



The Food Foundation: Parliamentary Briefing on the Agriculture Bill

Where have all the people gone?

Introduction: The Agriculture Bill was introduced to Parliament through its First Reading on 12th September 2018. Following Brexit and any transition phase - UK agriculture will be operating outside of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Therefore, as the UK prepares to leave the European Union in March 2019, this legislation will shape the agricultural system for the foreseeable future. The Bill proposes moving away from the CAP system of direct payments and towards paying public money for environmental-related public goods.

Human Health is as important as Animal Health and should be added as a Public Good to the Bill:

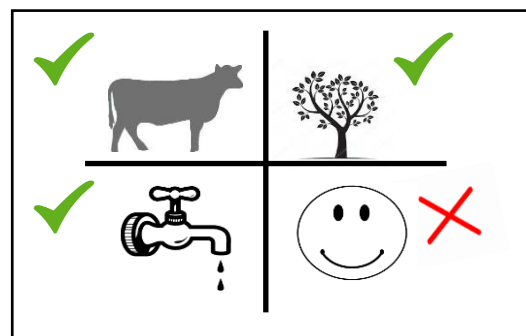
- Inclusion of Amendment: ***supporting the delivery of improved public health outcomes***
- Clarification is required from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to emphasise the importance of public health in relation to this Bill.
- Additional Clause relating to metrics to adequately assess the impact of the Agriculture Bill on the environment, animal welfare and the health and food security of citizens.

Food Foundation position

We welcome the environmental principle of the Agriculture Bill and believe that moving towards a system of public money for public goods is the right direction. Moreover, we argue here that while Agriculture Policy should be designed to support positive environmental outcomes, it is fundamentally about the production of the food we eat and should therefore also be designed to support positive human outcomes as well.

Clean air and forests are both considered public goods as they comply with two defining elements of a public good, they benefit all without exclusion (non-excludability) and do not diminish as others use them, ensuring all can enjoy them (non-rivalry).

The current Bill considers animal health and welfare as a public good; even though it is excludable and rivalrous. Animal health and wellbeing is very important, *so too is the health and wellbeing of our citizens*. And yet, our health has thus far been excluded from the bill on the grounds that it doesn't comply with a definition of a public good.



A healthy population - a public good

The consumption of nutritious food helps deliver the public good of a healthy society, thereby qualifying nutritious food as an access good. A healthy population is a public good because it brings a wider set of non-rivalrous and non-excludable benefits. These include:

a reduced burden on the tax payer: what we eat is now the second largest driver of ill health and death in the UK – second only to tobacco. The public purse is bearing the consequences of this with soaring NHS bills resulting from heart disease, diet-related cancer, stroke, obesity related diseases and a burgeoning number of people being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes) and the opportunity cost of this means reductions will benefit all in a non-rival and non-excludable manner.

increased economic productivity: resulting from less absenteeism and presenteeism; this will benefit all in a non-rival and non-excludable manner as GDP increases.

impacts on the transport system: such as the size of cars to accommodate larger people. This is both rivalrous and excludable as larger sized vehicles would limit the number of vehicles allowed on roads and larger vehicles would likely increase the cost of travel.

a more equal society; obesity has a higher incidence among disadvantaged households, and also imposes a disproportionate burden on those already disadvantaged. Reducing inequality will benefit all in a non-rival and non-excludable manner.

Amendments and Clarification:

1. Public Health Amendment to be inserted:

(1) The Secretary of State may give financial assistance for or in connection with any of the following purposes—

- (a) managing land or water in a way that protects or improves the environment;
- (b) supporting public access to and enjoyment of the countryside, farmland or woodland and better understanding of the environment;
- (c) managing land or water in a way that maintains, restores or enhances cultural heritage or natural heritage;
- (d) mitigating or adapting to climate change;
- (e) preventing, reducing or protecting from environmental hazards;
- (f) protecting or improving the health or welfare of livestock;
- (g) protecting or improving the health of plants
- (h) supporting the delivery of improved public health outcomes.^[1]***

^[1] *Support under subsection (1)(h) may include, but is not limited to, measures to:*

(a) Increase the availability, affordability, diversity, quality and marketing of fruit and vegetables

(b) reduce farm antibiotic and related veterinary product use, and antimicrobial resistance in harmful micro-organisms, through improved animal health and improved animal welfare,

(b) provide support for farmers to diversify out of domestic production of foods where there may be reduced demand due to health concerns

(d) reduce harm from use of chemicals on farms, and

(e) reduce pesticide residues in food.

2. Clarification is required from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to emphasise the importance of public health in relation to this Bill.

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs must acknowledge that the protection and improvement of human health should be a founding principle of the current Bill and should address this by emphasising the importance of farming for the production of nutritious foods which promote and protect public health.

3. Additional Clause: For the Secretary of State to publish a series of metrics to assess the impact of the new legislation on the environment and citizens.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are often conducted prior to rolling out new legislation. In order to adequately assess the impact of the Agriculture Bill on both the environment and the health of citizens, a series of metrics must be established to regularly monitor how the Bill is performing on protecting and improving the environment, animal welfare, and the health and food security of citizens.

About the Food Foundation

The Food Foundation is an independent think tank working to address challenges in the food system in the interests of the UK public. We provide clear analysis of the problems caused by the food system and the role of policy and practice in addressing these. We develop and articulate food policies that support and guide the UK public to make choices that improve their health and well-being and we inform and generate demand for new and better public and private sector policy and practice.

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