

Written evidence submitted by the Landworkers' Alliance (AB18)

Submission to the Agriculture Bill Committee

Summary of proposed amendments to the bill:

- National Food Strategy
- Agroecology Amendment
- Local Food Amendment
- Conditions on “Delinking” of Payments
- Small farms
- County Smallholdings
- Ring fenced budget for Agriculture
- Powers Should be Duties

1. *The Landworkers Alliance farmers union supports the replacement of direct payments with environmental land management schemes but calls for the central focus of the bill to be supporting farmers to produce healthy, affordable local food using agroecological techniques as a way to deliver public money for public goods.*
2. The Landworkers Alliance is a union representing a current membership of about 1,000 farmers, growers and land-based workers. Our members focus on delivering high quality local food while simultaneously looking after the environment, landscapes, wildlife, animal welfare, community access, employment and other public goods. We represent the policy interests of agroecological small, medium and family farms and new entrants to farming. All of our policy recommendations are based on extensive consultation with our membership.
3. The Landworkers' Alliance was also instrumental building a wider set of policy suggestions called [A People's Food Policy](#). Working with about 160 different organisations to support a food system where everybody regardless of income, status or background has secure access to enough good food at all times, without compromising on the ability of future generations to provide for themselves.
4. As a union representing many innovative agroecological farmers we are pleased to see healthy soils, animal welfare, biodiversity and climate change at the front line in an Agriculture Bill. We are also pleased to see an end to the inefficiency and inequality of the current system of area-based payments and a commitment to supporting new entrants. These ideas are policies for which we have been campaigning for years due to the inequity in the distribution of payments. This transition to a more equitable system of public money for public goods is long overdue.
5. However, we believe it is essential that the environmental land management system is tied to ecological food production with clear targets for local production and reducing the UK's reliance on imports whilst delivering environmental and social public goods. As a farmers' union our core objective is to promote and improve the production of good food for local communities. Our members provide the evidence that it is entirely possible to produce the food we need using the highest levels of environmental land management through nature-friendly, high animal welfare, agroecological farming. We believe that **access to healthy local, environmentally sustainable food should be the central aim of agricultural policy**. The following ideas and amendments proposed by the Landworkers Alliance should help facilitate this.
6. Please note, the Landworkers Alliance is a small organisation, with limited capacity for

policy work, so our proposals will need further shaping by the bill committee. However, we are very active in working with both farmers and consumers on a grassroots level. We are confident that our ideas are an accurate reflection of not only the interests of the next generation of ecological farmers, but the wider interests of the public who want a better farming system.

7. **National Food Strategy based on Food Sovereignty-** Within the bill in the principles section of the bill itself, there should be a commitment for government to produce a comprehensive food strategy, creating duties and targets for local and regional food production to create plans for how we make healthy, sustainably produced food affordable and accessible to people of all income levels as a way of aligning our farming policy with environmental commitments, public health strategies, education, trade regimes and land use planning. We do not know how this would be worded in the Bill, but feel it is of vital importance to the Bill.
8. **Agroecology Amendment-** Bringing together the delivery of public goods and food production through Agroecology - After part 1.1 Financial Assistance powers, add

1.2 "The Secretary of State will give particular attention to integrating whole farm agroecological approaches, as a means of delivering the purposes listed in clause (1) (1) "

9. This would encourage future schemes to support active farms which produce affordable local food and provide social benefits (like education about food and farming) at the same time as managing the land in an environmentally beneficial way. The emphasis is on incentivising farming techniques that deliver environmental benefits, alongside edge of field measures and wildlife zones. The Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM) as currently configured supports land managers to caretake a beautiful and diverse landscape to the detriment of food production. However this addition to clause 1(1) would support sustainable food production, ensuring we support farmers- without going back to a system of direct payments.
10. *The UN FAO provides the following definition of agroecology: 'Agroecology is based on applying ecological concepts and principles to optimize interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system. By building synergies, agroecology can support food production and food security and nutrition while restoring the ecosystem services and biodiversity that are essential for sustainable agriculture. Agroecology can play an important role in building resilience and adapting to climate change.'*
11. Examples of whole farm agroecological systems are mixed farming, community supported agriculture, organic farming, pasture-fed livestock and other whole farm sustainable farming techniques that work together with measures to encourage wildlife and restore nature.
12. Summary of Benefits of Agroecology- There is growing evidence of the benefits of agroecology for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (**World Future Council**. 2018. *Scaling Up Agroecology. Call for Nominations Triggers Unprecedented Response*. <https://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/scaling-up-agroecology-our-call-for-nominations-triggered-unprecedented-response/>, **Salas, P.** 2016. *A Closer Look: Agroecology and Food, Women and Climate Change*. Groundswell International. <https://www.groundswellinternational.org/agroecology/a-closer-look-agroecology-and-food->

[women-and-climate-change/](#), among others). Agroecological methods can produce comparable or superior yields at lower cost with greater profitability, and sustain more diverse and nutritious diets than industrial monoculture-based agriculture (From uniformity to diversity: a paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems. International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES) <http://www.ipes-food.org/>.) Ecologically, these systems are low-impact; they are often regenerative of biodiversity, soils and the environment, in contrast to highly degrading forms of external input, intensive agriculture. Through the minimal use of fossil fuels and high-energy (chemical) external inputs, as well as sequestering carbon, agroecology can also contribute to climate change mitigation. The complex adaptive systems in agroecology are also highly resilient to flooding, hurricanes, pests and drought. Studies have shown that agricultural producers using agroecological practices such as crop diversification, maintaining local genetic diversity, animal integration, soil organic management, water conservation and harvesting are more resistant to ecological disasters than monocropping (Morris et. al 2016, Altieri et. al 2015, Holt-Giménez 2002). Thus, the evidence of the multiple benefits and potential of agroecology is extensive and concrete.

13. **The UN FAO and a Growing number of Countries Embrace Agroecology-** Between 2014 and 2017, FAO's global dialogue on agroecology has brought together more than 1400 participants from 170 countries in six regional symposia, taking the political debate about agroecology to a new level. At the October 2018 COAG meeting – the highest governing body of FAO - 192 members of FAO adopted a resolution to endorse the 10 elements and to request that FAO develop action plans with partners to scale up agroecology around the world. **FAO**. 2018g. *Scaling up Agroecology Initiative*. Rome, FAO. 17 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/I9049EN/i9049en.pdf>).
14. The French government, who has made agroecology the central plank of their agriculture policy describes agroecology as having triple performance: 1. Environmental 2. Economic advantages, improving yield and efficiency – especially for small-medium family farms 3. Societal - beneficial to society at large including health and nutritional benefits
15. France is one of the first industrialised nations to start to re-orient its agriculture sector towards methods that give equal weight to environmental and social goals as well as to economic ones. The 2014 French Law for the Future of Agriculture, Food and the Forest actively promotes agroecological approaches and set a target of implementing these on 200,000 French farms by 2025. It also adds agroecology to the curriculum of agricultural colleges across the country. Under the slogan “produisons autrement” (let us produce in other ways), the law looks to agroecology for solutions to current problems. In 2014, the French state employed over 200 new researchers and tutors to teach agroecology across the country as a core part of the national agricultural educational programme. The new law includes promoting crop diversity, ecological interactions and biodiversity as guiding principles for arable and horticulture production, forestry and livestock rearing. The Ministry of Agriculture itself has taken the lead on this new agroecological approach, providing support via education and research and grants for collective projects by groups of farmers. Additionally, France has a dedicated research program led by their national research institute. The policy is that environmental objectives do not need to be in conflict with economic aims and encourages farmers to join forces with other stakeholders to manage resources at a landscape level in cross-sector ‘environmental and economic interest groups’. The law also makes a fundamental change in land policy, protecting farmland from competing land uses and making it easier for young farmers to get started. <http://www.pan-uk.org/site/wp-content/uploads/Agroecology-Update-French-National-Agroecology-Programme-Sep-16.pdf>
16. **Local food Amendment-** in the clause (2) add "*and developing local supply chains to*

improve access to healthy food” The full clause would read:

(2) The Secretary of State may also give financial assistance for or in connection with the purpose of starting, or improving the productivity of, an agricultural, horticultural or forestry activity and developing local supply chains to improve access to healthy food.

17. This amendment gives recognition to the importance of access fresh local food for improved public health and a resilient domestic food supply. It could support development of local food strategies and capacity and infrastructure for local food initiatives in accordance with food strategies. This amendment would ensure that there was start up support for New Entrants to farming to bring on a new generation of active farms producing high quality, healthy food for our local communities. Improving access to healthy food is the best way the Agriculture Bill can deliver improved public health.
18. Examples are start up and improvement for both rural and peri-urban community integrated farms, local processing and marketing initiatives, local food co-operatives, regional seed networks, equipment sharing initiatives, humane abattoirs, and local supply chains, including online local food delivery systems.
19. Summary of the benefits of Local food- Strengthening short supply chains serves to protect our domestic food systems, strengthen local economies, and facilitate access to fresh, healthy, affordable food for all.
20. Local food systems also deliver benefits on a scale that extends from the local to the global; many of which align strongly with governmental policy priorities. However local food systems suffer from decades of underinvestment. There is a real need for sustained government backing for the sector. Many of the businesses involved – whether producers, processors, independent retailers or caterers – are small, with limited management and financial capacity for collaboration and sector development.
21. The role played by local farms, in boosting rural and national economies, and building economic resilience should not be underestimated. Producers gain a higher share of the retail pound, thus making smaller enterprises more profitable, while the capacity of locally-owned and operated businesses to circulate and return money spent in their operations within the local economy creates a multiplier effect. For every £1 invested in local food, £6-8 is returned to society. Over 50% of this is retained in the local economy, compared to 15-30% of the money spent in non-local enterprises(<http://www.nourishscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Local-Food-Economy-Report.pdf>) Additionally, local food systems encourage enterprise development and diversification, creating new jobs and teaching people new skills. A five-year national study on Mapping Local Food Webs estimated that 103,000 jobs (full and part-time) across England could be attributed to the local food economy, with 61,000 flowing directly from local food sales. Spending in local food outlets supports an average of one job for every £46,000 of annual turnover; compared to one job per £138,000 to £144,000 of turnover at three major national chains (<https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/2897-from-field-to-fork>).
22. With the capacity to meet up to 80% of the UK’s food demands through UK-based production, over 50% of which can be produced within 100 miles of where it will be consumed (Growing Communities Food Zones <https://www.growingcommunities.org/food-zones>), local food systems create a more resilient food supply. This bolsters the UK in the face of uncertain trade deals and volatile global prices, while reducing the deficit through

import substitution for domestic produce.

23. Agroecological farms which produce primarily for local consumption are some of the most diverse and sustainable agricultural systems. These mixed farms with multiple products require lower inputs, as well as enabling more on-farm recycling to decrease waste. When sold locally, a much higher proportion of produce is used and food waste decreases substantially, supporting governmental targets to reduce waste, increase recycling, and to create more environmentally-friendly businesses. This is in addition to the high animal welfare standards observed on local farms, as well as the increased biodiversity of both crops as well as wild species. Perhaps the most significant environmental impact, however, is in enhancing and improving environmental quality. Decreased industrialisation of local food systems results in decreased pollution of surrounding water bodies, soils, and air.
24. Reducing the cross-haulage of food amount during both import and export reduces transportation, and thereby carbon emissions, in line with commitments to the Paris Climate Change Agreement. This lessens the UK's impact on the climate, both here and internationally, but at the same time the typically biodiverse nature of these farms means that they are more likely to successfully withstand the anticipated impacts of climate change.
25. Health benefits have the potential to reduce the strain on NHS services, with the production of fresher, more nutritious, and affordable food that is directly accessible to local communities bringing agricultural policy into line with Public Health England's 2016 Tackling Obesity Strategy. In a country facing an 'epidemic of loneliness' there are also myriad benefits associated with the community aspect of local food; whether simply increased interaction with local vendors, increased community involvement with organisation of farmers markets and local events, or even the physical and mental satisfaction derived from volunteering at local farms and community supported agricultural schemes. Many people in the UK are disconnected from their food and unaware of how and where the food they eat – and its ingredients – are produced. The dominance of highly processed food in our diet contributes to our poor nutrition and the increased prevalence of diet-related illnesses.
26. The Agriculture Bill provides an opportunity for government invest at scale in local food, creating thousands of good jobs, promoting health and well-being, enhancing our food culture and reputation, and making our food system more resilient and sustainable.
27. **Supporting New Entrants via conditions on delinked payments-** part (7) *Regulations under this section may make provision for or in connection with the payment of a lump sum (at the request of a person entitled to direct payments) in lieu of any direct payments to which that person would otherwise be entitled with respect to two or more years of the agricultural transition period for England. Payment of the lump sum to be conditional upon the lump sum being used for:*
 - (a) *transitioning the farm to a farming system that delivers the purposes outlined in section 1.1 or*
 - (b) *improving the productivity of the farm or*
 - (c) *the farm land, for which the entitlements are held, being made available to rent or buy, or via a share-farming arrangement, to new entrants or a community land trust.*
28. Our union represents many new entrants to farming and land workers seeking to start enterprises on the land. The end of direct payments and the "golden parachute" option should allow farmers to pass their land on to a new generation.
29. We would like to see this transition supported by incentives for land sharing - like

encouraging farmers to host other agricultural enterprises, for example horticulture, alongside other farm activities, to set up land trusts and to take on apprentices as a form of intergenerational knowledge exchange.

30. The Landworkers' Alliance recently held a Good Food, Good Farming march on October 14, 2018 where about 600 Agroecological farmers who supply local food came to London from across the country to show their support for "More Farmers, Better Food". Lorca Hudson, a young farmer from Dorset who drove a tractor to Westminster, voiced the aspirations of the next generation of farmers:

" We need to give young farmers a chance to feed our people, a chance to farm the land , and to have a voice in the world of farming. As large corporation farming takes over the chance for young people to be able to own and farm the land in the way we know is right is rapidly disappearing. We want to be able to produce good food and to care for our land and animals to a standard that is good for everyone."

31. **Ensuring support for small farms-** The money promised for new entrants and environmental land management must materialise in a form suitable for small farms, horticulture and community agriculture. There should be no minimum claim area to ensure that active farmers are eligible for support - regardless of the size of their holding . To ensure there is no minimum claim area section 1 of the bill should specify that "*there should be no minimum claim area for financial assistance*" as point (5) of the section.
32. **County Smallholdings estates-** The Landworkers' Alliance supports the addition of an amendment regarding county smallholding, which are important for New entrants to farming to get started.

(1) Every smallholdings authority who immediately before the commencement of this Part of this Act hold any land for the purposes of smallholdings shall review the authority's smallholdings estate shall, before the end of the period of eighteen months beginning with the commencement of this Part of this Act submit to the Minister proposals with respect to the future management of that estate for the purposes of providing —

(a) opportunities for persons to be farmers on their own account;

(b) education or experience in environmental land management practices;

(c) opportunities for increasing public access to the natural environment and understanding of sustainable farming; and

(d) opportunities for innovation in sustainable land management practices.

(2) No land held by a smallholdings authority as a smallholding immediately before commencement of this Part of this Act is to be conveyed, transferred, leased or otherwise disposed of otherwise than—

(a) in connection with the purposes listed in subsection (1); and

(b) in accordance with proposals submitted under subsection (1).

(3) For the purposes of this section, "smallholdings authority" has the same meaning as in Section 38 of the Agriculture Act 1970.

Government should protect and diversify the county farm estates, by giving county farms statutory protection in the Agriculture Bill from being sold off.

33. **Ring-fenced Budget-** The end of direct payments will release money for a extensive range of new programmes. The full budget of approximately £3 billion at the end of the transition period should be ring-fenced for agriculture and spent on the transition to, and maintenance of environmentally responsible farming and land use. The money promised for new entrants and transition must materialise in a form suitable for supporting small, medium and family farms and community agriculture, or the vitality of farming activity in this country will decline- and along with it our food sovereignty.
34. **Powers should become duties-** Across the bill we can substitute “*may*” with “*shall*” in all clauses.
35. Overall, we are positive about the potential for this bill to support a new generation of farmers. The wording of the bill allows for the wide range schemes, but we also feel that it is it is too vague. The bill on it's own carries the danger of being under-financed. The Health and Harmony policy paper (Sept 14 2018) contains much more detail, but we are concerned that the key parts of the policy paper need to be carried over into the text of the bill as duties rather than powers so that there is a statutory obligation to carry out the developing support system. If the bill carries no statutory obligations, when direct payments are cut, there is the potential that the money for farming will dwindle down to peanuts. Agriculture is far to important to let that happen.

October 2018