



The Federation of Cumbria Commoners is a hill farmer owned and managed membership organisation and represents around 500 hill farmers who graze common land (commoners) as part of their overall farm business.

The Federation of Cumbria Commoners recognises that the Agriculture Bill is crucially important for the farming sector, but we are concerned that it doesn't provide an effective framework for government to support hill farmers who graze common land (commoners) as part of their overall farm business. Our collective stewardship of common land, has helped to create and conserve the landscape, wildlife and archaeology of the uplands of Cumbria (the Lake District, the Pennines, the Howgill Fells and Western Dales).

There are a number of general measures we would like to see in the Agriculture Bill to support farm businesses so they can be sustainable environmentally. We also have some specific asks for hill farming.

Asks to improve the Agriculture Bill for farming in general

- We believe that payments for public goods has to include food, because food security is a public good and a public right.
- Commit to maintain agricultural spending after 2022 at the same level it is now.
- Establish a multi annual budgetary framework that provides certainty for farmers and allows us to plan and invest for the future.
- Provide more detail on the provisions for delinking direct payments from land management. We oppose delinking except for farmers wanting to retire, but this must be accompanied by a new entrant scheme on the same land. Otherwise new entrants will not be able to compete with existing farmers to take on farms vacated by the retiree. Farming will become even more the province of the few with little renewal.

Ways to improve the Agriculture Bill for hill areas

- We request explicit recognition of traditional hill farming and commoning systems as a public good. Hill farmers are a mainstay of the social and economic fabric of many remote rural communities. This system is at risk and will disappear without explicit public investment.
- We would like to see public support for native breeds of sheep, cattle and ponies as a public good. These breeds are best suited to environmentally sensitive grazing of our most valued habitats, but will never be as productive as commercial breeds.
- We request that the definition of cultural heritage provided in the explanatory notes (para 53) to the Bill is expanded to include farming practices and traditions e.g. native sheep breeds, hefting, traditional shows and sports, shepherds meets and local dialects. These underpin the Lake District's new Word Heritage Status.
- The Bill needs to acknowledge the complexity of land ownership and tenure. Common land often covers a large geographical areas that is collectively managed with a number of parties undertaking different land management activities on the same piece of land. Measures in the Bill should work for common land as well as single occupancy enclosed land.

We ask you to speak up on our behalf during the second reading of the Agricultural Bill.