Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru National Assembly for Wales

Agriculture

Introduction

About 1.6 million hectares of land in Wales is agricultural, of which around 80 per cent is designated as Less Favoured Area[i]. Agriculture in Wales is predominantly cattle and sheep farming. There are some 24 thousand farms in Wales, of which about 17 thousand received over £200 million in funding from the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Single Payment Scheme (SPS), which replaced subsidy schemes in 2005. This scheme broke the link between CAP payments and production. It is paid once a year and is based on the amount of subsidy paid, and land used, between 2000 and 2002.

The Welsh Assembly Government promotes a sustainable approach to agriculture and supports farmers in adapting for the future. Under the CAP, payments are also made to farmers who keep their land in good agricultural condition and comply with environmental, public and animal health and welfare requirements. The SPS, therefore, runs alongside the Tir Cymru programme, which covers agrienvironment schemes such as Tir Cynnal and Tir Gofal, as well as Tir Mynydd (See Rural Development Quick Guide no. 10[ii]).

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

"Agriculture" is field 1 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over agricultural matters through Legislative Competence Orders. The following secondary legislation responsibilities of the Second Assembly will transfer to Welsh Ministers in the Third Assembly:

- Common Agricultural Policy and Single Farm Payments
- Animal Health and Welfare
- Food and Market development

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- Climate Change Bill
- Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 is due to be submitted before the summer for the approval of the European Commission by the new Welsh Assembly Government following consideration of the priorities and levels of financial support available.
- The EU regulation on animal by-products is due to be revised in December 2007.
- The Commission will launch a broad consultation as it prepares for its 2008 review of the CAP reforms implemented since 2003 - referred to as the "CAP health check". The proposals in the CAP health check should take effect in the period 2009-2013. It will also be an opportunity to discuss options for post-2013 as the EU considers how its budget should be reformed.

EU policy

The EU has wide jurisdiction over agricultural matters. Fields of competence include all aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) including market measures, rural development policy, financial matters as well as international relations relating to agriculture. The European Commission sees the following as its main tasks in the field of agriculture:

- Managing and developing the Common Agricultural Policy (see Health Check above and further simplification of agricultural legislation)
- A new EU Animal Health Strategy for 2007-2013 is due to be published in September 2007.
- Reinforcing rural development policy as the second pillar of the CAP
- Safeguarding the European model of agriculture in a changing context
- Successfully conducting the enlargement process
- Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production – due December 2007. Promoting sustainable consumption and production by addressing social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

- The Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 has yet to be finalised. The first plan ran from 2000 – 2006 and provided funding for various grant and training schemes[iii].
- *Starting to Live Differently*[iv] is the sustainable development scheme of the National Assembly for Wales. It is accompanied by a Sustainable Development Action Plan[v].
- There was a consultation until 27 April about a climate change adaptation action plan for Wales[vi].

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's legacy paper highlighted the following agricultural issues for the attention of the Third Assembly:

- Bovine Tuberculosis
- Sustainable Farming and Environment 2020 – Task and Finish Group
- Successor Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2007-2013
- The Environment Strategy for Wales
- Biocrops and biofuels
- Food and market development
- The Climate Change Bill

Useful links

1. The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering countryside issues: http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/?lang=en
2. DEFRA maintains websites covering animal health and welfare, farming, horticulture, plants and seeds, rural affairs, and wildlife and countryside: http://www.defra.gov.uk/
3. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/agriculture/index_en.htm

Further information

For further information on aspects of agriculture, please contact:

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See also the Topic Brief on Food

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[i] Less Favoured Area (LFA) is the area in which farms are eligible for the Tir Mynydd scheme.
[ii] MRS research paper 06/034 *Rural Development funding in Wales* (MRS QuickGuide 10): http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubmrs/content/06-034.pdf
[iii] Welsh Assembly Government Rural Development Plan 2000-2006. http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/countryside_policy/rural_development/?lang=en
[iv] Welsh Assembly Government, *Starting to Live Differently*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypubs/935748/?lang=en
[v] Welsh Assembly Government, *The Sustainable Development Action Plan: 2004-2007*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable_development_publicat/sdactionplan?lang=en
[vi] Welsh Assembly Government, *Responding to our Changing Climate: Consultation on a Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan for Wales*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultation/662235/1502-270407climatechange?lang=en