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Edward Rees
Sustainable Farming Branch,
Countryside Policy Division,
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15 August 2008

Dear Mr Rees

FAWC Response to the Welsh Assembly Government's Consultation on the Proposed New Strategy for Farming in Wales: "Farming, Food and Countryside – Building a Secure Future"

FAWC has a number of comments that it hopes will help to strengthen the proposed new strategy for farming in Wales. These comments are given below.

1. Although animal welfare is referred to in a number of places in the draft Strategy document (i.e. pages 25, 29, 30, 31 and 33), FAWC would like to see animal welfare as a core consideration of the Strategy. To this end, FAWC recommends that the stated objective of the draft Strategy be re-worded to read "to achieve a more profitable future for farming and its associated food processing industry which will sustain farming families while safeguarding the environment and animal welfare, mitigating climate change and maintaining the vitality and prosperity of our rural communities".
2. Similarly, animal welfare could have been included in the key industry objectives from the report "Sustainable Farming & Environment: Action towards 2020" as restated in the final paragraph of Page 2 of the draft Strategy. This could read "environmental and animal welfare objectives must be achieved through farmers managing their businesses to ensure they use sound environmental and animal welfare management practices, but some environmental and animal welfare objectives must be achieved through government incentives."
3. On Page 4, under the heading Success, animal welfare should again be referred to. On Page 5, in the final line, this could have read "...Wales has the opportunity to position itself as a world-wide producer of top-quality environmentally and animal welfare friendly meat and dairy products."

4. Protection of animal welfare is an important element of sustainable farming and one that should be more emphasised in the draft Strategy. It is difficult to conceive farming in Wales in 2020 which does not pay high regard to animal welfare; especially since this is likely to be of continued and growing concern to consumers and the market (this has particular relevance for Section 4 of the draft Strategy entitled “Stronger Connections to the Market”).
5. It is hoped that in the future Welsh farmers will have greater opportunity to obtain premium prices for high welfare products, for example, once a satisfactory welfare labelling system is in place which allows the market to adequately reward farmers for producing high welfare products.
6. Animal welfare provenance is an important part of ‘food provenance’ referred to in Section 3 of the draft Strategy document (e.g. pages 17 and 18) and high welfare is likely to be an important element in differentiating Welsh livestock products (e.g. Welsh lamb) from competitors and an integral part of producing a top quality product.
7. RDP monies should be used to help Welsh farmers develop their businesses to adopt practices that improve farm animal welfare and help Welsh farmers to market these products and achieve premium prices.
8. It is important that the Farming Connect service includes appropriately-informed and trained personnel that can advise on the animal welfare aspects of livestock farm businesses and can help farmers to better connect with and explore opportunities relating to market requirements for products with high animal welfare provenance.
9. In terms of the priorities for improving animal welfare referred to on page 33, FAWC is happy to continue to advise and work with the Welsh Assembly Government and the industry to formulate practical ways in which animal welfare can be improved, and to develop a shared vision for farm animal welfare in Wales in the longer term.

Best wishes,

Yours faithfully



Professor Christopher Wathes
Chairman, Farm Animal Welfare Council