

The Welsh Way:

Towards Global Leadership in Sustainable Lamb and Beef Production

Wales is a global exemplar...

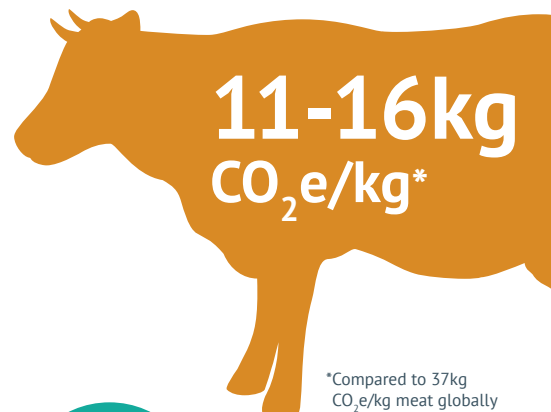
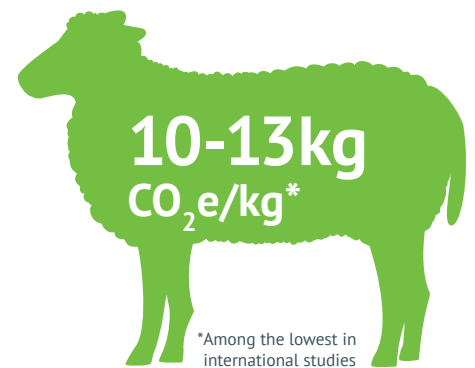
In Wales, beef and lamb is raised overwhelmingly through non-intensive farming which relies on abundant grass and rainfall rather than energy-intensive imported feed – making Wales one of the most sustainable places on Earth to produce red meat.

- Thanks to sustainable methods, cattle and sheep farming in Wales emit fewer greenhouse gases than in many other parts of the world.
- It uses non-intensive farming techniques, grass and rainwater to rear animals in pasture-based farming systems which place vastly less pressure on natural resources.
- Soils represent a hugely important store of carbon. Given that the overwhelming proportion of land in Wales is managed for agricultural purposes, this puts the sector in a really important position: soils could be a notable sink of carbon, depending how they're managed.
- Welsh farming is already making a positive contribution. For example, there's been an increase in the number of farms in Wales generating renewable energy.

...and there's more we can do

- Optimising animal health and welfare is one of the simplest and most effective ways to maximising the efficiency and the outputs from Welsh flocks and herds, while correct and targeted nutrition can help ensure there is less waste and less associated emissions.
- Effective breeding can also bring environmental benefits, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by improving both growth rates and feed conversion efficiency.
- When a range of on-farm measures are combined, Welsh farms could potentially deliver an emissions reduction of 20.4% for the sheep sector and 11.6% for the beef sector. This would see Welsh agriculture emissions reduce by around 7.5%, whilst the total volume of prime lamb and prime beef output would remain constant.

Red meat farmed in Wales is already significantly more sustainable than the global average



Number of farms in Wales generating renewable energy has increased to 18%



Two things you might not know about Welsh farming

1. Welsh farms create and protect habitats, ensuring biodiversity and promoting good soil health

- Livestock grazing in Wales has played a significant role in creating wildlife habitats and the continuation of these grazing practices is essential for their ongoing management.
- Ecosystems require variation in the structure and composition of the vegetation in order to complete their life cycles successfully – farming provides this.
- Research has shown that the grassland soils in the UK have a similar soil organic carbon to clay ratio as forestry land in good soil health.

Animal manures and grasslands are the best approach to return carbon and therefore health to soil.

Rothamsted research



UK grasslands sequester around 240 kg of carbon per hectare per year. In Wales that means around 318 million kg of carbon is taken out of the atmosphere every year thanks to Welsh farming.

Based on 1.326m hectares – Welsh Government figure



2. Welsh farms already play a huge role in carbon capture

- Agriculture and land management can offset carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere through sequestration, removing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it in soil, wooded landscapes and semi-natural habitats, primarily through photosynthesis.
- For grasslands which may have reached equilibrium, grazing management will play a vital role in maintaining these carbon stocks as the main terrestrial carbon store.
- Some farms in Wales may already be carbon neutral through activities such as production of renewable energy and carbon sequestration.
- Changing permanent grass to forestry can have a negative impact in the short term, releasing around 2.25 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per hectare per year from the soil. Instead we should be strategically increasing woodland cover by integrating within existing farms systems.

What does all this mean for me?

- UK consumers can keep eating red meat: our average consumption is comparable to that advised by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (70g of red meat per day).
- Red meat also provides key nutrients as part of a balanced diet, including vitamins A and B2, calcium, iodine, iron, magnesium, potassium and zinc. UK figures show that young women in particular don't consume enough of these.
- We shouldn't just 'offshore' our emissions: supporting livestock production in Wales and GB avoids consumer demand for red meat being met by additional imports, which would drive up global emissions by sourcing from countries with less sustainable farming practices.
- Buying Welsh Beef and Welsh Lamb means supporting world-leading sustainable sheep and beef farming.

Buying Welsh Beef and Lamb means supporting over 223,100 jobs and Wales' biggest employer – the food and drink supply chain – worth over £6 billion to the Welsh economy.



The climate crisis we face is urgent in nature and global in scale – and there is no doubt that some intensive farming systems are part of the problem.

The answer is not to stop eating red meat but to choose meat which has been produced more sustainably.