

The next step in delivering our vision for Scotland as a leader in sustainable and regenerative farming

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Our vision for Scottish Agriculture

We will transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture.

This commitment will sit at the heart of a robust and coherent framework to underpin Scotland's future agriculture support regime from 2025 onwards.

Scotland will have a support framework that delivers high quality food production, climate mitigation and adaptation, and nature restoration. High quality, nutritious food locally and sustainably produced is key to our wellbeing – in economic, environmental, social and health terms. We will support and work with farmers and crofters to meet more of our own food needs sustainably and to farm and croft with nature.

Farming, crofting and land management will continue to play an important role in maintaining thriving rural and island communities. Land management in Scotland will change as we tackle the twin biodiversity and climate crises which will present challenges and opportunities for farmers and crofters, building on their traditional leadership role in land management and stewardship.

In acknowledgement of the reliance that urban Scotland will have on rural communities and businesses to help deliver our climate change targets and net zero ambitions, we will support farmers, crofters and local communities to ensure they can capitalise on the benefits and that there is a Just Transition.

Our vision is underpinned by these values and principles. We will:

- ensure that Scotland's people are able to live and work sustainably on our land
- remain committed to supporting active farming and food production with direct payments

- seek to create a diverse, flourishing industry
- integrate enhanced conditionality of at least half of all funding for farming and crofting by 2025
- as part of this conditionality, expect recipients of support to deliver on targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain and low emissions production
- develop policy, regulatory and support mechanisms which deliver emissions reductions in line with our climate targets, and contribute to wider government objectives and priorities, particularly in relation to our net zero ambitions
- design those mechanisms to support outcomes that restore nature, benefit our natural capital and promote the natural economy
- ensure those mechanisms are flexible enough to be adapted in delivery to accommodate emerging evidence, science, technology and tools
- adopt an evidence-based, holistic, whole farm approach, including learning from and applying practice and experience from other nations
- adopt a natural capital and just transition approach to land use change
- where practicable, stay aligned with new EU measures and policy developments

To achieve this vision, we will work with and alongside farmers, crofters and land managers to ensure that they have the right support to:

- continue delivering high farming standards, including to enhance animal health and welfare
- contribute to our Good Food Nation ambitions and Local Food strategy, particularly to create more localised supply chains, enhance producer value and cut food miles
- deliver emission reductions in line with our climate targets
- contribute to the restoration of nature through biodiversity gain on the land they farm
- support land use change that contributes to our climate and biodiversity goals in line with the recommendations of the Just Transition Commission
- encourage more farmers and crofters to farm and produce food organically
- improve business resilience, efficiency and productivity, including through adoption and deployment of technology and innovation
- take a whole farm approach to reducing emissions and environmental impact
- accelerate adoption of approaches and measures which minimise, reduce and remove the use of agrochemical inputs and increase the use of non-chemical related actions
- enable more local employment on the land, more women to enter farming and more new and young entrants into farming
- identify and develop the skills needed for regenerative and sustainable farming, changes of land use and adaptation to the changing climate.
- encourage co-operative approaches to optimise collaboration and knowledge exchange

We will support and work with the agriculture industry to meet these shared objectives. Our short-term focus and priority is on those sectors with the highest emissions, including livestock production – the national test programme prioritises them to begin the transformation journey. But there is also a universal element in the Programme in acknowledgement of the need for all farming activity to change in the medium and longer term to become low carbon, sustainable and regenerative. While the initial priority is on cutting emissions, we will build on this work through other actions to create compelling, evidence based, outcomes focussed measures which deliver wider benefits through nature restoration, integrating trees on farms, peatland restoration and land management.

A strong basis for progress

We start our transformation journey from a strong base. Scotland is engaged in a range of activity already, including the creation of farm based tools, for example Agrecalc to assess emissions and more recently sequestration at a farm level, through to a whole farm approach to business and environmental improvement, exemplified in the monitor farm and the farming for a better climate programmes.

The industry has played a key role in deliberating on and proposing change. Now our farmers and crofters can lead the change. We know that many farmers, crofters and land managers are already farming more sustainably, adopting regenerative agriculture principles and approaches, and using tools such as carbon audits and soil testing to inform practice change.

This activity has been complemented by the research and development work of the world class scientists and academics, based in Scottish institutions, who are also helping to design and develop the tools of the future which will help make farming more sustainable and low carbon.

But emissions from agriculture are still too high; we are still not managing to do simple, obvious things – such as improved slurry storage; we do not have a baseline of activity or understanding of who is doing what, when and where; and critically, we are at risk of missing opportunities to tackle the twin emergencies of climate and nature collaboratively that will create green skills, new jobs and industries that benefit farmers, and rural and island communities.

A National Test Programme to start Transforming Agriculture in Scotland

National Test Programme from Spring 2022

Government recognises the need to do more with more urgency and to balance the needs of the whole industry – our national test programme will seek to do so with a twin track approach:

TRACK ONE

The purpose of Track 1 is to encourage farms 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. This is an opportunity open to all farmers, crofters and land managers, to enable their businesses to gain an understanding of their own baseline at an individual farm level.

TRACK TWO

The purpose of Track 2 is to design, test, improve and standardise the tools, support and process necessary to reward farmers, crofters and land managers for the climate and biodiversity outcomes they deliver.

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.

Track 2 will include detailed testing of more involved tools and advice that will establish a robust method through which farmers can record the benefits to climate and nature they deliver through their businesses. Once tested these can then be rolled out to all farmers and crofters.

The Programme will begin in 2022 with a phased approach to rolling out measures for current recipients of farm support payments, with the aim that these measures will become a mandatory requirement for accessing support. This will enable the shift to at least half of all payments being made conditional within current payment schemes and will inform design of types and levels of conditionality in future payment schemes.

Already, farmers crofters and land managers have been at the heart of helping to design this twin track approach – our commitment to co-design and co-production will continue as we transition from testing to transforming future rural support. We are also committed to ensuring that information and data will flow smoothly and securely through a future payments system which allows for benchmarking, national baselining, assessment and

analysis of success and further learning opportunities and individual business decision making.

Key Themes

In the future, we expect conditionality to apply to key, core themes including:

- greenhouse gas emissions
- biodiversity audits
- soil testing
- nutrient and forage plans and
- animal health and welfare plans

We will encourage farmers and crofters to take action which cuts emissions, enhances biodiversity, and produces more of our food more sustainably.

A key goal for sustainable food production will be to reduce emissions by producing the same output per capita with fewer emissions, not to produce more with the same emissions. By its nature agriculture will always create some biogenic emissions; but it is possible to cut them sharply from current levels while at the same time increasing on-farm carbon sequestration, on-farm biodiversity and maintaining production. While we will seek to maintain overall food production, the balance of what we produce may change as part of our ambition to be a Good Food Nation and to produce and source more of our own food needs locally.

Initially, these themes will be tested in the National Test Programme to explore how best to apply these conditions, ensuring that they deliver towards environmental outcomes and continue to support food production. This will allow for a co-design approach, support a Just Transition, and inform the development of the future support framework.

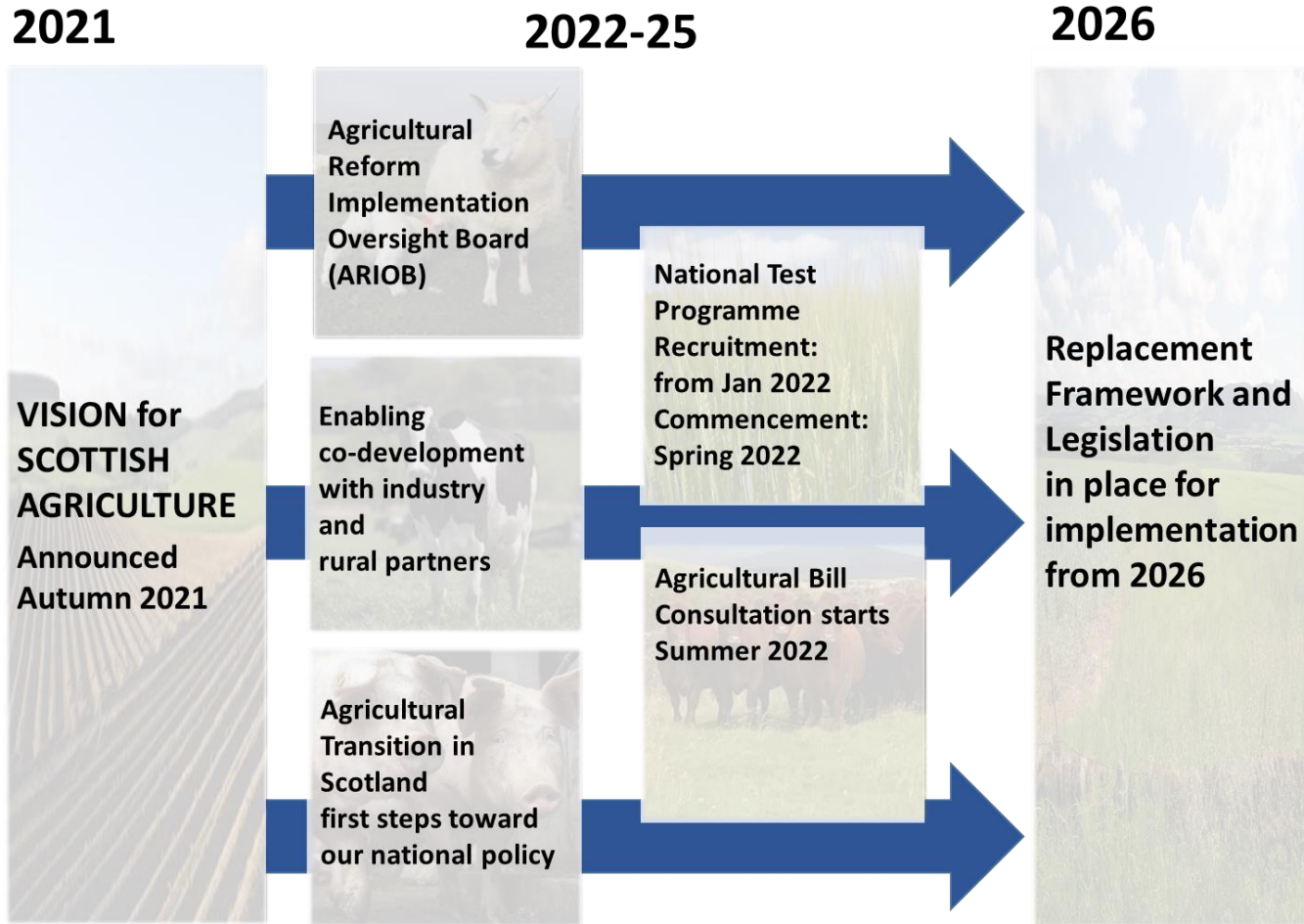
Behaviour and culture change

Transformation will only happen if everyone who wants to farm in the future understands, knows and practises sustainable and regenerative agriculture. Supporting people to adapt and effect a nationwide cultural change is critical to our success to cut emissions, enhance biodiversity and retain our world class food and drink industry. To achieve this, we will explore how best to enable behaviour and culture change and invest in a range of approaches, including a greater focus on peer-to-peer support. We will also consider the role that area RPID offices might play in the future as one stop shops, providing advice, information and support online and on the ground for farmers, crofters and land managers.

Farmers and crofters have helped shape Scotland's landscape for centuries, accumulating generations of important knowledge and expertise. We know they will now adapt all that they know to help us meet these new challenges. They have a huge contribution to make to tackling the climate and nature crises, while continuing to provide the backbone of one of our most important national industries – food and drink. We trust them to help us deliver on all our ambitions for Scotland.

Timeline

Future Policy Development Timeline





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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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