

Grassland science and innovation

The key to a Greener Brexit

- Context

Cledwyn Thomas, Elaine Jewkes, Liam
Sinclair



UK grasslands

Total UK agricultural area is 17.5 million Ha

Grasslands comprise 12.4 million Ha (71% of total)

Of this

- 10% Temporary Grassland (<5yrs)
- 80% Permanent Grassland, of which
 - 60% is Grassland over 5 yrs and
 - 40% Single owner Rough Grazings
- 10% Common Rough Grazings

(DEFRA Farming Statistics, 2017)

Wide range of species composition

- Temporary grasslands- intensive single species
- Species rich meadows
- Permanent grasslands
- Rough grazings – semi natural

Livestock Production

Grasslands support production from

- 10 million Cattle
- 35 million Sheep
- 2 million Dairy Cows

Grassland farms



- produce 36% of UK agricultural output amounting to £8 billion,
- have the greatest number of holdings and employ the largest number involved in agriculture (e.g. 31% of agricultural workforce in England).
- but have a high reliance on subsidy (over 90% of income from Direct Payments in non dairy)
- even so 66% of grazing LFA farms and 75% of lowland grazing had profits less than £25k per annum
- wide range in performance (ratio >2 between top and bottom 25%)

Multifunctional Grasslands

Grasslands have high potential to deliver public goods

- Reduce pollution
- Mitigate GHG
- Improve soils
- Support landscapes
- Create habitats for plants and wildlife
- Deliver amenity value

Multifunctional grasslands

They have potential through

- better targeted support,
- new technology and innovative practices
- Better integration of grassland research and extension

To deliver

- a successful rural economy
- a healthy natural environment,
- improved productivity