

## Somerset Council

Full Council  
18 December 2024



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### Motions on Notice

Executive Member: All

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Executive Director for Resources, Strategy and Transformation, Alyn Jones

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#### A. Supporting Somerset Farmers and Food Producers

The following motion will be proposed by Councillor David Woan and seconded by Councillor Oliver Patrick:

**Somerset Council is committed** to supporting Somerset’s farmers, along with Somerset-based food and drink producers; whether by engaging and working in partnership together, or being sympathetic to diversification opportunities, to help our farmers thrive, and adapt to market forces, new technologies, and the challenges of modern-day farming.

**Somerset Council also pledges** vocal opposition to any unfair and excessive interference from central government which in the view of Somerset Council, would diminish the role played by farmers in Somerset.

**Somerset Council recognises**, in line with our environmental commitments, the benefits of locally-produced food and drink, which has lower food miles than imported food and drink and is produced to some of the highest environmental and welfare standards in the world.

**Somerset Council is committed to procuring food as locally as possible**, in line with our 2023 Local Food Procurement in the South West declaration.

**Somerset Council will promote** the presence and availability of local suppliers, including farm shops, to encourage people to buy local produce.

## B. Protecting British Family Farms and Preserving Rural Communities

The following motion will be proposed by Councillor Faye Purbrick and seconded by Councillor Lucy Trimnell :

Somerset Council notes with concern the proposed changes to inheritance tax announced by the Labour Government in the recent Autumn budget, which would scrap Agricultural Property Relief (APR). APR has been instrumental in allowing British family farms to remain intact across generations, supporting food security, sustaining rural communities, and aiding environmental stewardship.

This tax is estimated to impact over 70,000(1) family farms, leaving the average farming family with a tax bill of at least £240,000(2), which will force many to sell portions of their land or close entirely, paving the way for corporate ownership over family ownership.

Somerset Council believes that this tax will have severe impacts on:

1. **Food Security:** Selling off land or closing farms will put our national food independence at risk, at a time when global stability is already fragile. British family farms are critical to ensuring a steady supply of homegrown food.

2. **Rural Community Stability:** Family farms are the foundation of rural Britain and Somerset, contributing to local jobs, schools, and essential services. Labour's proposed tax risks destabilising communities, eroding the rural way of life, and causing a negative ripple effect across the countryside and our communities.

3. **Environmental Stewardship:** Farms cover 70% of the UK's land (over 420,000 hectares in Somerset alone), with family farms playing a leading role in nature recovery, biodiversity, and sustainable land management. The sale and fragmentation of these lands would hinder conservation efforts and undermine environmental initiatives that his council has pledge to support.

### **Somerset Council resolves to:**

- Declare opposition to the Labour Government's changes to inheritance tax affecting family farms.
- Write to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and the DEFRA Secretary, along with all Somerset MPs, outlining our opposition to this tax change and the scale of the impact to Somerset and our rural economy.
- Advocate through all available means for the continued APR exemption of family farms to preserve the UK's food security, our rural communities, and environmental initiatives.

Somerset Council urges all Councillors to stand with Britain's family farms, to support our rural communities, enhance local food security, and to protect our environment by formally rejecting and calling for the reversal of the proposed "family farm tax."

### **References**

1. CLA 2024 October <https://www.cla.org.uk/news/help-the-cla-save-your-family-business/>
2. AHDB 2024 October <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/ahdb-response-to-budget-2024>

## **C. Food and Farming**

The following motion will be proposed by Councillor Lucy Trimnell and seconded by Councillor Faye Purbrick :

This council believes that Somerset's farmers are essential to our local economy, food security and our environment as well as maintaining our much-loved rural landscapes.

### **To that end, this council agrees to:**

- 1) Recognise and note the significant contribution made to our local economy and food supplies by our hard-working farmers, particularly our meat and dairy producers who account for the majority of Somerset farming produce.
- 2) Strengthen our partnerships with arable, livestock, and dairy farmers to support and enhance Somerset's iconic countryside and will seek to oppose unnecessary additional pressures such as the hike in employers National Insurance contributions and Inheritance Tax on farmers.
- 3) Make a commitment to support local farmers, growers, and the food and drink sector by ensuring, where possible, that food and beverages served at council-organised events are sourced from local suppliers. This will include meat and dairy, alongside fruit, vegetable and cereal products, reflecting the full diversity of Somerset's agricultural output.
- 4) As part of Somerset Council's efforts to address environmental priorities, the Council will explore ways to encourage residents to shop locally whenever possible. This will include promoting home-grown, affordable, and nutritious produce to reduce food miles, boost the local economy, and support our farming community.