Pay farmers to boost soil says Gov report

By Olivia Midgley

DEFRA could be forced to make a U-turn on its decision not to pay farmers to improve soil health as part of a new payment for public goods model.

A report by the Government’s own Natural Capital Committee published this week said any future environmental land management scheme should incentivise farmers to help reverse soil degradation which is costing the UK £3.21 billion each year.

The report said: “The protection and enhancement of soil quantity, quality and health should be incorporated into any future environmental land management scheme [ELMS] to encourage beneficial practices. “These include those which reduce climate change, increase biodiversity, avoid soil erosion and increase water holding capacity.”

Rejected

Last month, Farmers Guardian learned an application proposed by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust for an ELMS trial going further and making a more specific commitment by designating soil as one of the headline indicators in the 25-year Environmental land management Plan and soil should be listed as a public good in the forthcoming Agriculture Bill.”

NFU calls on Government to increase action on mental health

INDUSTRY leaders are pushing the need for greater NHS resource in rural areas to help those struggling with their mental health.

NFU vice-president Stuart Roberts told attendees at the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution annual general meeting this week that dealing with issues such as Brexit and the impact of climate change could affect farmers’ mental well-being.

He said: “We need to see Government providing more medical resource in rural communities to ensure farmers can get the help they need and deserve. “The industry must also remember that with all the changes and challenges coming our way, there also comes opportunity, not only to become a world leader in food production or to be at the forefront of environmental and climate action, but to build a farming sector which is underpinned by support, compassion and resilience.”

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