

Written evidence submitted by Wales Young Farmers (HIL0009)

It gives us great pleasure as Wales Young Farmers (YFC) to give evidence on the economic and cultural impacts of trade and environmental policy on family farms in Wales. The Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs is a voluntary youth organisation operating bilingually throughout rural Wales. Our membership age is between 10-28, and it's a democratic movement therefore all the decisions of the movement is made by the members. We employ staff on a Wales level and also our 12 counties throughout Wales. At the moment Caryl Haf, from Ceredigion is our current Wales YFC chairman, and is a past member of Llanddewi-Brefi club since the age of 10. Members are able to compete in a variety of competitions throughout the year, learn new skills, create new contacts across the world, get involved with a variety of activities within the YFC and also within their wider community. Wales YFC has over 4,000 members between the age of 10-28, not all from farming background – they are all a part of 157 Clubs across 12 county federations. All YFC Clubs are affiliated to one of twelve independent County Federations and are ran by a network of volunteers, supported by a varying staff team at a County level, depending on funding and membership numbers. Each Club operates with an officer team; including a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, all of whom are within membership age and are elected at the Clubs Annual General Meeting.

How unique are family farm and how significant is their contribution to Wales' cultural life?

1. Historically family farms have been the structure and backbone of agriculture and it's rural enterprise. The average family farm in Wales is approximately 48ha, in comparison 88ha in England. Bio-diversity plays a major part in the average size of the farms, as these can produce mixed habitats as well as enhancing wildlife and new habitats for the future especially with the development schemes available. These farms have been farmed and lived on by families for generations, and have invested in the areas that they have been brought up in.
2. These family farms are effecting upstream and downstream employment, with local business and larger companies, for example Wynnstay, CCF, Farming Connect, Lantra employing a member of the family to support the family farms.
3. These families play an active role within rural communities, and are the heart of their communities for many generations. They are the establishment and future of Young Farmers Clubs, Women's Institute, places of worship, even down to clearing roads in winter and bad weather – these are the people that keep communities running. The Welsh language is unique to Wales, and the future of the language and the future of family farms run together closely.
4. Young Farmers Clubs have originated from family farms coming together to create clubs within rural communities, and by now multiple generations are attending YFC clubs across Wales. YFC plays a vital part within the rural community and the future of local schools, and future development of communities. As mentioned in the recent Iaith y Pridd document a call was made for the need to use public money to fund the Welsh-language activities of the YFC organisation. One way to do this would be to enable the local authorities to fund the Welsh-language activities of clubs in their areas. Without exception, the YFC Movement was recognized as being the vanguard in supporting the Welsh language in rural communities, and was seen as a movement

which could play a key role in taking the language to non-Welsh-speaking communities where the clubs and structures are already in place. Given sufficient financial support, it was held that Wales YFC could develop its bilingual digital material, hold eisteddfodau in non-Welsh-speaking areas and introduce more competitions for Welsh learners in order to encourage non-Welsh-speaking areas to learn about Welsh language life and culture.

5. Farms within Wales are now businesses as well as being Family Farms, and this is the way of life. During generations we have seen other industries move around and not building any permanent structure in any location – this is what make family farms unique – they are established, generational, and here to stay.

What are the main challenges facing family farms specifically, and farming communities more generally, in Wales?

6. There is a variety of challenges that face family farms and farming communities across Wales, and these can vary in areas and stages of life of the farmers themselves. With the uncertainty of future support payments and regulations, the succession on future family farms is a large challenge at the moment. Due to the instability farmers aren't able to plan going forward, and this is with great concern.
7. Change in legislation will impact all aspects of agriculture and rural Wales in general. With many talks on different future trade deals with Australia, which would not be a large increase on sales to Wales is worrying for farmers, as well as the talks with the deals with New Zealand going forward.
8. A major challenge for first generational farmers who are trying to purchase a farm for the first time is the competition with the bigger buyers from woodland companies, or companies that are looking for Carbon Management – with much larger financial backing behind these the first generation are at a loss before starting.
9. Increase in rural crime is another major challenge that has increased dramatically during the last couple of years, and even areas that have a rural crimes team that are supportive they are unable to protect every part of rural wales.

What are the potential implications of free trade agreements for farmers in Wales?

10. There is a variety of implications of free trade agreement on farmers in Wales, one of the main ones highlighted is the difference in regulations and environmental factors between Wales/UK and other incoming countries. We in Wales produce products to the highest standard possible with traceability and animal welfare on top of the list, unfortunately not all countries follow to a higher standard as what we do. Other countries are able to produce products at a much cheaper rate due to the changes in these factors. These factors can vary due to herd sizes, lifestyles, standards, land availability – these can vary dramatically between Wales and other countries. Checks need to be done to ensure that the highest standards are reached and safe-guarding the quality of our product for future generation.
11. There needs to be a balance between the selling into our market in comparison of us selling into their market. With the variety in sectors that we have in Wales, it is important to set a president with the free trade deals, as this can have an accumulative impact, for example other countries will then want a different/better deal.

12. Another potential implication is the currency movement, as this can make a difference to pricing over night.
13. With the Australian Trade deal for example as it looks at the moment, the amount of meat coming into the UK from Australia will approximately be 83% in comparison to as little as 7% leaving the UK for Australia. We as Wales need to be able to compete with other countries on a free trade deal agreement on a fair playing field.

How, if at all, is the UK Government's climate change policy agenda impacting on family farms, including the future generations of farmers, and rural communities in Wales?

14. The policy is impacting on family farms and rural communities in many ways, which is concerning not only to first generational farmers but to the future of how family farms are run. One of the worries that we have come across is the buying of land, where large companies are coming and buying fruitful land and planting trees, and therefore outbidding local families trying to expand, or even first generational farmers trying to join the industry. This in time will cause a threat to food production, as taking land out of production due to tree planting will reduce the amount of available land for production, therefore we do need food security – Production of food is the most important at the end of the day, to ensure we can feed the country with the highest possible standards.
15. Within the climate policy it needs to make us as farmers and rural communities more competitive, not only within the market place but within funding for development and enhancing knowledge and skills, to create the right opportunity and support for the sector. Unfortunately no support has been seen as of yet, where as other industries have had this support and knowledge.
16. Next generational farmers have the enthusiasm for learning and taking on new ideas for the future.
17. Statistics show that agriculture has the least carbon emissions of the top 5 industries, being the industry that has decreased its contribution most from 29% during the 1990s to 10% today.
18. Climate Change needs clarity for everyone to understand, for example, what to do, how to do it, when to do it, who to work with – None of this information is given to the ground source of agriculture within family farms or rural communities.

What practical steps can the UK Government take to support these communities and how should the UK and Welsh Governments work together to support these communities unique culture, including their contributions to the Welsh Language, and heritage?

19. Communication is one of the key factors in supporting communities. Open conversations are needed with leading agricultural leaders, which should include, both unions, young farmers clubs to name a few. Hearing their opinions and sharing ideas is vital in the future, especially on any large decisions like future trade deals, funding, compliances, regulations and future subsidies.
20. Unfortunately the UK treasury cut agricultural funding to Wales by 137million in the first year, which was very disappointing to hear.

21. Future subsidies will play a huge part and impact farms all over Wales – this in time will effect the Welsh Language and the way it develops during the next 20 years, the effect on culture and communities could be devastating.
22. Regulations need to enable business to enhance and develop, and not hinder them and move them away from the industry. And the compliance difference between the large and small businesses needs to be looked at, as the backing behind the larger companies is far larger than those with smaller unique local companies.
23. Carbon levels need to be looked at closely, especially with the larger companies outside Wales buying land to plant trees to help their carbon levels, this will then be able to give them an extra boost on the temptation to pollute even more. This could lead to undermining Welsh agriculture.

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