

FWP 18

Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Ganalog y Priswyr Amaethyddol Evidence from : The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV)

I write on behalf of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers in response to the consultation on forestry and woodland policy in Wales.

Introduction

The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) represents, briefs and qualifies some 2,700 professionals who advise and act on the very varied matters affecting rural and agricultural businesses and property throughout the United Kingdom. Instructed by a wide range of clients, including farmers, owners, lenders, public authorities, conservation bodies, utility providers, government agencies and others, this work requires an understanding of practical issues.

The CAAV does not exist to lobby on behalf of any particular interest but rather, knowing its members will be called on to act or advise both Government and private interests under developing policies, aims to ensure that they are designed in as practical a way as possible, taking account of circumstances.

Our particular interest in this consultation arises as an organisation that supports rural advisors who may have a role in managing woodland and its creation.

In preparing this response we have consulted our membership generally and our Wales Committee in particular. I set out below the CAAV response to the consultation question

What are the challenges and opportunities that arise from leaving the European Union?

Forestry plays an important part in the Welsh economy as a whole contributing some £1.7bn a year and in particular in rural areas where job creation from forestry, both directly and indirectly, is helping to sustain communities. When the UK leaves the EU we believe this will provide opportunities to further support the industry.

In encouraging afforestation there may be an opportunity to review the planning system such that it is more simple and supportive of forestry. We welcomed the proposals earlier this year to reduce requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments in relation to forestry and responded to the joint consultation accordingly.

There will also be an opportunity to review and improve existing plant health measures. Stronger plant health measures would help to reduce, or at least delay, the entry of new

pests to the UK, protecting existing woodland and giving new woodland a better chance to thrive.

Once trees are planted it will be important that there are sufficient financial incentives for the forest's maintenance, either through strong markets or through any replacement Common Agricultural Policy scheme, in order that forests produce good environmental and economic benefit.

When the Common Agricultural Policy ceases to apply to the UK there will be an opportunity to design and implement more tailored land management policies. Current woodland grants have not been able to provide enough funding for planting and fencing which is a specific issue that could be addressed in future.

More widely we see that it may be important in Wales to look to support rural communities, key users of the Welsh language, in providing environmental gain. In particular in relation to forestry there may be opportunities to explore how afforestation can provide ecosystem services such as; carbon sequestration, cultural services for local communities and flood alleviation. However, we believe that more research is needed in this area to inform decision making.

A key issue for agriculture following the UK exiting the EU will be the availability of labour, as the sector employs many foreign nationals whose ability to work in the UK in the future may be limited. To a certain extent a lack of seasonal and temporary labour is also a threat for the forestry sector, in particular within establishment and machine operating sub-sectors. Addressing labour availability will be important in supporting the overall success of the sector.

We trust that the responses given above are helpful and would be pleased to discuss matters further with officials if required.