

Building Consensus Case Study



POLICY BRIEF

The Government is transforming the way English farming and the countryside are supported and regulated, bringing the biggest changes to the sector in more than 40 years.

We will move away from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy area-based subsidies and introduce new policies and solutions. They will reward environmentally sustainable farming, and farm productivity and prosperity will improve. The future schemes will provide farmers, foresters and other land managers with more control over how they use their assets to deliver environmental public goods.

This includes the introduction of three environmental land management schemes that will reward farmers for the delivery of environmental benefits: the Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Local Nature Recovery scheme and the Landscape Recovery scheme.

We understand that this is a big change for farming and know how important it is that we get it right. That is why we are committed to working with farmers and land managers to co-design our new approach, including running tests, trials and pilots to learn and adapt before launching our environmental land management schemes.

Co-designing the schemes with stakeholders

We are committed to building the future schemes through a process of 'co-design'. This means working in partnership with farmers, land managers and the wider farming community, to identify opportunities and problems, and to make sure that we are designing our policies and schemes in a way that works for them – as well as achieving the schemes' intended outcomes.

This approach means that we can bring genuine lived experience into our design process. We can incorporate first-hand feedback about what's working well, and what we might need to improve. We are taking an iterative, incremental approach so that we can learn and adapt as we go.

How are we doing this?

We:

- are taking different approaches to deliver through co-design, including user research, running co-design workshops, and delivering seminars and forums
- ran a series of farmer-focused webinars attended by more than 1,700 attendees, 75% of whom were farmers, to help develop our policy
- are using social media to gather thoughts and ideas from the online farming community – such as regular posts on the [Future Farming blog](#), which anyone can leave comments on
- organise for senior Government officials to visit farms, to hear farmers' views first hand
- have monthly farmer-hosted 'virtual farm tours' to which all staff are invited
- giving them the opportunity to engage with farmers, despite not being able to physically get out on farm

Tests and trials

Since 2018, we have been undertaking a number of tests and trials to help us understand how the new environmental land management schemes could work in a real-life environment. We are using our test and trial activity as a vehicle to engage with a wide range of farmers, land managers and stakeholders, to harness their ideas and contribute to the design of the future schemes. We use the evidence and learning they generate to help shape and inform scheme design.

Almost 3,000 farmers and land managers are engaged in tests and trials, covering a range of different sectors, geographies and land types. We will continue to learn and improve through tests and trials throughout the pilots. Our overall aim is that in 10 years' time we will have a tried and tested, world-class system to support our farmers and deliver environmental benefits.

Pilots

We will run extensive pilots to learn and adapt before launching our future environmental land management schemes. While tests and trials focus on trying out individual parts of the future scheme, like land management plans or different payment methods, the pilots will test a working version of the schemes from start to finish. The learning from these pilots will be fed directly into scheme design and implementation planning.

The scheme pilots will enable us to test and develop the real-world operation of our future schemes – allowing us to understand how a scheme works for farmers and how it is able to deliver environmental ambitions.

The first pilot we are conducting is on the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme. We have invited over 2,000 farmers to take part, and the first agreements will start in October 2021.