

## NFU sets out ELMs proposals after industry raises concerns about Defra plans

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The NFU has set out proposals for how the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme should work, after industry raised concerns about Defra's 'lacklustre' plans.

Together with the TFA, CLA, LEAF and the Sustainable Food Trust, the union has been working on making ELMs Tier 1 as attractive as possible to farmers.

The group's plans would deliver a number of key outcomes, including soil quality, improved habitat and wildlife, efficient water use and flow, air quality, protection of culture, greater public access, lower emissions and better animal health and welfare.

As well as delivering environmental outcomes, the points-based scheme would also boost management capabilities, with farmers rewarded for devising plans and setting targets, measuring performance and sharing insights on best practice, with the aim of improving productivity.

This 'Sustainable Food and Farming Scheme' (SFFS) would be voluntary, and would offer farmers a menu of measures in line with their skills, environmental ambitions, farm business strategy and the features present on farm.

Speaking at a Westminster Food and Nutrition Forum event last week (September 17), Rohit Kaushish, chief economics adviser at the NFU, said: "The core of the scheme is based around optimising resource use efficiency.

"This is about looking at how farm systems as a whole can become more efficient in the way they utilise resources and finding ways to improve land management.

### **Investments**

"Some of the measures within these two themes could include capital investments in water infrastructure and precision application technology, and alongside that, land management measures such as cover crops and buffer strips."

The plans also provide an opportunity for farmers to earn a 'multiplier payment' if they choose measures which complement each other.

The idea is to create a whole farm strategic approach.

### **Recognition**

Mr Kaushish said: "If a farmer wants a soil management plan, adopts soil testing, appropriate rotation practices and measures to avoid soil compaction, and also engages in peer-to-peer learning, there will be some recognition of the fact that the individual measures packaged together will deliver more in terms of environmental outcomes."

A similar 'synergy multiplier' would be applied to boost productivity grants, where farmers adopting a package of complementary measures around, for example, water management, would be able to access increased match funding for investment.

A White Paper containing the full plans is to be released later this autumn.

**Article written by Abi Kay, Chief Reporter, Farmers Guardian**