

FOCUS

on North East Rural Affairs



North East MEP Fiona Hall is fighting in Brussels and here in the UK for a fair deal for local farmers.

Fiona said: "I know that farmers are a great asset to the British economy and countryside, producing food of outstanding quality to the highest environmental and animal welfare standards. I also know that you deserve to receive a fair payment for your hard work."

There are elections for the European Parliament on 4th June this year. Please give your support to the MEP who has worked tirelessly since she was elected five years ago to stand up for farmers.

Fiona says 'EID of sheep is fundamentally flawed'

Lib Dem MEP Fiona Hall opposes the introduction of compulsory electronic sheep identification, which has caused a massive outcry from sheep farmers across the region.

"It is my belief that compulsory sheep EID will cause unnecessary burdens for farmers. We don't need more bureaucratic measures and unnecessary red tape," said Fiona.

She has asked the Secretary of State for Rural Affairs to introduce the tagging on a voluntary basis to avoid overbearing costs for farmers.

The UK and the Republic of Ireland are the largest sheep producers in the EU. British farmers need any new identification system to work effectively but this one is fundamentally flawed."



Fiona Hall MEP works closely with local MP Sir Alan Beith

Labour's record of failure

Since Labour came to power over 11 years ago, life has got much tougher for hard working families in rural areas.

- Almost one in four farms now lose money each year.
- Retail prices for milk have increased but farm gate prices have not. Supermarkets are taking a greater share of the profits whilst the number of dairy holdings is dropping dramatically.
- Fuel poverty twice as bad in rural areas but we receive as little as 5% of government grants to upgrade insulation and heating - even though rural households account for 20% of the population.
- Over 85,000 social rent homes in rural areas have been sold since Labour took over in 1997 leaving many local people unable to afford to live in rural areas .

Fiona's Action File

- 1** Fiona Hall MEP has fought for a total import ban on Brazilian beef affected by foot and mouth
- 2** She is opposed to compulsory EID for sheep
- 3** She has supported the sustainable British bio-fuel industry
- 4** She has fought for the same rules on pig rearing conditions all over Europe to end UK farmers' unfair disadvantage

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Lib Dem MEP welcomes NFU manifesto

The NFU has recently launched its manifesto for the 2009 European Parliament Elections, taking place on 4th June.

Fiona said: "I welcome the launch of this document, particularly the NFU's call for mandatory country-of-origin labelling, which would help consumers who wanted to choose to "shop local" and support their local producers."

"Given that the UK is the fifth largest recipient of EU funding for agriculture, it is vital to get EU agriculture policy right, and I look forward to continuing to work with the NFU to achieve this."



"Pollution rules are inappropriate for North east farmers" says Fiona Hall

Lib Dem MEP Fiona Hall said: "I have criticised the new European measures to control industrial pollution because they will adversely affect even small farmers in the UK."

The new rules are designed to control pollution from global industrial giants. But tucked away in the text are measures which affect manure spreading and poultry raising.

The Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament was not even asked for its opinion.

"I believe the Parliament's approach on this piece of legislation has been seriously flawed."

"I will keep on fighting the elements of this law which are inappropriate when applied to farms."

A date for your diary

On **27th May**, Fiona will be taking part in the NFU's hustings for the European elections.

NFU members can see Fiona debating at **Kirkley Hall College, Ponteland**, from **7.30pm**.

Lib Dems: standing up for farmers



Did you know that the Liberal Democrats have a higher proportion of MPs from rural seats than any other mainstream party? We are proud of rural Britain and are passionate about giving it a new lease of life.

The Lib Dem top priorities for rural England include: stopping big food companies bullying farmers; cutting taxes for village shops and pubs to help them through the recession; protecting rural post offices and services; and providing more affordable homes for local people.

Labour are an urban party with urban concerns. That's why so many of their initiatives target cities and towns and why they've sidelined affordable rural housing in favour of urban regeneration projects.

Under the Conservatives, rural services declined thanks to bus privatisation and post office, police station and local shop closures.