



NFFN Evidence; Nature Friendly Farming for The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (AERA) 16th April 2021

The Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) is a farmer led independent organisation, established in 2018 uniting farmers who are committed to managing their land for wildlife and the public good at the same time as growing and providing safe, healthy nutritious food. The Network represents over 2000 members in NI, Wales England and Scotland. In NI members from a range of different sectors are represented in the form of a Steering Group.

We warmly welcome the opportunity to provide evidence regarding the proposed motion to support Nature Friendly Farming in Northern Ireland.

Summary

- Nature friendly farming is an umbrella term to describe farming systems and practices that **enhance and protect biodiversity** and **contribute to tackling climate change** alongside food production. **Nature friendly farming is not only better for nature but also ensures that our land remains productive, ensuring we can go on producing food forever.**
- Nature is good for business and essential for our future. There is increasing recognition that environmental production practices are essential for robust supply chains – in short, to ensure we have food on the table. The Nature Friendly Farming Network believes that the farming industry has a moral responsibility to address the damage caused to the natural world by agriculture, and that only by adopting sustainable nature friendly practices can future productive capacity be secured.
- Many farmers are already playing an incredible role in helping wildlife flourish on their farms – we believe that they should be better supported and rewarded by the market for their good work.
- **There is a massive opportunity to roll out nature friendly farming at scale as part of a future domestic agriculture policy.** This will help deliver a range of important public policy objectives, at the same time as providing resilient, sustainable, productive farm businesses. To do this, the NFFN believes that a future agriculture policy for NI should:
- Help all NI farmers to produce safe, healthy food at the same time as helping our soil, landscapes, rivers and wildlife to flourish, whilst delivering ambitious action on climate change.
- **Maintain the current levels of agricultural support and redirect farming payments towards mainstreaming nature friendly farming, whilst ensuring that this adds measurable value to the environment.**
- **Recognise that the shift towards a more nature friendly approach is not just good for wildlife but is key to the long-term survival of the Northern Irish farming community,** delivering broader benefits to the public, including flood protection, water and air quality, carbon storage and the maintenance of thriving natural landscapes and wildlife.
- Make sure future schemes are practical and accessible to all farmers.
- Ensure that the quality of produce from our industry reflects the quality of the land we farm, **with market recognition of value through suitable reward for nature friendly products.**
- **Continually monitor and assess environmental performance,** to ensure that nature friendly farming is delivering measurable impact for nature, the environment and the public.

- There are numerous examples of Nature Friendly Farming in action, both at the farm scale and across entire landscapes, locally and further afield. In short, **with the right support any farm can become nature friendly.**
- A future payment scheme focused on delivering positive environmental land management should represent the principal means of farm support. In the future, payments for environmental delivery can help provide a stable reliable income source for farm businesses, whilst delivering multiple goods and services to society.
- This represents good value for money to the taxpayer and provides a robust justification for long term public investment in farming and land management.
- NFFNNI recognises that many farm businesses are reliant on farm support in its current form and that a transition towards a new system should be planned and managed carefully. Moving towards a payment system linked to environmental delivery represents a significant shift from the status quo, meaning businesses must be fully prepared.
- There should be support to the sector to improve resilience and help transition towards a new payment system. This could include capital grants, training, business advice and support for technology uptake.
- As we head into a new farming system, and begin to determine how farmers work with nature, address climate change and produce food, **the NFFN is calling on the AERA Committee to support nature-friendly farming, which is not only good for farm businesses, but can help address the biggest societal challenges of our time.**
- We urge the Committee to endorse the proposed motion and consider how our recommendations can help roll out nature friendly farming at scale.

A definition of nature friendly farming;

Nature friendly farming is an umbrella term to describe farming systems and practices that **enhance and protect biodiversity** and **contribute to tackling climate change** alongside food production. **Nature friendly farming is not only better for nature but also ensures that our land remains productive¹, ensuring we can go on producing food forever.**

Nature is good for business and essential for our future. There is increasing recognition that environmental production practices are essential for robust supply chains – in short, to ensure we have food on the table. The Nature Friendly Farming Network believes that the farming industry has a moral responsibility to address the damage caused to the natural world by agriculture, and that only by adopting sustainable nature friendly practices can future productive capacity be secured.

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Ecosystem resilience is economic resilience

Nature friendly farming has a vital role to play in ensuring that farm businesses remain productive, profitable and resilient at the same time as restoring nature and addressing the climate emergency. Nature underpins profitability; a healthy farmland ecosystem means a healthy bottom line.

If we are clever and innovative the solutions that protect the environment can also boost the economy; restoring soils is vital for food production, carbon storage and biodiversity, without

¹ https://www.nffn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NFFN_report_v7.1.pdf

healthy soils our food system will fail and with it so will many businesses². Supporting thriving populations of pollinators and beneficial insects means that crops will be more productive and natural pest management will be more effective. Restoring natural processes in upland areas can safeguard against flooding by soaking up and slowing down water. Functioning watercourses, wetlands and floodplains can also provide drought resilience allowing the landscape to naturally store water essential for nature and food production in dry periods. Shortening food supply chains not only reduces food miles but it helps farmers to achieve better prices and they are less vulnerable to disruption

Nature means business; The business benefits of nature friendly systems

It has been considered, and indeed encouraged, that higher levels of production can be linked to improved farm profitability. Often the role of nature within all of this has not been examined and seen only as an additional burden to be managed rather than an integral partner in the farm business. Recent studies have shown that farm businesses need to review production costs, outputs, and the role of farm support schemes, but also consider that their ultimate profitability could actually be inextricably linked to their partnership with nature.

Nature provides farmers with 'natural capital' for their businesses in the form of soils, grass, water and geology, which farm businesses work with for crop or livestock production to take place. Where these 'free issue' assets are not managed correctly, farm productivity will reduce. Taken beyond their natural production limit, for example by increasing stocking levels to more than the grass can cope with or cropping more than the soil can naturally support, the farming businesses will need to adapt to maintain production. This is achieved via additional inputs such as fertilisers or the requirement to purchase additional feed to maintain the productivity. This increases the overall costs of production and potentially reduces the profitability of the farm business. Overdependence on imported fertilisers makes our agricultural system vulnerable, phosphate is a finite resource, supplies are going to become scarcer and more costly. We need to find ways to collect and recycle phosphate – this will protect our soil and waterways, improve profits and reduce our vulnerability to disruption in the supply of fertiliser.³

Farm businesses can benefit economically by adopting more nature friendly production practises⁴. For example, better business planning can reduce costs, boost nature and increase economic resilience. Recent research has found that matching stocking levels on upland farms in line with the carrying capacity of the land can reduce overheads, resulting in increased profitability and more environmental benefits⁵. Nature friendly farming systems can also benefit from diverse income streams as a result of a more diverse farmed landscape as well as producing premium in demand products. As consumers are rapidly becoming more aware of the climate and environmental impacts of the foods that they buy, demand for local, nature friendly products will only increase. Food Foundation identified that of the top 50 most popular fruit and vegetables consumed in the UK, 16 could be produced here but are currently imported. This represents a £1.3bn market opportunity.

² <https://www.circularonline.co.uk/news/consumers-demand-greener-products-in-wake-of-pandemic/>

³ RePhoKus – Phosphorous Stock and Flows in the Northern Ireland Food System

⁴ Harkness C et al. 2021 Stability of farm income: The role of agricultural diversity and agri-environment scheme payments

⁵ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Hill%20farm%20profitability%20report%20-%20FINAL%20agreed%2015%20Nov%2019.pdf>

⁶In recent focus groups held with 15 of Northern Ireland's top restaurants, all of them said they wanted to buy a bigger variety of seasonal food direct from farms.

What could be considered as good practise both locally and further afield;

There are numerous examples of Nature Friendly Farming in action, both at the farm scale and across entire landscapes, locally and further afield. In short, with the right support any farm can become nature friendly. Below are some key examples which span several different farming systems both in NI and further afield.

Nature as an enterprise in its own right; Simon Best Acton House Farm

"Ensuring that we as farmers take a long-term view of sustainability and enhancement of our environment is extremely important. I think most farmers understand this, but agriculture policies have put the sector under huge pressure to deliver low cost food. Our environment is one of our greatest assets and politically this hasn't been supported. Recognising the value of nature friendly farming is critical for this long-term view"

Simon Best farms at Acton House Farm near Poyntzpass in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. His farm is 1,200 acres of predominantly arable land, including an Aberdeen Angus beef herd and green waste composting facility.

The farm has been involved in agri-environment schemes for over 20 years, with the aim to combine a production led arable system with sustainability. Interventions include rough grass margins, pollen nectar mixes, wild bird seed crops, increasing hedgerows, and tree planting.

Results

Soil health has increased considerably, with the improvement in soil organic matter and fertility. Regular bird monitoring is undertaken with the local community, which has shown that rare priority species are using the farm, such as lapwing. Water quality is also monitored and there is a thriving otter population on the land. Regular monitoring helps to demonstrate the value added by nature friendly practices.

Less is more; securing profitability in the uplands North Yorkshire

"We have chosen to focus on the natural and sustainable farming route on our farm. For us it is not only a more profitable way of farming, but also more sustainable, from an environmental and economic point of view. We are more likely to be still farming in 10, 20, 100 years' time if we don't try to work against nature. Unsustainable practices have a finite lifespan"

Based at Hill Top Farm in North Yorkshire, Neil Hessletine has been involved in Nature Friendly Farming since 2003, securing a range of benefits from increased profitability, increased resilience and the restoration of key priority species and habitats.

Key outcomes

Environmental

⁶ Food Foundation – Farming for Five a Day

A reduction in stocking rate, coupled with mixed grazing and a change in grazing management has led to the return of several different priority grassland species, including scabious, wild thyme spearmint and bluebells which were not previously found on the land.

A reduction in grazing pressure has allowed the grass to grow longer, helping to prevent flooding downstream, whilst a several other interventions have been adopted to enable natural flood management.

Farm business

Increased profits; whilst overall output and income from agriculture have decreased, the business has become more profitable. This is a result of a significant reduction in the costs of production.

Fewer sheep means that there is no need to buy in concentrates or feeds. The business has moved from a loss-making enterprise into profit, even before any public support mechanisms are taken into account.

Nature as a core component of the business; Charlie Cole Broughgammon Farm Ballycastle

“Nature friendly farming is essential. Not only to conserve nature but also to secure the long-term future of farming itself. We are facing huge problems globally and locally regarding soil health, water quality, the loss of wildlife from our landscapes and climate change. If sustainable, regenerative farming practices become mainstream, farmers could be the solution to these challenges”

Charlie Cole is a first-generation farmer who manages Broughgammon on the North coast of Antrim. His farm, famous for its award-winning rose veal and goat burgers, has been championing sustainability and the principle of ‘forward thinking farming’ since 2012.

Since taking the farm on, Charlie has accomplished a lot to benefit nature and improve the underlying sustainability of the business. The farm has species-rich acid grasslands which is grazed sensitively to ensure optimal conditions for plants and wildlife. There has been the restoration of a network of hedges and pockets of woodland around the farm. We’re in the process of establishing a farm rotation through our good fields to benefit soil health and contribute to carbon storage. Recently Charlie has been implementing an agroforestry project, which will make a huge contribution to wildlife - attracting beneficial pollinators that will increase yields and the business’ bottom line, all whilst enhancing the carbon storage capacity from the farmed landscape.

What would you like to see in the future agricultural policy to support nature friendly farming?

There is a massive opportunity to roll out nature friendly farming at scale as part of a future domestic agriculture policy. This will help deliver a range of important public policy objectives, at the same time as providing resilient, sustainable, productive farm businesses. To do this, the NFFN believes that a future agriculture policy for NI should:

- Help all NI farmers to produce safe, healthy food at the same time as helping our soil, landscapes, rivers and wildlife to flourish, whilst delivering ambitious action on climate change.
- Recognise that urgent action is needed and drive rapid change to current farming systems through a culture of innovation and a flexible and responsive system to support transition

- Maintain the current levels of agricultural support and redirect farming payments towards mainstreaming nature friendly farming, whilst ensuring that this adds measurable value to the environment.
- Recognise that the shift towards a more nature friendly approach is not just good for wildlife but is key to the long-term survival of the Northern Irish farming community, delivering broader benefits to the public, including flood protection, water and air quality, carbon storage and the maintenance of thriving natural landscapes and wildlife.
- Make sure future schemes are practical and accessible to all farmers.
- Ensure that the quality of produce from our industry reflects the quality of the land we farm, with market recognition of value through suitable reward for nature friendly products.
- To enable the widespread adoption of nature friendly farming, we must build on past successes and find solutions to previous obstacles. With the creation of domestic agriculture policy, we have an opportunity to do this, to create a system that delivers truly sustainable land management. We believe future environmental schemes should play a core role in this, providing income to farm businesses for the environmental benefits they deliver. Key to its success will be in its design, with previous agri-environment schemes acting as a proof of concept for delivery.

Future Scheme Design

A future payment scheme focused on delivering positive environmental land management should represent the principal means of farm support. In the future, payments for environmental delivery can help provide a stable reliable income source for farm businesses, whilst delivering multiple goods and services to society.

This represents good value for money to the taxpayer and provides a robust justification for long term public investment in farming and land management. To ensure the effective delivery of environmental outcomes and achieve farmer engagement and buy in, policy should be practical and simple. Policy should be holistic, based on the whole farm operation including production and environmental aspects as far as this is possible. This means flexibility, for example to reach environmental targets across the farm or landscape, rather than in individual fields, and more focus on outcomes and achievements than mapping and calculating.

Funding

Critical to a schemes future success is the funding allocated towards it. Under the CAP, the RDP budget has been insufficient in meeting environmental needs. A future policy should focus on rewarding farmers to provide those benefits, especially environmental benefits that are not normally paid for through the market. This is where the majority of public funding should be focused.

Recent research demonstrates that to meet government's environmental objectives requires an **8-fold increase in funding for environmental management is required**. To ensure that a future scheme can meet its intended objectives, funding should be allocated on the scale of need required to meet current environmental commitments.

Regulation

Any future support scheme needs to be underpinned by an effective regulatory baseline. This should ensure that all farmers are operating on a level playing field and meeting minimum regulatory

requirements. The baseline should apply to all farm businesses, not just those that are engaged within a future support system.

This is necessary to make farms more environmentally and nature friendly and ensures that the environmental benefits that farmers deliver through schemes are not undermined by damaging practices elsewhere. Regulation creates a level playing field, with all farmers and land managers bound by the same rules. Regulation should define the rights and responsibilities of landowners, providing clarity about when they will be expected to maintain existing environmental and animal welfare standards and when they can access support for provide additional benefits, for example for going beyond regulatory standards to help improve water quality.

Comprehensive entry level scheme

A comprehensive, broadly accessible element - available to all land managers that meet the entry threshold. The scheme should pay for good environmental land management with requirements above and beyond baseline regulatory requirements. This should address widespread issues such as protecting soil, air and water resources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and maintaining wildlife habitats and landscapes. The comprehensive element would include simple interventions such as hedgerow restoration and management, tree planting, creating wildflower field margins, establishing bird cover crops, creating wetland features, establishing stream-side corridors, low input winter and spring cereals and retaining winter stubbles on arable land. These are measures that could be implemented by the majority, if not all, farmers and land managers.

The aim should be to encourage a step change towards more sustainable production - with more farmers enrolled in a more ambitious scheme than currently. This element of the policy would effectively replace direct payments as the primary public funding mechanism available to farmers and land managers to engage with. To achieve this there will need to be significant financial investment in support to move the large majority, if not all, farmers into the scheme. This will include advice and possibly transition payments to support farmers to both gain recognition for work they are already doing and to reach an ambitious level for this scheme

Targeted scheme design

Targeted payments should aim to conserve priority species and habitats, to ensure the appropriate management and condition of designated nature conservation sites and to support habitat recreation and restoration e.g. peatlands and wetlands.

A targeted element will address specific problems that need more investment and more complex management, often over a landscape scale, including management, restoration and creation of priority habitats; species recovery programmes, including predator control; ensuring high water quality; and supporting strategic natural flood risk management. This payment should be determined by both national and local priorities and should be flexible enough to tailor to a farm or landscape context with the ability to combine measures to maximise potential benefits.

A joined-up approach

Future schemes should aim to work at a landscape scale and payments should be calculated to account better for this collaborative, coordinated approach. This helps connect the good work of farmers in each area, to contribute more effectively towards environmental outcomes, rather than creating fragmented areas of good quality habitat within biodiversity deserts. There should be a fund for landscape scale collaboration. Farmers that want to collaborate to produce landscape scale

results, for example species recovery or to improve water quality, should have access to additional support to help them do this, for example groups working at a catchment scale.

Promoting habitat connectivity of our countryside is essential. All farms should be encouraged to partake in the scheme so that there is better connectivity across the countryside. Hedges, grasslands, tree lines and wild areas should continue to play a role as they work better when coordinated over a wider landscape scale.

The role of training, advice & Knowledge transfer

Transitioning towards a new system of whole farm support will require a significant investment in training, advice and should encourage knowledge transfer. Regular support from a trusted advisor makes a significant difference towards achieving environmental success and ensures that land managers are fully equipped to do what is best in each area. This support should be provided consistently throughout the duration of the scheme agreement and could be delivered from a range of actors depending on need and expertise. Advice should be delivered across a landscape, with an advisor working with a group of farm businesses. This will allow for a more joined up approach to delivering environmental benefits, reduce costs, increase efficiencies and encourage farmer collaboration. Incentives for farmers to work collaboratively across a landscape should be built into scheme design, especially within high priority landscapes.

Continuous training on sustainable farming practises should be available to farmers, so that they are equipped with the knowledge to farm sustainably, covering all aspects of the operation. This should be provided centrally through formal education delivered by CAFRE and through a process of continued professional development for farm business holders. Effective knowledge transfer will also be important, so that farmers can learn from each other, solve problems, innovate and demonstrate how the needs of nature can be effectively incorporated into farm businesses.

Payments

Payments for environmental work must be fair and provide adequate financial incentive to farm businesses. Farmers should be paid in line with their achievements and effort. Payments should reflect the genuine environmental or social benefits that farmers provide. As such, we believe that payments should be calculated beyond cost incurred, income foregone. Too often the true cost and value of such options has not been reflected in the payments attached to them. This often limits the uptake of interventions that require more difficult or expensive management, but which can often provide significant environmental benefit.

As part of a future policy framework, there is scope to develop payments related to environmental performance. There is good evidence that payments based on outcomes, or at least results, can improve environmental benefits, and increase farmer engagement where they are taking more ownership of results. We do however appreciate that developing results-based schemes can be a lengthy and complex process, and that developing such a scheme for the whole of Northern Ireland within the timeframe of a transition period would be challenging. There are technical challenges with this approach that must be addressed before it can be rolled out as the primary mechanism for rewarding farmers and land management.

Transition

NFFNNI recognises that many farm businesses are reliant on farm support in its current form and that a transition towards a new system should be planned and managed carefully. Moving towards a payment system linked to environmental delivery represents a significant shift from the status quo,

meaning businesses must be fully prepared. Government must set out the direction of travel clearly from the outset, outlining how they intend to phase out current payment arrangements when moving towards a new scheme. With this, there should be support to the sector to improve resilience and help transition towards a new payment system. This could include capital grants, training, business advice and support for technology uptake.

The aim should be to improve the competitiveness of the sector using one off or time-limited payments such as capital grants, loans etc. There is also a need to pilot new approaches and trial new schemes during this period, this could include creating new supply chain models (e.g. public procurement of food from local farms) or filling in supply chain gaps unmet by the private sector (e.g. processing fibre composites from flax or hemp) There should be recognition of the financial implications of new policy on farm structure and the diversity of types of farm across the country. Transitional arrangements and future payments should aim to preserve this diversity and the social and economic benefits that this provides.

A challenge fund to help the agricultural industry respond to the current crisis should provide rapid access to financial support for innovative solutions that can scale. Supports like Techstart Proof of Concept and the Innovate UK Covid Response scheme demonstrate how innovation can be supported with low levels of administrative burden

Innovative funding mechanisms

A future policy should significantly increase incentives for private investment in natural capital and ecosystem services. Future investment in nature friendly farming should be supported by a combination and of public payments and private capital, making it profitable and rewarding to manage land sustainably for both private and public benefit. For example, utility operators investing in upstream land to reduce the costs of flood protection, or food businesses investing in soil restoration on the farms in their supply chain or peatland/woodland owners being able to trade in carbon credits or water companies investing in land management to improve water quality; the opportunity to facilitate this within a future policy framework should be explored.

Links with other policy objectives

Whilst we are calling for a significant repurposing of funding towards the delivery of environmental objectives based on the scale of need, we recognise that to deliver a sustainable, innovative, profitable and resilient agriculture sector we cannot look at the environment in isolation, and that investment in other areas will be required. Under previous rounds of the Rural Development Programme several initiatives have been put in place to deliver a range of positive outcomes for farm businesses, rural communities and the countryside more generally. A future policy should seek to build on these, whilst ensuring a joined-up approach with environmental delivery.

Such measures have included capital funding to increase competitiveness, create and develop shorter supply chains and trial innovative technologies, the transfer of skills and knowledge between different farm businesses, support for rural communities and support and advice to diversify and maximise other rural business opportunities. Such support will remain important in the future, helping to create thriving rural communities which are well placed to deliver for and benefit from nature and the environment.

There are opportunities being presented through NI's increasing recognition as a tourist destination. This has been built largely on the value of our natural capital through our landscapes and through the quality of our food. With this, there is an opportunity for farmers and other stakeholders to

deliver and benefit from agroecological food tourism, in which high quality food is recognised for its role in maintaining high quality landscapes. Support to enable producers to capitalise upon this through the development of local supply chains and geographic indicators would help contribute towards this.

Supply Chain

There is an important role for consumers and the food supply chain in influencing how land is managed. Accreditation schemes can ensure that food produced to high environmental standards is recognised in the market and that farmers producing in this manner receive generous reward. Government can play a key role in facilitating this and should work with stakeholders to determine what opportunities exist. For example, food produced on land managed under environmental schemes could be marketed based on its role in delivering environmental benefits. Improved public awareness of environmental schemes would allow the public to understand better the link between the taxes they pay, their spending on food and the management of the countryside.

Where possible, future agriculture policy should also encourage farmer cooperation to create and develop local sustainable supply chains, which often allow farmers to secure added value for what they produce. Digital solutions like Equilibrium Markets and Source Grow could help to transform public and private procurement of local food direct from farms. Models like Big Barn's food hubs and La Ruche Qui Dit Oui could support the development of local markets. Support for 'direct to consumer' routes like honesty boxes, vending machines and veg box schemes will help to shorten the supply chain. Stimulating these markets will support farmers transitioning to more profitable and sustainable crops. Similarly, there are opportunities to create geographic indicators for products emanating from particular landscapes. Opportunities for this have been largely provided through previous RDP schemes and should be encouraged in the future.

Climate Change and on farm Nature Based solutions

The farming sector has a moral obligation to switch to nature friendly farming. We can and must become part of the solution, slowing, halting and then reversing the climate and nature emergencies. The Northern Ireland agriculture sector has a vital role to play in delivering an ambitious target. Ambitious domestic targets are essential, not only in ensuring that emissions are reduced within a specified timeframe, but also in providing the right signals to the sector to invest in farming practises that enable the transition to nature friendly farming at scale.

We believe that in facilitating an alternative approach to farm business management, that actively works with nature we can restore our land's capacity to store and sequester more carbon, whilst significantly reducing emissions from agriculture; and that with the right policies, support and investment, NI's agriculture and land use sector can achieve ambitious GHG reduction targets. Climate action should not be viewed as a constraint, but an opportunity to facilitate a new era for farming and land use, which provides a vibrant farming sector, thriving wildlife, whilst ensuring that Northern Ireland achieves world leading climate ambitions.

In achieving an ambitious target, it is essential that the sector is fully equipped and supported to make the necessary transition. Whilst some nature and carbon friendly farming changes will be simple, many will require support including funding, advice and a change in many overarching policy frameworks

A climate plan for Northern Ireland agriculture should enable a range of policy interventions aimed at reducing whole farm emissions, facilitating a change in agricultural practises, to shift towards

agroecological system thinking, a reduction in energy and fuel use, positive management of carbon and wildlife rich habitats, habitat creation and business advice and knowledge transfer to support nature and climate friendly farming.

Conclusion

With 75% of NI's land managed as farmland, farmers are key to delivering food security, biodiversity and climate targets. However, NI farming is in a challenging economic situation. Without clear direction from governments and policy makers, there's a lot of uncertainty when we need urgent action. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address the nature and climate emergencies and help farmers to understand that long-term business sustainability, resilience to market and climate challenges, and financial viability means working in harmony with nature. Farming policy needs to support the industry to rapidly move to a sustainable output model that enhances natural capital and nature, or else many farming businesses will face an increasingly difficult financial situation.

As we head into a new farming system, and begin to determine how farmers work with nature, address climate change and produce food, the NFFN is calling on the AERA Committee to support nature-friendly farming, which is not only good for business, but can help address the biggest societal challenges of our time. We must be bold and deliver long-term solutions now so that farmers can build sustainable and resilient farm businesses that produce healthy food and protect our natural world for future generations to enjoy. We urge the Committee to endorse the proposed motion and consider how our recommendations can roll out nature friendly farming at scale.