

Our common interest in feeding the nation.

What I want to see for Wales' future is a flourishing farming sector, with farmers producing more food for the Welsh plate.

All over the world, we are losing farmland every year to flooding and burning, as a result of the ravages of the climate and nature emergencies. The harsh truth is that if we don't change direction, that is where we are eventually heading in Wales too.

What this tells me is that we have a common interest in making sure our farming sector is protected, through an ambitious response to climate change. The alternative is unthinkable for the thousands of families across Wales who depend on farming for their livelihoods, directly or indirectly. This is why our climate and nature goals must be non-negotiable.

Doing what we have done for the last 10, 20, 30 years will simply mean fewer farmers and their families making their living off the land in Wales in the next decade or two. The implications of that on our economy, our land, our culture is unimaginable.

Now, I could tell you that because I have relatives who were farmers (which is certainly the case) or that because I was raised and live now in a semi-rural part of Wales (also the case) that I understand what it means to face the challenges of farming in a changing world. But you know that isn't really true. The only way to know what it is like to farm today, is by being a farmer.

I am not a farmer, but I am a straight-talker, and a listener.

And the challenge we face today is that not enough of the food our fantastic Welsh farms produce ends up on Welsh plates. If we are honest with one another, we sometimes struggle to find common ground on our environmental aims, because we don't have sufficient common ground when it comes to growing food.

We talk about the important principle of keeping farmers on the land producing food. That's absolutely true of course. But how much more powerful would that principle be if it were about not just growing, but also about feeding ourselves as a nation too?

As we decide how to spend public money, how much more compelling is the case if that money is both supporting farmers and feeding Welsh families at the same time?

The first priority of the Welsh Government's Sustainable Farming Scheme is to support sustainable food production. The objective which has generated most controversy though is the equally important priority of responding to the climate and nature emergencies. Let's develop an ambitious farm to fork policy which better aligns food production with food consumption in Wales.

Then we will have created a common interest in making sure farming in Wales is able to withstand the climate ravages which lie ahead – and that will be good for us all.

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