

Consultation on the Operation and Effectiveness of the Agricultural Sector (Wales) Act 2014 and its Future.

Question 1

a) Do you consider that the Agricultural Advisory Panel has fulfilled all of its duties since its establishment?

b) Are there any priority areas/issues either in relation to agricultural wages orders, career development or any other issue you would suggest the Panel focuses on?

c) Do you consider that that the Panel and its sub-committee should have more time to develop their work?

You may wish to consider sending any suggestions of matters that you would like to draw to the attention of the Panel for consideration with your response to this consultation.

Answer:

In relation to question 1(b) Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is particularly interested in the links between the developing concept of “Brand Wales” (as articulated by the Cabinet Secretary’s round table and associated stakeholder working groups) and the nature of the training now available to the existing agricultural workforce and new entrants. In this context, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with members of the Skills Development sub-committee and explore in more detail some of the natural resource management challenges as well as the opportunities which now lie ahead.

In relation to question 1(c) the consultation document points out that the “Skills Development sub-committee is very much in its infancy...”. On this basis it seems only reasonable to make more time available so that a clear view on the future direction of travel can be established, regardless of whether this work is then taken forward by the Agricultural Advisory Panel, the SDT sub-committee or by others.

Question 2

a) Do you consider that the sub-committee on Skills Development and Training has identified the key areas it needs to focus its efforts on?

b) Are there any other areas within the industry which you believe would benefit from the establishment of a sub-committee?

You may wish to consider sending any suggestions for the sub-committee's consideration with your response to this consultation.

Answer:

Limited information on the work of Skills Development and Training sub-committee is available on the Agricultural Advisory Panel website. The consultation document simply states that: *“The sub-committee began by considering various reports on skills and training development in the sector to inform its work. Their focus initially was on the wider picture, and the direction provided in “Towards a New Professionalism - The skills strategy for agriculture and horticulture” as well as the need to increase the professionalism of the industry at all levels. Further insight into the current training provision was provided by the expert members of the sub-committee...”*

The reference to “a new professionalism” is interesting in that the strategy commissioned by the Agri Skills Forum dates from early 2010 and yet much of the text and the emphasis on promoting skills development as being “central to business improvement and the concept of professionalism” remain just as relevant today. The main difference is the introduction of a new legislative architecture within Wales. In particular, the Environment Act 2016 (planning and managing Wales' natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way) and the Well-being of Future Generations Act together provide a unique underpinning for the “Brand Wales” initiative now being developed in response to the decision to leave the EU. As discussed during the Cabinet Secretary's roundtable and associated stakeholder meetings, such a brand would reflect the crucial role of Welsh agriculture in producing not just the raw materials for the agri-food sector, but in managing a wide range of ecosystem services in ways that support both the tourism, recreation and water industries.

In this context, we would like to draw the sub-committee's attention to the attached inter-agency report on the French Government's recent decision to promote greater use of agroecological principles and practices in both farmer training programmes and agricultural colleges:

[Promotion of agroecological approaches - Lessons from other European countries](#),

This kind of approach to using “nature based solutions” has clear parallels with the Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy, especially through promoting both systems and practices that ensure reduced use of fertilisers and pesticides whilst at the same time promoting the development of climate change resilient agricultural ecosystems.

Question 3

Do you have any suggestions for additional information to be included in an updated version of the guidance, or for further clarification of the existing guidance?

Answer:

NRW does not wish to comment on this part of the consultation.

Question 4

a) Do you consider that having agricultural wages orders which set minimum levels of hourly rates of pay and conditions is beneficial for the agricultural industry?

b) Do you have any comment to make on specific aspects of Agricultural Wages (Wales) Orders?

Please let us know if you would like to suggest any changes for future orders.

Answer:

NRW does not wish to comment on this part of the consultation.

Question 5

a) Do you consider there needs to be increased awareness of the Agricultural Minimum Wage provisions?

b) If so, what do you think would be the most effective way to communicate this?

c) Do you have any concerns around compliance or enforcement of the regulations that you would like to bring to our attention?

Answer:

NRW does not wish to comment on this part of the consultation.

Question 6

Do you have suggestions, concerns or views on cross border arrangements?

Please tell us where you consider that best practice needs to be shared across the UK.

Are there any specific aspects of implementation which could benefit from formal agreements in your view?

Answer:

NRW does not wish to comment on this part of the consultation.

Question 7

How effective do you consider communications to have been in the review period 2014-2017?

Please send us your views and/or suggestions for improved communication.

Answer:

During the period since the establishment of the Skills Development and Training Sub-Committee, it would have been helpful if more information could have been provided on the issues under consideration and the progress being made. One way of doing this in future would be via Gwlad and/or through providing more regular updates on the existing Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales website.

Question 8

Do you think that the Act should be preserved?

Answer:

Yes.

The Agricultural Sector (Wales) Act 2014 provides the legislative underpinning for the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales. This in turn provides a mechanism for seeking to improve the skills base of the existing agricultural workforce as well as developing career opportunities for new entrants. The UK's forthcoming departure from the European Union (and the associated opportunity to develop a distinctive "Welsh Brand" that can be attached to a wide range of products) only serves to emphasize the increasingly important role that a highly trained and innovative workforce, skilled in natural resource management and aware of the links with other sectors such as tourism, is likely to play in supporting the Welsh economy in future

Question 9

Are there any other comments that you wish to make in respect of this consultation?

Answer:

No.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: