

Principles for a land use framework

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Summary

The UK Government's commitment to a land use framework (LUF)¹ is a positive step towards more strategic land use decision-making. This briefing sets out key land use and governance principles following consultation with a wide range of farming and environment organisations. The purpose of this briefing is to support Defra and others in creating an LUF that works for people and the planet.

Land use principles for a land use framework should:

- Include rural, peri-urban and urban land, and consider England's global land use implications.
- Integrate food, climate, nature, fibre, timber, housing, energy, and access.
- Prioritise multifunctional land use and landscapes.
- Enable agroecological farming, circular economy, and nature restoration.
- Identify woodland, peatland, grassland, and wetland restoration opportunities.
- Find ways to increase sustainable horticulture production for nutritional security.
- Support new entrant opportunities in the land-based sector.
- Aid the Government in meeting renewable energy and housing targets.
- Ensure land use decisions are evidence-based.

Multifunctional land use can create greater resilience for land-based enterprises and local communities. It can support the Government in meeting climate, nature, and health targets while encouraging diverse and secure sustainable food production. Modelling and evidence^{2,3,4} suggests that sustainable, agroecological farming and nature restoration is scalable and workable in the UK.

Governance principles for a land use framework:

- Provide strategic, joined-up thinking at the national level.
- Be more detailed and practical on land use and objectives at the local level.
- Follow a democratic process to incorporate community aspirations and buy-in.
- Local decision making may work best at county level⁵ but other options are possible.
- Implement a degree of spatial prioritisation at the local level.
- Support strategic delivery of Environmental Land Management (ELM).
- Align with the need to meet climate, nature, and water and air quality targets.
- Link to the Government's aims and ambitions on health – nutrition and access.
- Enable the use of private and charitable finance alongside public funding.
- Establish an independent body to oversee progress and provide accountability.
- Assess national guidance against impacts internationally.⁶
- Embed the principles of a Just Transition⁷ into the national guidance.

¹ Government's food strategy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-food-strategy/government-food-strategy>

² FFCC and IDDRI TYFA: <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/study/modelling-agroecological-uk-2050-findings-tyfa-regio>

³ Sustainable Food Trust 'Feeding Britain': https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/V2SFT_Feeding-Britain-from-the-Ground-Up-single-page-view-compressed-for-web.pdf

⁴ National Food Strategy 'Three Compartment Model': <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/>

⁵ Due to existing administrative boundaries to work with; the FFCC are piloting this approach.

⁶ For example, greenhouse gas emissions, land use take, and social impacts such as land grabbing.

⁷ ITUC 'Frontlines Briefing', 2015, p.6: https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc_frontlines_climate_change_report_en.pdf

It is important to reflect the aspirations of communities and to get buy-in at the local level. From a national perspective, an LUF should help Government meet its targets and ambitions on climate, nature, housing, food security, wellbeing and health. For an LUF to be effective, it cannot be undermined by trade policy that increases emissions overseas or undermines UK environment, animal welfare, and food safety standards, nor can it be undercut by planning reforms.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with those developing the Framework and interested in a strategic approach to land use, and to support work on a land use framework.



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Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional, and local level. www.sustainweb.org