

## **Briefing for Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on Welsh provisions in the Agriculture Bill**

Confor: Promoting forestry and wood ([www.confor.org.uk](http://www.confor.org.uk)) is a not-for-profit membership organisation which represents 1500 sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses across the UK. Confor represents the whole forestry and wood supply chain and focuses on strategic issues vital to the success and sustainable future of the sector.

In Wales, Confor works with businesses, Assembly Members, government departments and relevant stakeholders to increase understanding of forestry and timber and to remove barriers to new woodland creation in Wales, resulting in larger, healthier, better-managed and more productive forests and woodlands for multiple benefits.

Confor recommends that the Assembly provide consent to the UK government to legislate in this area, to avoid possible disruption to woodland creation.

### **Confor's view: A Common Countryside Policy**

Confor's position is that forestry and timber production should be part of an integrated land use scheme alongside farming and food production.<sup>1</sup>

Landowners and land managers should be able to integrate forestry and farming activities to maximise economic, environmental and social benefits on their land, without encountering barriers created by divergent regulatory or support systems. Public support given to promote environmental, social or economic outcomes should be available to farming and forestry equally, insofar as they deliver those outcomes.

### **Context: *Brexit and our land***

Confor has welcomed the Welsh Government consultation paper *Brexit and our land*, which is forward-thinking in its proposals to integrate the agri-food and forestry-timber supply chains into a sustainable and productive land use strategy.<sup>2</sup>

### **Comments on the Agriculture Bill, Schedule 3**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/246687/common-countryside-policy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/247186/confor-response-to-brexit-and-our-land-consultation.pdf>

Part 1 supports Confor's call for an integrated approach, by enabling Welsh Ministers to provide funding for forestry and farming on equal terms.

Part 2 is of limited relevance to forestry, which does not receive Basic Payments. However:

- Confor welcomes the proposal to phase out Basic Payments, which have created a serious barrier to new woodland creation in Wales and a divergent culture between forestry and farming.
- It is important that funding for new woodland creation, delivered under Pillar 2 of CAP, continues to be provided during the transition period, if Welsh Government targets of 2,000-4,000 hectares of new woodland per year are to be delivered. It is vital that this funding is enhanced rather than interrupted during the transition, not only to meet carbon reduction targets, but to give farmers the opportunity to diversify their production into timber where appropriate.

Regarding the remainder of the Schedule, we have not yet received clarification from Defra whether forestry and timber is regarded as a part of the agri-food supply chain, or separate from it:

- Part 3: Collection and sharing of data
- Part 4: Intervention in agricultural markets
- Part 5: Marketing standards and carcass classification.

The wider question is whether, for the purposes of the bill, the forestry and timber supply chain is considered part of the agri-food supply chain, or a separate supply chain.

Part (3) (12) on p.36 defines 'agri-food supply chain' as 'food or drink for personal consumption'. However, some non-food produce is mentioned in these Parts ('fibres and leathers'), but others are not, including timber, energy crops and fodder crops.

It is not clear in these Parts whether 'plants' includes trees.

While some of the provisions in these Parts are not relevant to forestry and timber (or indeed to the whole of the agri-food supply chain), there are others which are, for example:

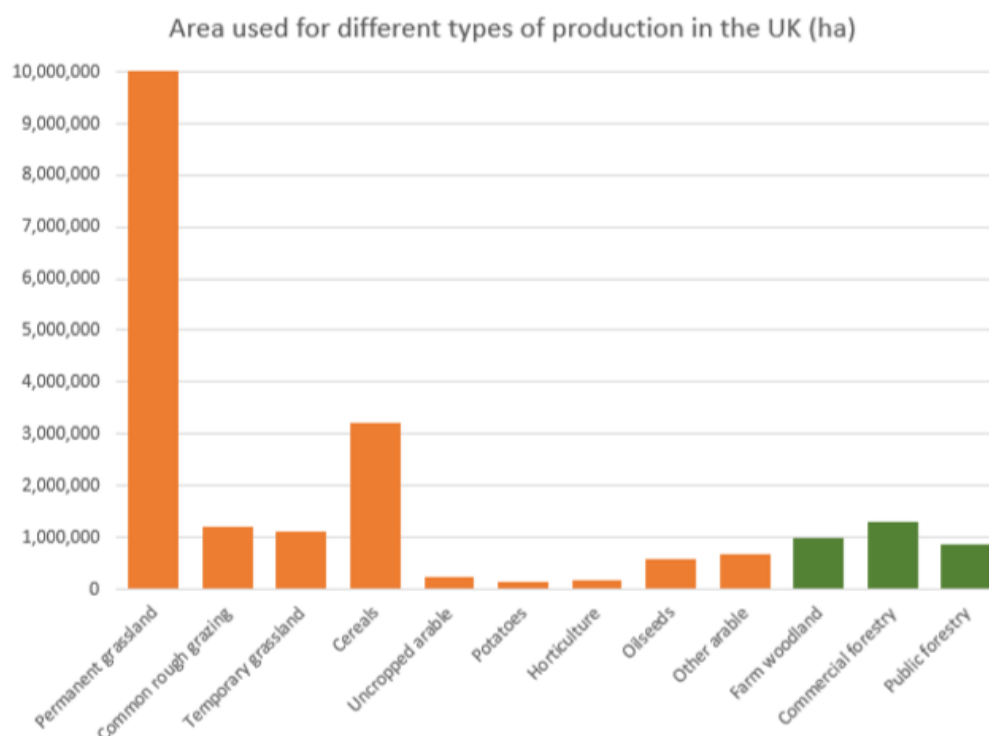
- It would be valuable to include comparable data on forestry and timber alongside farming and food to inform policymaking. Confor highlighted examples of this in our commentary on the Evidence

Compendium<sup>3</sup> produced by Defra as part of the consultation on the Agriculture Bill. These figures are included below.

- It is not clear whether 'exceptional market conditions' includes incidents caused by circumstances such as disease or weather. It is important that forestry is considered for support on equal terms with other forms of production in the case of losses. For example, *P. Ramorum* has caused widespread and ongoing losses of larch, while the summer drought which has had a serious impact on new woodland creation this year.
- The inclusion of timber under Part 5, Marketing Standards, could be valuable for developing recognition of a high-quality Welsh timber supply chain, for example to encourage architect specification of 'home-grown homes'.

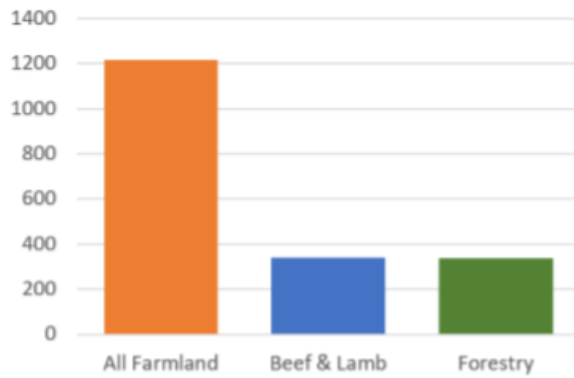
Eleanor Harris  
Confor Policy Researcher  
7 November 2018

### Comparative statistics provided in response to the Defra Health and Harmony Evidence Compendium, May 2018

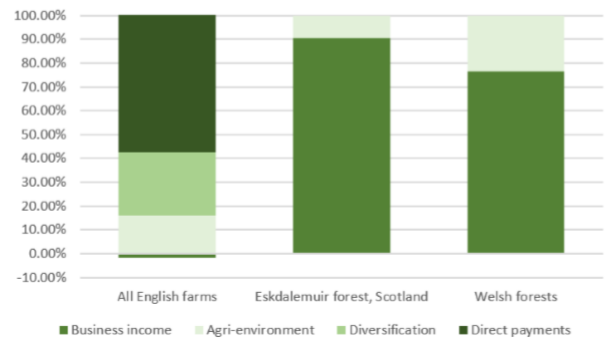


<sup>3</sup> <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/246944/health-and-harmony-evidence-compendium-with-forestry-may-2018.pdf>

Output per hectare



Source of income for farms and forests



Outputs of products as % of total rural production

