

About SLE

At Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) our work helps to ensure that rural Scotland thrives. We are a membership organisation for landowners, rural businesses, and rural professionals. We promote the wide range of benefits land-based businesses provide: tourist attractions, leisure facilities and landscapes enjoyed by the public, as well as, housing, employment, tourism & enterprise, and farming opportunities.

Summary

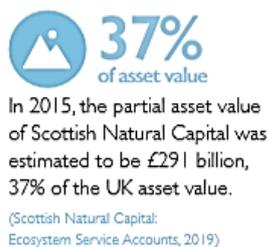
The Trade Bill is a crucial part of the UK Government's post-Brexit strategy. For food and farming it is critical that this bill doesn't result in UK producers being placed in an impossible situation where they compete in an effective race to the bottom.

This government stood on a manifesto which promised to maintain UK standards of production, which was the right thing to do and is something the industry supports. However, the issue is not with domestic production standards but the standards of production used for imports. In the UK Agriculture Bill Third Reading debate, the point was continually raised that protecting standards of both domestic production and imports was out of the scope of that bill and it would be better suited to the Trade Bill. We therefore urge MPs to protect food standards on the face of the Trade Bill.

Introduction and Context

Although many aspects of farming and land management are devolved, the UK Trade Bill will have an impact on farming across all parts of the UK. It is absolutely vital that the Trade Bill considers the views and needs of Scottish agriculture. It is important that this primary legislation is rigorously scrutinised to provide the best foundation for subsequent secondary legislation. There should not be a reliance on statutory instruments and secondary legislation to correct already known deficiencies in the primary legislation.

A long-term vision from the UK Government is absolutely key to stability and confidence in the sector. It is imperative that future policy does not prevent rural businesses from taking advantage of these opportunities. Ahead of the 2019 General Election we launched our manifesto "[Our Plan for a Thriving Rural Scotland](#)" which called for key issues such as trade and common frameworks to be addressed immediately, and for climate change to be front and centre of all policy. Our vision is to have the true value and contribution of rural land-based businesses recognised and valued both publicly and politically.



Thriving rural businesses provide wider social, economic and environmental benefits for all, as detailed in our paper "[#Route2050: A direction of travel for Scottish land management to 2050](#)", which sets out a 30-year

vision for rural Scotland. Our concern is with doing what is best for Scottish farming and rural development and in our view maintaining a functioning UK-wide agricultural system is important. SLE remains open to supporting whichever route best achieves that goal.

Protecting Standards

Having left the EU, Scottish businesses will enter an unprecedented era of change in terms of international trade. Strong and committed leadership will be fundamental to ensuring we create the right conditions for Scotland's producers to continue to thrive. We would like to see the UK Government ensure that trade in agri-food products is as free as possible with our principal markets. In the event of disrupted trade supply routes, public procurement should stipulate the use of domestic produce to enhance the potential for supply in our domestic markets.

Scotland's producers need guarantees from the UK Government that domestic production and environmental standards are upheld as part of future international trade deals. Our extremely high environmental and food safety standards are amongst our key selling points, and this must be protected after we leave the EU to ensure we do not find ourselves in a 'race to the bottom'. As a responsible nation, Scotland must ensure it does not export its farming function to other countries, particularly where environmental, animal health and food safety is not guaranteed.

Route2050: A direction of travel for Scottish land management to 2050

[#Route2050](#) sets out our priorities for future rural investment and reward. SLE is in an almost unique position, with members involved in a range of sectors including agriculture, forestry, housing, & tourism. Each of these require high standards of land management and each is reliant on the other to deliver their full potential. Agriculture is of course devolved, and we are clear that Scotland must be able to meet its policy objectives on its own terms.

Which is why the development of common frameworks that respect the devolution and Scotland's autonomy is so crucial. We believe that rural businesses will underpin increased societal and environmental wellbeing throughout Scotland and the UK along with the direct creation of jobs and the indirect increase in opportunities for product and service provisions. What seems clear is that if it is managed in an integrated way, the land can deliver more in the way of outcomes to society.

Common Frameworks

The Scottish agricultural sector has similarities and differences with every country in the United Kingdom. However, even if the detail of delivering policies is different, it will be important that there is a common policy framework across the UK. One which ensures there are no barriers to trade or broad difference in welfare standards. Any UK policy or framework has to be created with equal collaboration across all of the devolved administrations.

SLE welcomed the agreement between the UK government and devolved administrations on the principles that will underpin the creation of common frameworks. The UK Governments updated [Frameworks Analysis Document](#) clearly shows the areas and level of action required in the development of common frameworks. Frameworks will be needed across a broad range of policy activity. Of the 21 policy areas where future

legislation may be needed to implement common rules, 15 relate to agriculture, food production or the environment.

Whilst agriculture and rural development are devolved, at present Scotland does not have absolute control because the framework within which Scottish decisions are made is set by the Common Agricultural Policy at the EU level. Scotland is able to tailor implementation of the policy, not decide on its own policy. We accept this situation because the CAP provides the policy consistency across the EU that allows trade, from which we benefit. An over-arching policy framework provides a degree of consistency, for example on the level to which farmers are subsidised, so that there is a level playing field that enables open markets. We agree to cede some sovereignty in decision-making because we gain something in return: we gain the ability to trade without infringement or additional cost.

For more detailed information:

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