



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SUSSEX

CPRE Sussex Policy Position Statement

AGRICULTURE

Section 1

What are the problems/issues?

Traditional farming is under threat with a decline in dairy, cattle, sheep and cereals. Farmers must innovate to stay in business. Some farms have become more specialised or diversified into other areas, such as office rental, leisure based activities and farm shops. This has implications for the local countryside with increased visitors, traffic and changing farm scenery.

The decoupling of direct payments and the introduction of a Single Farm Payment (SFP) is encouraging further extensification of production with an increase in fallow land, reduced inputs and reduced grazing pressure. While CPRE Sussex welcomes the fact that many farmers have adopted environmentally sensitive farming practices alongside extensification, there is no certainty that the agri-environmental or woodland schemes will continue. Most environmental schemes are 5 – 15 years in duration and the reforms reduce the incentive for farmers to enter land into such schemes due to insufficient payment rates.

The reforms encourage under-grazing / no grazing and a decline in mixed farming. This could lead to a decline in condition of important wildlife sites, less diversity of habitat, a loss of landscape character, less landscape diversity and a switch to alternative, possibly more damaging, non-farming land uses. Farm businesses are under even more pressure to restructure and labour input will decline. This will include an increase in contract farming, and a decrease in local knowledge, skills and stewardship management practices.

Some Sussex Downs pastures are already reverting to scrub. The supply of meat from single farm units that used to graze this land is now too small to suit the international market,

most supermarkets do not tend to source food locally and local butchers are too few and far and between. Supermarkets tend to stock food from all over the world that has no local identity and no connection with the landscape.

Adaptation has come at a cost; involving the sale of land, abandonment of traditional farming methods and a loss of livestock.

Farming should be about more than simply growing crops or livestock production, it should also be about providing healthy, high quality food at a fair price and securing a beautiful, diverse and accessible countryside, whilst ensuring the future of a vibrant rural industry.

Section 2

CPRE Sussex Policy Statement

CPRE Sussex is in a unique position to help farmers have a voice. We believe in supporting farmers, as environmentally sensitive stewards of land.

Our vision is that wherever you live, you should be able to walk into a shop, supermarket or restaurant and find fresh affordable local food, sourced from the nearby countryside and that the food is produced in a way that benefits the environment and contributes to a vibrant rural economy.

Objectives

- To support local farmers to remain in farming
- To encourage environmentally sensitive farming practices.
- To support diversification projects that are respectful of the local environment and community
- To support increased grants for appropriate diversification projects.
- To encourage clearer communication about schemes and initiatives between

national government and farmers, and between farmers and their local community.

- To encourage the education of the general public on farming and farming issues.
- To support initiatives that reduce food miles and encourage self-sufficiency of food-production in the UK.
- To encourage realistic prices for farm produce.
- To support our partner organisations in pressing for greater EU and government funding security for farmers.
- To encourage local authorities to buy locally produced food for schools and canteens.
- To support “The Taste of Sussex” awards by promoting their organisation and buying their products and services.

Section 3

CPRE Branch contact

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Section 4

What can you do?

- Buy your food locally from farm-shops (e.g. www.bigbarn.co.uk), farmers markets (www.farmersmarkets.net) and locally sourced foods in supermarkets.
- Help set up a farmers market in your area. The National Association of Farmers' Markets can give you guidance.
- Encourage supermarkets to source food locally.
- Contact other local retailers, restaurateurs, office cafeterias, and schools to encourage them to source and market locally produced goods.
- Examine the food/catering purchasing policy of your local council and other major employers and encourage them to support local food distribution and marketing networks.
- Encourage your friends, families and colleagues to buy locally.
- Support businesses based in farm properties and the local rural economy.

- Try to understand and support farmers planning applications for diversification projects which are respectful of the local environment and community.
- Enjoy the countryside and all of the recreational schemes that Sussex farms have to offer.
- Go on a farm visit to learn more about farming.
- Obtain local food from “Taste of Sussex.”

Web sites

The National Farmers Union - www.nfuonline.com
Defra - www.defra.gov.uk
Big Barn - www.bigbarn.co.uk
Farmers Market - www.farmersmarkets.net
Linking Environment & Farming (LEAF) - www.leafuk.org
Sussex Food Finder - www.srcc.org.uk/projects/foodfinder.htm