



# The Manifesto for **High Nature Value (HNV) Farming** in the UK

**Raising a Voice for High Nature Value Farmers**

**([www.hightnaturevaluefarming.org.uk](http://www.hightnaturevaluefarming.org.uk))**

Across the UK, many thousands of farmers and crofters choose to value nature as an integral part of their farm businesses. Through sensitive, low – intensity management these farmers manage valued habitats such as moorland, wildlife rich grasslands, hay meadows, traditional orchards and salt marshes, sometimes as common land. These ‘High Nature Value’ (HNV) farmers take pride in producing high quality food and breeding livestock for other parts of the farming industry, whilst sustaining threatened wildlife and some of our most important cultural landscapes.



Many of these farms also provide wider public benefits such as carbon storage, clean water, soil conservation and flood alleviation, as well as maintaining a quality environment which underpins rural tourism and supports rural economies and communities. But these ‘non-market’ outputs are rarely properly rewarded, and many HNV farmers struggle to make a living from their land.

HNV farmers deserve our respect. Many of them have carried on in spite of low incomes year after year, putting in long working hours under tough conditions with little recognition of what they contribute to society and the environment. Most do receive a degree of public support, via the funding schemes of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) though this support may not be enough to maintain commercial viability<sup>(1)</sup>.

Current public policy does not fully reflect the wider cultural and economic contribution that these farms make to rural communities<sup>(2)</sup> and can fail to target the most vulnerable farming areas, often those associated with HNV practices. For example, it has been estimated that HNV farming in Scotland helps maintain landscapes which attract £1.4 bn of tourism revenue<sup>(3)</sup>. However, the current Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) in Scotland results in higher overall levels of financial support going to the least disadvantaged areas.



***“As farmers we must protect and enhance the environment. Farming must be sustainable, but we need to make a living.”***  
***(Farmer from Exmoor)***

We need to ensure long term sustainable solutions are found for the farmers who work in these challenging areas. If we are serious about halting the decline of wildlife, then UK Governments must show more leadership in identifying and supporting HNV farming. But as this manifesto highlights, we all have a role to play. We need to act now to support these farmers as the loss of HNV farming is not easily reversed.

1) Swales and Moxey, 2008 Targeting CAP support at HNV farming and crofting systems.

2) O' Rourke and Kramm, 2012 High Nature Value (HNV) Farming & The Management of Upland Diversity. A Review European Countryside, 2, p.116-133.

3) SHN, 2010 Assessing the economic impact of nature based tourism in Scotland

# IT'S TIME TO ACT NOW

**Governments must do more to recognise and support HNV farming in the UK:**

- Through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) ensure that HNV farmers are properly rewarded for supporting our most precious wildlife and landscapes, eg prioritise spending for this in Rural Development Programmes across the UK.
- Continue to fund programmes such as LIFE+ and INTERREG that support community-led initiatives delivering appropriate processing, marketing, and certification of locally grown products, along with sustainable tourism and business support which all create enabling business conditions for HNV farming.
- Make progress in identifying, maintaining and monitoring HNV systems – this is a priority of the European Commission and a requirement for all Member States. The Scottish Government has already made good progress in developing a HNV farming indicator; England, Wales and Northern Ireland must now follow suit and make this a policy priority, ensuring farmers are engaged in the process.
- Invest in research on HNV farming systems across the UK, including assessing the broad benefits they provide for society. The so-called ‘sustainable intensification’ approach to farming fails to recognise the important environmental, cultural and economic benefits that these more extensive farming systems can provide.
- More support from Local Government through a range of initiatives such as Local Nature Partnerships.

***“If Agri-Environment Schemes did not exist I would pack-up farming and the land would be either bought up and intensified or abandoned.”***

***(Farmer from Northern Ireland)***

## **HNV farmers and crofters should organise and develop their voice:**

- Farmers and crofters themselves are the most powerful advocates for HNV farming and can do much more to adopt and promote the concept.
- They can champion the high quality agricultural products they produce and help make the connection between low intensity farming, the natural environment and sustainable food production.



- HNV farmers and crofters have a wealth of know how and skills to contribute to knowledge exchanges and information sharing on HNV farming.

***“It’s sad to see the loss of shepherding skills - there is nothing better than getting out on the hills every morning with my dogs.”***  
***(Farmer from Wales)***

***"The 40-50 acre farms have gone, without better support the 200 acre farms will be the next to go. To ensure the next generation stay in farming we must make farming a viable option for them." (Farmer from Bowland)***



## **Farming bodies need to take more notice of HNV farmers so they are better represented in decision making:**

- National organisations representing general farmer interests should make more effort to increase their support for HNV farming systems and the range of benefits they provide to rural communities and enterprise.
- Existing farming bodies which support HNV farmers should continue working with Government, its agencies and environmental organisations to make the case for HNV farmers.
- Industry-led sector development (such as levy boards/research bodies) must recognise and promote the value of the products - both agricultural and environmental - of HNV farming, and support with relevant research and development.



***"My ties are on the machair, it's where I've always worked. It's the way that I've been brought up, I've known nothing else...when you're lifting tats and you're away in a wee world of your own it's like another place: another planet...It's incentive to keep going, it gets you going: all that fresh air."***  
**(Farmer from Outer Hebrides)**

**Place-based organisations and initiatives can make HNV farming integral to growth & development in rural areas:**

- Economic development bodies and other rural leaders can help provide funding support for job creation and development in areas where high quality food production, precious landscapes, recreation and wildlife come together.
- Explore market-based systems of support through piloting and implementing a framework for payments for ecosystem services.
- Landscape partnerships in protected areas must continue to connect and encourage the range of interests that can help HNV farming flourish.
- Key players in the 'supply chain' such as meat processors and retailers should find ways to differentiate, add value to and promote food from HNV farms.



**Citizens can actively support HNV farming, especially through their decisions as consumers:**

- Locals and visitors can actively support HNV farms by purchasing the food and other goods they produce. The products of HNV farms may not be clearly differentiated, so consumers may have to seek out these environmentally friendly products by connecting directly with farmers or farmers groups through on-line outlets, farm shops or markets, asking retailers questions about product origin.



***"Ten years ago, we would never have envisaged us opening a farm shop and diversifying into other non-farming activities. It is hard work but we pride ourselves on providing good quality local meat." (Farmer from Devon)***

- Tell local elected representatives that taxpayers' money should be spent wisely, by rewarding those farmers who deliver most for society as a whole.

## **Environmental organisations need to rally behind HNV farmers:**

- Environmental groups can build momentum around HNV farming and make the case for better support for these farming systems.
- To celebrate their contribution, the nature Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) must work harder to create links with HNV farmers, to understand their business and nature of their whole farming system.
- Environmental NGOs need to work harder with their supporter base to raise the profile of HNV farming.
- NGOs must continue to work at a landscape scale to develop an integrated approach to sustainable land management through partnerships such as Living Landscapes, Futurescapes and High Peak Moors.

***“We have lost corncrake from Northern Ireland -  
we can't let the curlew suffer the same fate”***  
***(Farmer from Northern Ireland)***



**“I enjoy seeing the choughs every day when I’m out checking my cattle. Our extensive grazing along the Cornish coast has encouraged the chough’s return. I would miss them if they weren’t there.” (Farmer from west Cornwall)**



We all need to work together to secure long term economic viability for these fragile farming systems to ensure these HNV farmers and crofters are unable to continue farming and feel that they have a sense of purpose and are valued for their contribution to society.

## This Manifesto is supported by the following organisations:



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