

Already part of the solution



National Sheep Association

Sheep deliver for environment, economy, society

Sustainable UK sheep farming

- Results in multifunctional outcomes to meet environmental, economic and social goals.
- Offers a solution to global warming and aids nature recovery and the wellbeing of people.
- Supports the nutrient cycle and protects valuable carbon stores.
- Maintains diverse genetics, cherished landscapes and rural communities and traditions.

Accurate consideration is needed to acknowledge what sheep farming already does, what else it can provide and what would be lost if the wrong policies are pursued.

Grasslands are truly multifunctional

Grasslands are as valuable for carbon, nature, access, health, well-being and aesthetic pleasure as any other form of land use, and more reliable and resilient than many.

Pasture grasses take CO² from the atmosphere and sequester it in soil, roots and foliage. Two-thirds of terrestrial carbon in British landscapes is in soils in the form of organic matter and soil life.

Permanent pasture and unimproved grassland is the most reliable way to deliver environmental gains and food production from land unsuitable for cultivation.

Arable soils also benefit from grass in the rotation and grazing sheep help to improve soil health and recycle nutrients.

Wool grows naturally on sheep and is a highly stable carbon store. Wool is biodegradable, fire resistant and a sustainable alternative to manmade fibres.

Grass-fed lamb and mutton is delicious, healthy and nutritious.

**Sybil MacPherson,
Dalmally, Argyll**



“Lamb reared sustainably on our farm utilises vegetation from land unsuitable for cultivation and has many desirable outcomes. Native sheep breeds forage and utilise convert quality grazing and enhance all environmental aspects.”



Working together to reduce emissions

Methane is the main greenhouse gas emitted by ruminants. Unlike carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, it only remains in the atmosphere for around 15 years, meaning concentrations do not build.

Efficiency gains and reduction in fertiliser use have already cut the carbon footprint of sheep farming.

Crosby Cleland, Ballynahinch, County Down



“Only rams with proven genetics are used on our farm and we utilise technology to carefully monitor stock performance and to ensure they are efficient. Data helps us track our environmental impact and productivity.”

Further efficiency gains and carbon sequestration means sheep farming can help us reach net zero targets.



Farming sheep in synergy with nature

Many birds, insects and small mammals thrive in the mosaic of habitats provided by sheep grazing.

Landscapes managed by grazing sheep support a rich diversity of wildlife, while producing food and fibre.

Integrating more trees into farmland will further develop this, without losing productive land to mass forestry.

**John Pawsey,
Bury St Edmunds,
Suffolk**



“Our diverse leys have improved soil health, while flowering legumes are great for pollinators and ground nesting birds. We have so much diverse insect and bird life and take great pride in the knowledge our holistic, low-input system is carbon negative.”



Sustainability is about more than just carbon

Sheep farming is the backbone of many rural communities, providing employment and supporting rural economies.

Without sheep farming, many of these communities, culture and tradition would disappear, as would local services and small businesses.

Sheep are central to landscape management, providing public access and supporting tourism. Sensitive grazing enhances plant diversity and prevents wildfires.

Grass-fed lamb and mutton is lower in total fat and has ideal levels of omega-3 and omega-6 essential acids, plus vitamin B12, zinc and iron. And it tastes fantastic!

The UK has a unique and rich diversity of sheep genetics with more native breeds than anywhere else in the world. Diversity is recognised as a key ingredient of life.

**Caryl Hughes,
Llanarmon
Dyffryn Ceiriog,
Clywd**



“If sheep farming ceased to exist, community spirit and traditions would be lost. It is the backbone of the community and works in harmony with the environment.”



Make the right decisions for the future

The National Sheep Association provides a voice for UK sheep farming.

NSA wishes to engage with everyone involved in the climate debate, to ensure the right decisions are made to ensure a holistic approach to sustainability.

Will Rawling, Ennerdale, Cumbria



"Grazing sheep is part of the solution to climate change and can assist with flood mitigation and enhance nature – an ambition of every farmer I know. We have done it for years. We are part of nature. We cannot ignore it or work against it, because natural processes will prevail."



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