

Mark Spencer MP
Minister of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

25th April 2023

Dear Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP,

Delivering prosperity in the uplands

Farms in the uplands are struggling under financial pressures, with many on the brink of going out of business. However, they are well placed to deliver environmental outcomes, sustainable food, and resilient local economies.

Support through Environmental Land Management (ELM) will not replace Basic Payment Scheme rates and Sustain's Unpicking Food Prices research shows farmers receive less than 1% of profit from the supermarket chain.

We have already proposed ways ELM could support upland farm businesses, however, we believe there are wider tools that Defra should use to help upland farms be more economically resilient and viable.

These farms would greatly benefit from increased access to independent advice on business resilience, shifting to local food supply, investing in agri-tourism, and making the most of ELM payments. A strategic approach to upland investment would help rural economies thrive while delivering environmental goals.

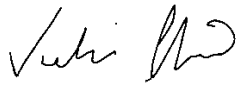
The UK Government could roll out targeted funding to help invest in enterprise, jobs and community networks in upland areas. For example, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund could be targeted to deliver these objectives. Alternatively, the development of a one-off targeted uplands resilient fund, focused on local food, environment and agri-tourism initiatives, could be a more appropriate targeted measure.

These two opportunities would help deliver economic, social, and environmental outcomes in upland areas, helping farms to provide decent work and community connections. It would enable farmers to deliver on net zero and nature, while supplying sustainable food into local markets.

Addressing the needs of the tenanted sector will be a key component in delivering prosperity in the uplands. To this end, the Government should set out a timetable for the implementation of the Rock Review recommendations to help achieve this.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you, your team, and your colleagues in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Yours sincerely,



Vicki Hird
Head of Farming
Sustain



George Dunn
Chief Executive
Tenant Farmers' Association



Martin Lines
UK Chair
Nature Friendly Farming Network



Jimmy Woodrow
Executive Director
Pasture for Life