

The Pasture-Fed Livestock Association (PFLA)

The PFLA is a membership organisation of beef, lamb and dairy farmers who raise their cattle and sheep exclusively from pasture and grass. No grains are ever fed. Eating 100% grass-fed food has significant benefits to human health, the environment and livestock welfare. The PFLA is a community interest company (CIC) and has no commercial interest.



The 'Pasture for Life' certification mark

The PFLA has established the 'Pasture for Life' certification mark and is the only scheme of its type in the UK registered with the Intellectual Property Office. The PFLA is responsible for overseeing the inspection process, which is delivered by an accredited UKAS provider. All inspection bodies used by the PFLA are certified to ISO/IEC 17065:2012. This certification is the only guarantee to consumers that their meat and dairy products are genuinely 100% grass-fed, with traceability to the individual beef animal and to batches of lambs – from farm to fork.

The standards underpinning 'Pasture for Life' production are based on sound science. They have been developed by farmers to protect and build their soils, maximise the value derived from their grassland and allows them to practice low external input farming. The publication *It Can Be Done*, using figures collected by AHDB Beef & Lamb, shows how farming to 'Pasture for Life' standards can be productive, viable and financially resilient, in some cases more so than intensive farming.

The PFLA is supporting farmers and consumers wishing to produce and buy 'Pasture for Life' food, by growing the market for these healthy and environmentally sound meat and dairy products.

Changes in government policy

There are three principal policy issues that would ensure more farmers and consumers can support this way of farming and so benefit the public good.

1. **'Pasture for Life' certification should be officially recognised in support payment policy, alongside other schemes such as organic certification.** The environmental and animal welfare benefits merit payments for producers, which will help meet the costs of certification. They would provide a long-term incentive for those wishing to make the transition to this type of sustainable farming.
2. **A review is needed of the definition of grass-fed.** At present the term can be used to describe products that are 'predominantly fed grass.' This could just mean 51% within the lifetime of the animal. Even intensively reared ruminant livestock could satisfy this condition and as such, customers may believe they are buying grain-free produce, when in fact they are not.

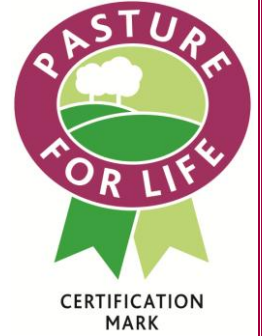
The PFLA would like the government to follow the example set in the USA and other countries, where there is a legal requirement for such terms to be clearly defined. In addition to the rapidly developing market in the UK, there are significant potential export markets in Europe, America and Asia. It is therefore crucial that standards are recognised and compatible with similar labels elsewhere in the world. At present, the 'Pasture for Life' certification does this and it is the only guarantor of meat and dairy products that are 100% grass-fed.

3. **The removal of the Specified Risk Material (SRM) rule for cattle over thirty months of age.** Many PFLA members finish traditional breeds, which reach their full economic and meat value over 30 months of age. It is widely acknowledged that the original reason for the imposition of this rule (for BSE control) no longer applies. There is a growing interest in the flavour of older beef and removal of this rule would simplify the meat chain for all beef animals considerably.

Further information on the PFLA standards for production and the human health benefits of grass-fed beef, lamb and dairy products can be found at <http://www.pastureforlife.org>. There is also a link to the document *"It Can Be Done – the farm business case for raising ruminants just on pasture"*.

Tel. 01285 889853 for more information.

Why Pasture for Life meat and milk in the UK?



- Two thirds of the world's and the UK's farmed area is grassland
- Cattle and sheep have the unique ability to convert grass into products of value to mankind, eg meat, dairy produce and leather
- Around a third of all grain (which could be eaten by people) is fed to livestock. Beef cattle convert grain at around 7-8kg grain/kg of weight gain, which is inefficient use of a valuable resource. Pasture is a viable alternative to feed and fatten beef cattle and sheep
- Figures collected under AHDB Stocktake and published in the PFLA booklet *It Can Be Done*, highlights the viability of wholly pasture-based farming
- [FAO Sustainable Grasslands Working Paper 2013](#) states:
"...the potential role of grasslands in addressing environmental and food security challenges is often poorly understood and under-valued... preliminary modelling results suggest that a grassland-based system of livestock production is a viable proposition... to meet food security demands, while imposing a lighter footprint on the environment."

Pasture generates many other benefits. It:

- Builds soil organic matter and captures/sequesters carbon
- Encourages biodiversity and wildlife
- Retains moisture, keeps streams and rivers clean and offers potential for flood defence
- Provides a natural, unstressed environment where ruminants can behave naturally and self-medicate
- Produces meat and milk that has measurable health benefits for consumers (see below). These are completely lost if the animal is fattened on grain for the last few months of life.

Why government policy should support certified Pasture for Life farmers

The PFLA is supporting the consortium of organisations brought together under the umbrella of Sustain – the Alliance for Better Food and Farming. This is asking the Government to *'ensure that fair, healthy, humane and environmentally sustainable food, farming, fishing and land management are central to the post EU Referendum strategy for the UK.'*

PFLA farmers are practising all that this Alliance is asking for. We urge the Government to develop a farm support policy that encourages and rewards the positive environmental actions and outcomes arising from a wholly pasture-fed approach to ruminant livestock farming.

Specifically, the PFLA is asking the Government to officially recognise 'Pasture for Life' certification as a passport to agricultural support payments, such as exists currently for organic certification. This would:

- Bring long-term benefits to farming in the UK
- Ensure independent auditing of those farmers who are in receipt of Defra grants, through the PFLA inspection process
- Provide a recognised resilient option for cattle and sheep farming in the UK

The PFLA's established Pasture for Life certification mark is a set of independently audited standards that are sufficiently rigorous to deliver real environmental, animal welfare and human health benefits. These are sufficiently robust to be recognised by the Government in farming policies that support the public good, and will encourage farmers to convert to this method of production (as has been the case with organic standards).

They include:

- Record keeping to organic and other assurance scheme standards
- Grassland management that is underpinned by PFLA standard 7.2 – *The diversity of plant species within grass leys and pasture is one of the most important elements of pasture-based production...*

The standards recommend:

- Grazing management plans
- Conservation of semi-natural and unimproved grasslands
- Measures to minimise application of artificial fertilisers and herbicides
- Stocking rates that encourage biodiversity with the use of herbs and native species
- Livestock management systems that result in the highest animal welfare outcomes

The need to redefine the use of the term grass-fed

Currently the term 'grass-fed' can be used to describe products that are predominantly fed grass, ie just 51%.

In 2009, in response to a consultation by the Food Standards Agency, Natural England recommended, *"the FSA should develop, in close consultation with Natural England and Defra, guidance on the use of the terms 'grass-fed'."*

The PFLA would like a clear set of agreed definitions, including those relating to the statutory regulations on labelling and advertising, to ensure that consumers are able to make an informed decision when buying 'grass-fed' food. This would mean they are presented with goods that meet expectations in terms of health benefits and how the animals were looked after during their lifetime.

Research from the USA and the UK shows how the health benefits of eating grass-fed beef fall away with even a minimal amount of feeding of cereals. The benefits are numerous but in summary they are:

- Lower overall levels of fat
- Higher levels of good, healthy fats such as omega 3, and a healthier ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids
- Higher levels of Conjugated Linoleic Acids (CLA), with antioxidant characteristics important in combating diseases such as cancer, heart and diabetes.
- Higher levels of vitamins and minerals such as beta-carotene and vitamin E.

In 2011, the *British Journal of Nutrition* published a study, which concluded that eating moderate amounts of grass-fed meat for only four weeks, would give consumers healthier levels of these essential fats.

With the extensive use of the term grass-fed in food promotions, this is long overdue. The current use of the term grass-fed does not allow consumers or public procurement agencies to make an informed choice and this should be addressed as a matter of priority.

Removal of the SRM rule

For many PFLA members the SRM rule is a cause of considerable frustration. It now represents an arbitrary rule that makes slaughter beyond this point unsatisfactory, difficult and costly. There is a growing interest in eating beef from older animals and farmers are keen to exploit the business case for doing this. Many PFLA members also raise traditional breeds, sometimes on poor but biodiverse land, where they take longer than 30 months to reach their full potential. We urge the Government to remove this barrier.

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October 2016