

Green MEP launches post-Brexit agriculture reports and calls for 'green tape' as Leadsom attacks 'red tape'



21 February 2017

Green MEP Molly Scott Cato, a member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, has launched [two reports](#) on ideas for the future of farming post-Brexit. The launch comes on the day the [National Union of Farmers begin their annual conference](#) in Birmingham, where Defra Secretary, Andrea Leadsom, again [attacked the EU](#) for 'tying farmers up in red tape'. She also called for a system based on simpler, more effective rules, where farmers will be 'free to grow more, sell more and export more.'

However, Ms Leadsom offered farmers [no clear plan on farming post-Brexit](#) and Dr Scott Cato says that [questions to the government](#) reveal they lack ideas on the future of farming after the UK leaves the EU.

The two reports – one by the [Soil Association](#); the other by Simon Fairlie of the [Land Workers' Alliance](#) – foresee a future where policies put soil health and biodiversity first, and where the way we use land helps tackle climate change. They say that to achieve this, farmers will need to receive at least as much money as they currently get through the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). Molly Scott Cato said:

"Like Ms Leadsom, I don't want farmers tied up in red tape, but we do need to bind ourselves in some green tape. We need to ensure land management protects and improves our soils, encourages biodiversity, and helps tackle climate change. The reports I have launched today contain a wealth of ideas on how we can achieve this.

"They also call for direct payments based on land area to be scrapped; instead future payments would be based on paying farmers for the public benefits they provide and for protecting the environment.

"With the government planning to remove us from the single market where around 65% of total UK agricultural exports are sold, platitudes about growing more, selling more and exporting more will ring hollow for most farmers.

"These reports show how to move UK agriculture away from a dependence on export markets and towards creating thriving rural communities by supporting family farms and relocating food production. Brexit could be a unique opportunity to move towards an ecologically and economically sustainable farming system, but the government seems determined to move us in the wrong

direction.”

Dr Tom MacMillan, Director of Innovation at the Soil Association, said:

“We’re hearing a fair bit of consensus from farming, nature and public interest groups on the big principles for agricultural policy after we leave the CAP – that the public expect high standards on animal welfare, for example, and that public money should pay for public benefits. What’s missing are practical and inspiring ideas that seize the chance to make a better fist of it, and face up to monumental challenges like climate change. So we’ve tried to set out a few game-changing ideas in our report”.

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[Green Party: Government must stop pushing costs of social care onto councils and residents](#)



20 February 2017

The Green Party has called on the Government to up spending on councils after it was revealed local services will still face deep cuts despite nearly every local authority in England planning to raise council taxes [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“The Government’s failure to invest in councils has put many in a desperate situation, with no choice but to cut valuable community resources like libraries and youth centres. The Government appears intent on starving local services and bringing almost every local authority close to financial breaking point.

“Proper social care for the elderly should be a red line. It should be non-negotiable and centrally funded. Government needs to take responsibility and invest in councils, rather than pushing costs onto residents and creating a postcode lottery of care. Instead of bringing the social care system to its knees, the Government should be facing up to the simple fact that if we want good social care we need to pay for it. The Green Party is the only party proposing that we make the right choice to invest in a secure future for our older people with free social care for the over 65s. ”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38982643>

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[Greens denounce Ministers' pandering to industry lobbyists on plastic pollution](#)



18 February 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: 'These latest revelations expose the Government's shameful decision to kowtow to industry lobbyists and roll back important recycling progress.'

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has issued a stinging criticism of government Ministers as documents reveal the [influence of plastics industry lobbying](#) on the decision to cut UK recycling targets. The revelations come as the latest 'Great Winter Nurdle Hunt' uncovers [widespread plastic pollution](#) on Britain's beaches.

The UK government quietly reduced recycling targets for plastic waste last year, after dozens of lobby groups and plastic producers pushed for lower rates, according to documents obtained by Energydesk.

Energydesk obtained 62 of the 63 responses to a government consultation on recycling targets.

The majority of respondents to the consultation were plastic producers or industry groups. Of those, all pushed for a reduction in the targets.

Keith, a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, said:

"Plastic pollution is choking our oceans and our beaches, but the documents obtained this week demonstrate the UK Government appears more concerned with protecting the profit margins of multinational corporations and industry lobbyists than safeguarding Britain's natural environment."

"It is extremely concerning that almost three-quarters of UK beaches are blighted by the raw materials of the plastic industry. These plastic pellets

pose a significant threat to our precious wildlife and damage the health of our oceans and seas.”

“These latest revelations expose the Government’s shameful decision to kowtow to industry lobbyists and roll back important recycling progress. Far from being a party working for the many, the Conservatives prove, once again, they are the party of powerful and privileged vested interests.”

“We cannot let the Government use the EU referendum as an excuse further water down essential recycling targets. The [EU Circular Economy Package](#) sets an ambitious and common EU-wide target for recycling 75% of packaging waste by 2030. Ministers must make a firm commitment to maintaining and implementing these ambitious targets post-Brexit.”

“Plastic pollution does not respect borders nor national sovereignty. For the sake of the health of our oceans and our beaches, to protect our precious environment and our beloved wildlife, Theresa May must also commit to maintaining a close relationship with our European neighbours to combat the problem.”

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[Green Party condemns UKIP proposal to spend foreign aid cash on NHS](#)



17 February 2017

***Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader: “There’s nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need”**

The Green Party has responded to UKIP leader Paul Nuttall’s plan to divert foreign aid spending to the NHS, which he raised during a speech at UKIP’s spring conference in Bolton.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“There’s no denying the NHS is in crisis but snatching money away from poorer countries is not the answer. There’s nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need.

“Nuttall is trying to pretend this is a silver bullet solution but we need to be honest – there’s a simple way to ease the pressure on our overburdened NHS

and that's to make the richest pay more tax. Our foreign aid spending is crucial to help stamp out inequalities around the world. A solution that simply creates another problem elsewhere is no solution at all."

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[Green Party: List of employers named and shamed for underpaying workers is just the tip of the iceberg](#)



16 February 2017

The Green Party is appalled by the revelation 360 employers underpaid thousands of workers almost £1 million [1] but believes it is just the tip of the iceberg as the Government process for naming and shaming employers is extremely flawed [2].

The current system means that large, profitable companies are only being named and paying penalties for a small part of all the arrears identified by HMRC [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Employers must be held to account if they fail to pay their workers properly. It might seem like an insignificant amount of money to the businesses but to the individual workers who need it to pay their rent or buy food it has a huge impact. In this age of insecurity everyone deserves to be able to make a living to support themselves and their families.

"It's absolutely right these employers are being named and shamed but the Government needs to make sure this is not the only action it takes to prevent the exploitation of workers. There is still a lack of transparency in the process as errors that are self-corrected by businesses are not included in the list. It means most of the back payments remain a secret and the public might never find out the true scale of the problem.

"The Green Party believes the introduction of a minimum wage of £10 by 2020 is a necessary step towards tackling inequality and poverty and we have long campaigned for the minimum wage to be raised to the living wage level."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38979368>
2. <https://www.carolinelucas.com/latest/minimum-wage-enforcement-ministers-making-a-mockery-of-%E2%80%98naming-shaming%E2%80%99-scheme>
3. For example, if two workers owed £500 each bring a complaint, HMRC will investigate and decide the employer owes total of £1,000. The employer will be named and shamed for that amount and pay a penalty of £2,000. However, if the employer reveals it actually has 200 workers in the same position and HMRC agrees, HMRC will allow the employer to self-correct in those 200 cases. But the employer does not get named and shamed for this £100,000 error and no penalty is imposed – because the employer self-corrected.

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