



Welsh Liberal Democrats Manifesto for Farming



Wales **CAN** do better



Printed, published and promoted by J. Foster on behalf of
Welsh Liberal Democrats, all at Freedom Central, Blake
Court, Schooner Way, Cardiff Bay. CF10 4DW.

Dear friend,

The Welsh Liberal Democrats are proud to have represented some of Wales's most rural constituencies at the National Assembly in Cardiff and in Parliament at Westminster. At the heart of these constituencies are the family farms, which have produced food, maintained the landscape and nurtured unique communities and the rural way of life.



Welsh agriculture has faced challenging and often turbulent times over the last decade, with outbreaks of devastating diseases, low farm gate prices, increasing input costs and never-ending forms to fill in. Despite these challenges, I meet farmers across Wales who are ambitious for their industry, ambitious to produce more food to meet growing demand, ambitious to develop new ideas and income streams and to protect and enhance our environment.

The Labour-Plaid Cymru Government has let Welsh farmers down over the past four years. From the scrapping of Tir Mynydd, the shambolic introduction of Glastir and a failure to tackle red tape, they have made it more difficult for farmers to run successful businesses.

The Welsh Conservatives won't help rural Wales. They have published their plans to cut the rural affairs budget by an extra 18% and cut even further the budget for local government, which will have a huge impact on many of the services rural communities depend on.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will ensure that farmers and farming are an integral part of the wider economic growth that we are determined to promote in Wales. But farming is not like other sectors of the economy. It needs to be nurtured by a Government

that understands that farming needs specific solutions and support if it is to thrive. That will in turn provide a boost to the businesses that supply the industry, which will benefit the whole rural economy.

So, if you want to see a vibrant future for farming and the rural economy in Wales, I urge you to support the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kirsty Williams

Leader, Welsh Liberal Democrats

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR WELSH FARMING

During difficult economic times there is always much talk about how governments can help businesses succeed. Many industries receive different types of support from government. But farming and its related activities are often ignored. Welsh Liberal Democrats understand that we need to support farming as well – it is at the heart of the rural economy.

We want to ensure that farms of all sizes, and in all areas, are properly backed by the Welsh Government. That means that we cannot make agricultural support schemes too exclusive or restrict them to only some farmers. Small farms are as important to the rural economy as large ones. The Welsh Government must never forget that.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the Labour and Plaid Government has made things more difficult for farmers. It has made support payments more complex, so that many farmers lose out. We will start by reforming Glastir, but we will also make sure that all support for farmers in Wales is sufficient, to provide the industry with a sustainable future.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will provide sustainable finances for farmers.



We will improve financial support available for farmers by:

- Reforming the Glastir programme - We will implement in full the recommendations of the Roberts Review, re-opening applications for the programme and ensure that as many farmers as possible have access to the scheme, as well as setting a realistic target for the number of applications. We will ensure that any additional changes to the scheme are open to existing applicants.
- Ensuring the effectiveness of the Glastir programme by implementing a robust monitoring system, to measure the impact of the scheme on farmers and the environment. We'll ensure a report on Glastir is debated by the National Assembly each year.
- Working with our colleagues in the European Parliament we will speak up for Wales in debates about EU funding. 80% of Wales is designated as Less Favoured Area (LFA) and we will vigorously defend the LFA boundaries in Wales in future negotiations about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2013. We will also strongly defend the historic basis for Single Farm Payments in Wales and lobby for a long transition period for any future changes to that historic basis, while supporting the 'two pillar' approach to the CAP to ensure the delivery of environmental improvements under pillar 2.

The dairy sector continues to suffer from low farm-gate prices for milk and we will ensure that the new Supermarket Ombudsman has the remit and the resources that will allow him to speak up for Welsh farmers and enforce fair play in the marketplace. We will work with the industry to develop secure supply chains for the liquid milk and cheese sectors, to improve profitability at each stage of the supply process.

TACKLING RED TAPE



Farmers are overburdened by regulation and bureaucracy that holds them back. Labour and Plaid Cymru just don't seem to understand that giving people more hoops to jump through doesn't just take up time – it also costs farmers money and hurts the rural economy.

We want to make the regulatory regime on farmers as light as possible – we can help farmers to meet their environmental and safety obligations without costing them thousands of pounds each year. Central to a Welsh Liberal Democrat approach would be helping farmers to comply with regulations rather than using punishment as a first resort. We would also make sure that we inspect compliant farmers less often.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will reduce the burden on farmers.

We will cut red tape by:

- Streamlining inspection of farms by co-ordinating and minimising the number of visits. We'll also target repeat offenders and inspect compliant businesses less, with the aim of co-operative compliance rather than imposing penalties.
- Reforming the farming advice service so that it is more individualised and ensuring that advice is offered on sustainability as well as profitability. We will use this service to promote the take-up of small energy-generating schemes on farms.
- Relaxing planning restrictions to make it easier for farmers to convert disused buildings on their land into commercial facilities – providing an alternative income for farmers and more business space for local business. This will also help ensure that business is spread across Wales.
- Press the European Commission to conduct a Europe-wide review of the EID scheme that is such a burden to the sheep farming sector.
- Reviewing the rules about on-farm burial, so that we take into account new scientific evidence about the risks of burying sheep in designated locations on farms.
- Develop a holistic approach to eradicating bovine TB which is based on the best scientific evidence available. We will also improve the Department for Rural Affairs' service to farms which are shut down due to bovine TB. This will include support for farmers to enable them to react to animal welfare issues.

THE RURAL ECONOMY



Many farmers are expanding their business and creating jobs by diversifying into new areas. Our economic policies will help entrepreneurial businesses, but there are specific measures that can be implemented to support businesses in rural areas.

Under Labour and Plaid Cymru, too much emphasis was placed on economic development in South Wales, at the expense of the rest of Wales, particularly rural areas. This is unfair – and only the Welsh Liberal Democrats have plans to ensure that every community in Wales has a vibrant, local economy.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will help create a diverse rural economy.

We will help farmers to diversify by:

- Supporting the Food and Drink Industry, which is often made up of small businesses in local areas. Specifically we will reform the planning system for small breweries and distilleries to make it easier for them to expand and we will create a labelling scheme for food and drink that identifies quality food and drink as Welsh. We'll also order a full audit of True Taste Wales to ensure it is marketing Welsh food effectively

- Creating a strong future for rural tourism, including promoting off-season activities across Wales to help reduce seasonal variations, encouraging the development of major attractions that receive national attention, investing in higher-speed rural broadband and wi-fi and ensuring that rural destinations and transport are coherently advertised.
- Supporting farmers, through our housing plans, to turn disused buildings on their land into affordable housing, providing affordable homes for local people and another income stream for farmers.
- Reducing the planning restrictions on small-scale biomass facilities and anaerobic digestion facilities, so that we can encourage their growth, benefiting local economies and helping to meet our renewable obligations.