

House of Lords Parliamentary Briefing prior to Second Reading of the Agriculture Bill - June 2020

We are asking for your help in tabling or supporting specific amendments to the Agriculture Bill after second stage reading. These are aimed at improving the Bill and strengthening its impact on farm incomes, public health, and the environment. It is due for its second reading on 10th June and amendments can be tabled after that. This is an early alert but we wanted to let you know we would be happy to answer any queries you may have on the amendments and the Bill, given the expertise of our team and our broad membership of 100 public interest groups. (Links to the [Bill](#), [Explanatory Note](#))

The evidence base is clear, as is the public support, for a new approach to how we nurture sustainable, healthy, resilient farming that delivers healthy food and public goods. The Bill has valuable content but needs some improvements so that it delivers on this outcome. Sustain is prioritising the following areas for amendments:

1. **A duty to deliver financial support for 'public goods' (Clause 1) and Fair Dealing in the supply chain (Clause 27).** These vital clauses are currently written as a power not a duty – leaving them vulnerable to political priorities and farmers potentially without adequate support. The Secretary of State needs to be accountable to deliver these key measures. We need to change the word 'may' to 'must' in Clauses 1, 27.
2. **Financial Support for delivering critical public health outcomes and for boosting agro-ecological farming**
 - a. We need public health goals related to healthier diets and farm systems in this Bill. This could cover critical issues such as access to fruit and vegetables, curbing antibiotic use in livestock farming, and addressing pesticide harm to workers and consumers.
 - b. Financial support for establishing and maintaining whole farm agro-ecological systems which would help farmers to produce food whilst restoring the environment, storing carbon in healthy soils, through agroforestry, silviculture (rearing animals with trees) whilst protecting nature on the *whole* farm. [Modelling shows that](#) agro-ecological farming, like organic, could deliver both the food and environmental outcomes needed including climate mitigation alongside other shifts in consumption.
3. **Trade rules and policy must not allow imports to lower standards.** We need measures to ensure agri-food imports are required to be produced to the same food, environment, and animal welfare regulations as our own. There is strong stakeholder support for such measures.

Sustain also supports other amendments including guaranteeing long term funding and on powers for a new regulatory framework as proposed by [the Greener UK coalition](#). Given the urgency of the need to act on climate change emissions and pollution from land use, supporting farmers effectively in any transition, we are also in favour of a clause to set targets for delivering a reduction in carbon emissions.

We recognise this Bill needs to be focussed but also that improvements, particularly around accountability, could ensure it delivers better outcomes. We would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about these issues and can provide briefings which give more detail on the priority areas.

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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