The Rural Affairs and Islands Committee is looking at the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill and wants to hear your views.

Q1 Do you think a framework bill is the right approach?

yes/no/don’t know – Please explain your reasons for this answer

Q2 Does the Bill provide a clear foundation for future rural policy and support?

yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons

Purpose and objectives

Section 1 sets out ‘overarching objectives’ of agriculture policy. They are—

- the adoption and use of sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices,
- the production of high-quality food,
- the facilitation of on-farm nature restoration, climate mitigation and adaptation, and
- enabling rural communities to thrive.

Q3 Do you think these are the right objectives?

yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons; if you have answered ‘no’, please set out what other objectives should be set out in the Bill.

Section 2 provides that Scottish Ministers must prepare a five-year ‘Rural Support Plan’ and Section 3 provides that certain matters must be considered when preparing or amending a rural support plan. These matters include—

- The objectives set out in Section 1
- Proposals and policies in the climate change plan which relate to agriculture, forestry and rural land use,
- Any other statutory duty relating to agriculture or the environment, and
- Development of EU law and policy.

Q4 Do you think the requirement that Scottish Ministers must prepare a five-year rural support plan is the right approach?

yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons

Q5 Do you agree with the matters to be considered when preparing or amending a rural support plan, as set out in section 3?

yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons; if you have answered ‘no’, please set out what other matters you think should be considered by the Scottish Ministers when preparing or amending a rural support plan
Key provisions

Part 2 confers powers on Scottish ministers to, among other things—

- Provide support for the purposes described in Schedule 1 (and by regulations add, amend, or remove purposes in Schedule 1),
- Make regulations regarding any guidance that is produced in relation to support,
- Make regulations to place an upper limit (or ‘cap’) on support and assistance,
- Provide support under exceptional market conditions,
- Make regulations about support, including how the amount of support is to be determined, conditions that may be imposed, enforcement, monitoring and administration, eligibility criteria, and payment entitlements.

Q6  Are the powers in Part 2 sufficient to provide for a new rural support programme?

**yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons**

Q7  Do you agree with the purposes as set out in Schedule 1?

**yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons; if you have answered ‘no’, please set out what purposes you think should be set out in Schedule 1**

Q8  Do you have any other comments on the provisions in Part 2?

Part 3 confers powers to modify existing legislation relating to support. The policy memorandum states that there should be a “smooth transition” from the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) rules to the future support schemes and, to achieve this, the Scottish Ministers need “suitable powers” to modify current CAP rules, including making more extensive changes and repealing them when the time is right.

Part 3 enables the Scottish Ministers to, among other things—

- Simplify, improve or update relevant retained EU law relating to the Common Agricultural Policy,
- Continue or end the operation of that legislation,
- Modify the financial provisions in that legislation,

Q9  Do you agree with the Scottish ministers’ powers in Part 3 relating to retained EU law?

**yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons**

Section 26 provides that Scottish Ministers must prepare and publish a ‘Code of Practice on Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture’. There is no deadline for producing this. Regulations made under Section 7 (on guidance) may require this
Code of Practice (or any other guidance about support) to be laid before the Scottish Parliament, require certain people to follow or pay attention to the guidance, or specify that following the guidance is important to ensure that a person has met a statutory duty or condition of support.

Q10 Do you agree with the provisions on a Code of Practice on Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture?

   yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons

Q11 Do you agree with the power – set out in section 7 – for the Scottish Ministers to make regulations about the guidance contained in a Code of Practice on Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture?

   yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons

Section 27 of the Bill gives Scottish Ministers the power to make regulations about continuing professional development for certain people or professions. ‘Continuing professional development’ typically means things like attending a training course or otherwise developing knowledge and understanding within a sector. The policy memorandum states the policy objective of this power is to “support delivery of knowledge, innovation, education and training in agriculture and land use or related sectors”.

Q12 Do you agree with the provisions around continuing professional development?

   yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons

Q13 Is there anything missing from the Bill that you expected or wanted to see? You may wish to consider issues discussed in the Agriculture Bill consultation which are not explicitly referenced in the Bill.

Q14 Is this Bill an appropriate replacement for the EU’s CAP regime in Scotland?

   yes/no/don’t know – explain your reasons

Q15 Are there any issues arising from the interaction of this Bill with other UK and Scottish legislation?

Q16 Please use the text box below to set out any further comments you wish to make about the Bill.