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Julie James MS,  
Minister for Climate Change,  
Welsh Government,  
*By email*

7/12/2022

**Re: Carbon Sequestration**

Dear Minister, Julie,

I hope that this letter finds you well. I am writing with regards to my concerns that detailed information is not held about carbon sequestered through agricultural land use within Wales.

It has come to my attention through a Freedom of Information Request that the Welsh Government does not hold data on the amount of carbon that is sequestered by land used by agriculture. Indeed, it has been explained that like the other countries of the United Kingdom, Welsh Government assesses carbon emissions and sequestration across the entire economy using the publicly available UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory (GHGI).

The Welsh Government are currently looking at requiring Welsh farmers to plant as much as 10% of their land with trees so to join the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). As has been highlighted on your website, "tree planting is not the single solution to climate change, however, planting more trees as part of a holistic approach can help us mitigate and adapt to the *impact* of climate change." Nonetheless, it is the case that the focus is on trees. For example, the SFS proposal is that hedgerows do not contribute to the 10% tree target, but any individual mature trees in hedgerows will be counted.

When considering that hedgerows are being excluded, and that no data is held as to the amount of carbon that is sequestered by land used by agriculture in Wales, I believe that we are facing a situation where over emphasis is being unnecessarily placed on the role of trees. This is a dangerous situation because there is no doubt that the move towards seeing such a major increase in tree planting, potentially even on best and most versatile agricultural land, will result in a fall in the amount of food farms are able to produce, and therefore a likely increase in our nation's reliance on imports.

Given the above, before you progress with requiring farmers to have as much as 10% of their land covered by trees, I would be grateful if you could arrange for a study to be undertaken into the benefits that hedgerows and agricultural land already has on carbon sequestration. Additionally, it would be appreciated if you could make a commitment that farmers will not be required to plant as much as 10% of their land with trees so to qualify for SFS should they be able to prove that such planting will reduce the farms food output.

Kind regards,

**Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS**