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Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd  
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 7 December regarding information about carbon sequestration through Agricultural Land Use in Wales.

Although we do not hold data on the amount of carbon sequestered by agriculture land in Wales, we use a wide range of sources to assess carbon emissions ensuring we take an evidence-based approach to developing the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). This includes making use of the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory, which models carbon sequestration for Wales. We also commissioned our Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring & Modelling Programme (ERAMMP) to provide us with evidence on a range of agricultural and environmental topics. [ERAMMP report 68](#) states the high proportions of permanent grassland and soils already high in carbon severely limit the potential for further carbon sequestration.

Maintaining high levels of carbon in soils and peat is important to lower emissions. Nutrient accounting and soil testing is one of the proposed Universal Actions in the SFS. This will ensure every farmer understands their soils and the demands of their crops. It will also help farmers in the scheme understand the levels of carbon stored in their soils.

We also jointly designed with ERAMMP the [Integrated Modelling Platform](#) (IMP). The IMP includes a chain of specialised, state-of-the-art models customised (as best as possible) with Welsh data. One of the ways we are using the IMP is to inform the development of the SFS through its integrated assessments of the potential impacts of the scheme on agriculture and the environment. Whilst the IMP is only part of the evidence we use to support our decisions it is a valuable tool in helping inform the design of the SFS so it can best deliver on the four strategic objectives set out in the Agriculture (Wales) Bill, including to produce food in a sustainable manner.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We have adopted the [UK Climate Change Committees](#) (UKCCC) target to create 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030. The UKCCC also separately recommends extending hedgerows by 40% to help the agriculture sector reach net-zero by 2050. One of the ways we are proposing to achieve the challenging tree planting target is for all farmers in the SFS to work towards having 10% tree cover on their farm by further integrated them into their farming system. We are not proposing this to be an approach which will require a major shift in farm management. Nor is it intended to be a one-size-fits-all approach.

We plan to support farmers make use of trees so they become an asset to the farm. For example, by planting more shelter belts and trees in field corners, trees can provide valuable biosecurity barriers on farm boundaries and provide shelter to livestock during increasingly hot dry summers. This is something farmers and the industry told us they want. As well as expanding carbon sequestration in woodlands and hedges the scheme will also support farmers to maintain carbon stocks in soils and peats as well as supporting them to adopt low carbon farming practices.

I hope this gives you an idea of some of the up-to-date, Welsh specific evidence we are using to inform the design of the SFS. As I have stated, a final decision on the scheme will not be taken until the modelling of both the economic and environmental impacts of the proposed SFS have been undertaken. This is to ensure the SFS delivers for our farmers and on our commitment to respond to the climate and nature emergencies.



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