Once tested as part of the Programme, these

can then inform future rural support which will be rolled out nationwide. As part of the livestock digital data project under this track, SAOS (3rd party) will work with a small number of beef farmers, in different geographic areas, to demonstrate the impact of agri-tech and specialist advice to inform future decisions on how advisory services and capital funding can support Scottish beef farming businesses to improve productivity.

The purpose of this track is to develop and test actions that are appropriate to become a conditional element of future direct support and to determine the data and metrics required to demonstrate they deliver against outcomes. The intention is that this will create a robust understanding of how new conditions or activities could be applied to future support, and ensure delivery of environmental outcomes in a way that supports sustainable businesses.

The scope of the EQIA

During the development of the National Test Programme, early consideration was given to its potential impact on people and equalities.

The support under Track One is being aimed at every farmer, crofter and land manager in Scotland that is currently eligible to receive support under the domestic extension of the EU CAP. The entry requirements are being set at a deliberately low level to try to minimise barriers to entry and encourage as many businesses as possible to participate. In addition, the support for soil analysis is being structured in such a way as to provide enough flexibility to meet the wide range in both size and type of farming systems across Scotland.

For Track Two, the number of participants will be limited in order to explore issues in more detail in a manageable fashion. Work is underway to establish a methodology for this, with statisticians from the Scottish Government Agricultural Analysis Unit designing a representative sample across all types of agriculture in Scotland. The sample will include a broad range of businesses, from those early adopters, likely to be ahead on the issues we wish to test, to those harder to reach businesses who may perceive greater barriers and are likely to need more support. Participation will still be voluntary, however.

The Programme is not intended to bring about a change in what the participating businesses produce (and so what end product might be available to consumers), but rather to encourage those businesses to be aware of the environmental actions and metrics associated with their activities, in preparation for this becoming mandatory in the future as part of the shift towards a long term future rural policy framework.

Given the focussed nature of the Programme, and the fact that it is voluntary, short-term and transitional, it was determined that the Programme was unlikely to have a significant impact on the protected characteristics. As a result, it was considered that only a minimal EQIA process was relevant at this stage, and it will be more appropriate to focus the equalities analysis on the changes that will be made during the development of the longer term future rural policy framework (with further consultation and EQIAs as needed).

Key Findings

There is limited data or evidence of the impact of the CAP on the protected characteristics. What evidence there is available for the CAP relates to age, sex and race of the current CAP recipients:

Age - The majority of working occupiers (occupier and spouse) are older than 55. The voluntary opportunity to participate in the Programme will be open to recipients of current agricultural support schemes, and the entry requirements are not related to the age of the participant. The Programme will therefore have no impact on this protected characteristic.

Sex - 40% of working occupiers are female, while 60% are male. The voluntary opportunity to participate in the Programme will be open to recipients of current agricultural support schemes, regardless of whether they are male or female. The Programme will therefore have no impact on this protected characteristic.

Race - there is no direct evidence regarding the ethnicity of recipients of CAP support, however, it is known that there are around 8,000 seasonal migrant workers in the Scottish agricultural industry, and their jobs are partially supported by CAP funding. These seasonal workers would not be direct recipients of agricultural support through current rural support schemes (although their employers will likely be recipients of such schemes). The voluntary opportunity to participate in the Programme will be open to recipients of agricultural support through current schemes, regardless of their race. The Programme will therefore have no impact on this protected characteristic.

No significant impacts on any persons with protected characteristics have been identified as a result of the EQIA process for the National Test Programme. There have been a number of evidence gaps identified, however given the short-term and transitional nature of the Programme it was determined that it would be more appropriate to consider these during the development of the longer term future rural support framework. As a pre-cursor to this, as a result of this EQIA, the potential for requesting some equalities information from participants in Track Two, as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework which is currently in development, is being considered in order to begin the process of addressing these evidence gaps.

Recommendations and conclusion

This is a voluntary scheme that is open to existing recipients of CAP support (as long as they meet the minimal entry requirements) for Track One, or open to those identified as part of the representative sample for Track Two, and is designed to encourage businesses to collect information about their own farm/land. The Scottish Government has therefore concluded that it will not have any significant impact on people (including those with protected characteristics).

This EQIA has identified evidence gaps in relation to the equalities impacts of existing CAP schemes. As a result, consideration is being given as to whether some equalities information from participants in Track Two could be requested as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which is currently in development, in

order to begin the process of addressing these evidence gaps. These evidence gaps will also be further considered as part of the wider transition to a new long term rural support framework.



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