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CPRE's Policy on Farming – Glossary

This glossary provides an explanation of key terms in the main Farming Policy Position Paper and the accompanying guidance paper.

For * items below see also helpful definitions provided in [Environment glossary - The Royal Countryside Fund](#)

***agroecology / agroecological farming** - according to the United Nations FAO: 'Agroecology is based on applying ecological concepts and principles to optimize interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system.' See <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/en/>

***agroforestry** - the intentional bringing together of arable crops or pasture with trees that are harvested for timber, fuel and fruit to harness the benefits of farming and forestry and the synergies between them. It can include forest farming (crops in layers under the tree canopy), tree belts as windbreaks or to stabilise riverbanks, silvopastoral (trees in a grazing system or pasture added to forest) and silvoarable (combining arable/horticultural crops with trees).

***biodiversity** - biodiversity, short for biological diversity, means 'the diversity of life in all its forms'. This is often taken to mean the diversity of species of organisms inhabiting the earth, a place or given area. It can include other dimensions including 'the genes these organisms contain and the functional characteristics of the ecosystems in which they live.' See [The Economics of Biodiversity The Dasgupta Review: Abridged Version 2021 p14 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

biodynamic farming - is 'a holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming, gardening, food, and nutrition' ; its origins are [Dr. Rudolf Steiner's](#) 1924 lectures to farmers which combined scientific understanding with 'a recognition of spirit in nature'. The approach applies a series of principles which includes: understanding the farm as an organic entity; supporting biodiversity; the integration of plants, animals and soils and driving on-farm fertility; and using composts and plant sprays to boost animal and plant health. See [Biodynamic Principles and Practices | Biodynamic Association \(biodynamics.com\)](#)

***carbon credits** – a market-based mechanism which enables those who cannot reduce their own emissions to purchase credits from those who can and do to contribute overall to reducing greenhouse gas emissions; credits need to be allocated to activities that can be measured and verified by an independent third party; typically they relate to energy efficiency measures or storing carbon in natural sinks such as trees or peatland soils. See [What are carbon credits and how can they help fight climate change? | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#)

carbon footprint - a measure of how much the activities of a person or body contribute in greenhouse gas emission expressed as a carbon dioxide equivalent; other greenhouse gases are usually included (such as methane or nitrous oxide) as well as both direct emissions from the activity

and from the energy and materials needed as well. See [Carbon footprint | Definition, Examples, Calculation, Effects, & Facts | Britannica](#)

***carbon neutral / carbon negative** – ‘A person, company or country is carbon neutral if they balance the carbon dioxide they release into the atmosphere through their everyday activities with the amount they absorb or remove from the atmosphere. This is also called net zero carbon emissions or net zero carbon, because overall no carbon dioxide is added to the atmosphere’. By extension an activity or entity which is carbon negative is storing or removing more carbon from the atmosphere than they are emitting. See [What does carbon neutral mean and what is net zero? | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#);

community enterprise – is a business run primarily to benefit the community rather than private shareholders; its assets may be owned, managed and controlled by the community itself and, though it may make profits, these are usually reinvested for wider community benefit.

ecosystem - is an area within which a community of organisms – plants, animals and other organisms – interact with each other and with physical ‘abiotic’ elements (such as rocks, weather) elements in the environment; an ecosystem can be as large as defined habitats or small such as a tidal pool. See [Ecosystem \(nationalgeographic.org\)](#)

***ecosystem services** – ‘functions and products from nature that can be turned into benefits with varying degrees of human input’. These are usually split into the following types: regulating and maintaining services (such as flood control, pollination, waste processing and climate regulation), provisioning – supplying goods and products such as food, fibre, timber and medicines – and cultural services including recreation and recuperation, pleasure and inspiration. See [Natural capital committee. How to do it – a natural capital workbook April 2017 pp10-12, 30](#); [The Economics of Biodiversity The Dasgupta Review: Abridged Version 2021 p16 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

environmental land management – since Brexit the Government has replaced the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy with Environmental Land Management schemes or ELM; these will ‘pay farmers and land managers to provide environmental goods and services alongside food production’; currently the 3 ELM schemes are the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) - to pay for ‘standard, universal actions at scale across the farmed landscape’; Countryside Stewardship - to ‘pay for more locally-targeted actions relating to specific habitats and features’ and Landscape Recovery – for landscape scale habitat restoration and land use change. See [Environmental Land Management \(ELM\) update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#); [Landscape Recovery: round one - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

environmental limit - an environmental limit is usually interpreted as the point or range of conditions beyond which there is a significant risk of abrupt irreversible - or difficult to reverse - changes to the benefits derived from natural resource systems with impacts on human well-being. (See [postpn_370-environmental-limits.pdf \(nottingham.ac.uk\)](#))

environmental public goods – see public goods

farmer clusters – groups of farmers and landowners working together across the boundaries of their land to improve their area particularly to improve their farming and the benefits for soil, water and wildlife. The group may be supported by an advisor or facilitator. Government has funded over 200 such groups since 2015 through its facilitation fund. See [Farmer Clusters - For farmers, facilitators and advisors.](#)

first tier authorities – local government in England is mainly split into two tiers between county and district councils with county councils referred to as first tier authorities. See [Local government structure and elections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

geotagging – is ‘the process of assigning coordinates to photos.’ ([How Does Geotagging Work? – GIS Geography](#)); it requires use of a GPS system to add coordinates to a photo, video or other media.

glamping – a term which combines glamorous and camping to refer to staying in more luxurious accommodation than a simple tent so usually in a tipi, treehouse or cabin and with access to modern conveniences (sanitation, running water, Wi-Fi)

health (or well-being) walks – refers to guided organized group walks designed to be accessible for all; also walks prescribed by health practitioners to improve the health and well-being of patients; often take in green environments as part of the walk for additional therapeutic benefits

heritage crops – refers to varieties of crops grown before modern scientific plant breeding; they have the benefits of genetic diversity and adaptation to localized conditions which may make them more resilient and adaptable to increasingly difficult growing conditions. Heritage grains pre-date widespread use of synthetic nitrogen so have deeper larger root systems allowing them to extract moisture and nutrients from deeper in the soil profile. (See [What are heritage grains? | Heritage Grain Trust](#))

***integrated farm management (IFM)**– refers to LEAF’s (Linking Environment and Farming) ‘whole farm business approach that delivers sustainable farming.’ ; this brings together ‘beneficial natural processes into the best modern farming practices, conserving and enhancing the environment, by combining appropriate technology and innovations with tried and tested approaches and farmer knowledge and experience.’ IFM principles aim for continuous improvement across the whole farm and are wide ranging: covering soil and water management, crop health, energy efficiency, landscape and nature amongst others. See <https://agricology.co.uk/resource/what-leafs-integrated-farm-management-ifm/>

landrace crops or animals – refers to domesticated species that have developed usually through a long period of cultivation or human livestock management so they have adapted to the local context and usually traditional farming system; they are often genetically diverse and differ from strains and breeds developed more formally. See

[Defining and identifying crop landraces | Plant Genetic Resources | Cambridge Core](#)

landscape character – is defined as the ‘distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements ... in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another’; elements can be natural or man-made. See <https://niopa.qub.ac.uk/bitstream/NIOPA/10907/1/final-lca-guidance-with-template.pdf>

local food – commonly used to mean food produced within a defined distance from the consumer so CPRE uses a distance of 30 miles along with retailers including Waitrose and The Cooperative; it can also refer to aspects of production, the values attached to certain foods or the types of outlet that sells it. See [From field to fork The value of Englands local food webs interactive.pdf \(cpre.org.uk\) pp10-11](#)

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) – LNRS were established under the Environment Act 2021; responsible authorities, usually county, unitary or metropolitan borough councils, have been appointed and funded by government to develop an LNRS by March 2025 to identify priorities for

nature recovery in their area and actions to achieve it. See [Local nature recovery strategies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

marginal land – commonly refers to land that is uneconomic to farm under crops; the term is flexible and this may be because the land has poor soil quality, water supply or is degraded in some way but can also depend on location and how it is managed; such land may be used profitably for grazing or for perennial crops. See [Marginal land - Wikipedia](#) ; [Concepts of agricultural marginal lands and their utilisation: A review \(sciencedirectassets.com\)](#)

National Character Area (NCA)/ area profiles - There are 159 Character Areas, each of which is distinctive with a unique 'sense of place'. These broad divisions of landscape form the basic units of cohesive countryside character, on which strategies for both ecological and landscape issues can be based. The Character Area framework is used to describe and shape objectives for the countryside, its planning and management. See [National Character Areas \(England\) | Natural England Open Data Geoportals \(arcgis.com\)](#)

***natural capital** - natural capital has been defined as 'the elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions'. [Natural Capital Committee: natural capital workbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) pp10-12, 30.

natural carrying capacity – The carrying capacity of an environment is the maximum population size of a biological species that can be sustained by that specific environment, given the food, habitat, water, and other resources available. Natural carrying capacity applied to farming livestock means the livestock population that can be sustained without artificial inputs such as fertilisers or additional feed.

natural services – see ecosystem services

natural carbon sink – refers generally to aspects of the environment which store carbon; although these include the oceans, forests, fungi and soils, the term often is used for types of land cover or habitats that have the potential to be harnessed to carbon from the atmosphere such as woodland, wetlands, seagrasses and kelp beds.

nature friendly farming / approaches - this includes a range of system-based approaches such as integrated farm management, regenerative, agroecological, organic and biodynamic farming. The Nature Friendly Farming Network was formed to 'champion a way of farming which is sustainable and good for nature.' (see [Nature Friendly Farming Network – Sustainable Farming \(nffn.org.uk\)](#))

***net zero** – means not adding further greenhouse gas emissions (ghg) ('carbon' or carbon equivalence is used as a shorthand for all such gases) to the atmosphere by achieving a balance between emissions produced and taking emissions out of the atmosphere.

offsetting – means to counteract (something) by having an equal and opposite force or effect; it is usually applied to greenhouse gas emissions and 'carbon offsetting' described as 'permanently removing greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere, usually through creating or restoring habitats which absorb emissions, or through reducing the rate of emissions from degraded landscapes.' See [Carbon offsetting: reviewing the evidence - Creating a better place \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

organic farming - a farming system that, according to the FAO definition, "relies on ecosystem management rather than external agricultural inputs. It is a system that begins to consider potential

environmental and social impacts by eliminating the use of synthetic inputs, such as synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, veterinary drugs, genetically modified seeds and breeds, preservatives, additives and irradiation. These are replaced with site-specific management practices that maintain and increase long-term soil fertility and prevent pest and diseases". See [Organic Agriculture: What is organic agriculture? \(fao.org\)](#)

packhouses - a building used to take in, sort, grade, process, pack and if required cool fresh fruit, vegetables and salads.

paludiculture / sustainable wet farming - is the productive use of wetland areas in ways that preserve their peat usually by rewetting or avoiding damage to the peat layer and using plants and marketable crops that can tolerate wet soils and do not require peat disturbance or nitrogen fertilisers which would damage the peat. Forms include wet meadows for pasture, reeds, sedges and similar species for biomass for fuel, building materials and growing sphagnum and medicinal plants.

portage routes – paths to enable users of rivers and other water bodies to carry their craft around obstacles.

food (processing) hub – are facilities in the food supply chain where goods can be brought together, stored, processed and transported; they enable small to medium scale farmers and food producers to aggregate their produce and tap into larger markets. They often share values of 'conservation, sustainability, healthy food access, and supporting local farmers' but also benefit food buyers who can trace the provenance of their food and who share these values. See [Food hubs - Wikipedia](#).

***public goods** - defined by government as: "Public goods are goods or services that no one can be stopped from using and where one person's use does not affect another's. For the environment, this includes such goods as an attractive landscape or a public park. If left to the market alone, the benefits to society provided by these goods would be underprovided or not provided at all, due to a lack of profit incentive." [Environmental land management and public money for public goods \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) Other environmental public goods include clean air and water, flood management and a stable climate. Unlike public benefits, the use of the term public goods refers to goods or services that are not normally sold on the market (hence when they are underprovided it is an example of market failure) so excludes products such as food, fibre or timber.

***regenerative farming** – The term regenerative applies to 'farming (...) practices that, among other benefits, reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity. They include no or minimum tillage; use of cover crops, crop rotations, compost, and animal manures; and well-managed grazing on the land. See [What is Regenerative Agriculture? – Regeneration International](#)

regenerative soil management - this means soil management using regenerative farming practices. Although regenerative farming does not have a standard definition, five broadly agreed principles at its core are: (i) minimize soil disturbance, (ii) maximize crop diversity, (iii) keep the soil covered all year round, (iv) maintain living roots all year round and (v) integrate livestock". See [Sustainable soil management in the United Kingdom: A survey of current practices and how they relate to the principles of regenerative agriculture - Jaworski - Soil Use and Management - Wiley Online Library](#).

resilient/resilience – means the ability to recover from difficulties or 'the quality of being able to return to a good condition after problems' See [RESILIENCE | English meaning – Cambridge Dictionary](#)); applied to agriculture it is a 'measure of how much disturbance an agricultural system

can withstand before a critical ‘threshold’ is crossed, and the system fundamentally changes.’ (See [Agricultural Resilience | Center for Resilience in Agricultural Working Landscapes \(unl.edu\)](#))

social prescribing – is when health professionals such as GPs or practice nurses – though not exclusively – refer people to local, non-clinical services often typically offered by voluntary/community sector organizations: this recognizes that people’s health and well-being is linked to a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors and this approach seeks to provide greater, more holistic forms of support for peoples’ social, emotional or practical needs , Activities ‘prescribed’ might include’ volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports. See [What is social prescribing? | The King's Fund \(kingsfund.org.uk\)](#) . Green prescribing is a subset of social prescribing and often refers to being active in nature to improve physical and mental health such as through walking and cycling in green environments and conservation or horticulture work.¹

sustainability – refers to processes or activities that can continue for a long time because they conserve natural resources and systems upon which they depend; it is usually defined by three pillars: economic, social or ethical and environmental; it is linked to sustainable development which was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission as development which meets ‘ the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’ See [Sustainability | United Nations](#); [Sustainability – Wikipedia](#)

water abstraction - ‘the process of extracting water from any natural source, such as a lake, aquifer, river, stream or spring.’ See [What Is Water Abstraction? Envirotech Online \(envirotech-online.com\)](#)

water table / groundwater recharge – groundwater is recharged when surface water usually from rain or snow, moves through the soil body and any saturated layer down into the aquifer(s) below; it is a vital hydrological process which enables groundwater to be sustainably managed : ensuring abstraction rates do not exceed the rate of recharge. See [Groundwater Recharge - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics](#); [Groundwater recharge - Wikipedia](#)

whole farm approaches – used here to refer to an approach applied to the whole farm business and which is system-based: it has a defined system approach so that management practices are interconnected to deliver a broader set of benefits and harness synergies between them. Some whole farm system approaches are certified such as organic or pasture-based.

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¹ See [A Covid-19 recovery strategy: Green prescribing for health - NHS Forest](#)