

Motion for Time Limited Debate

Proposer: Mr Jordan Meade

Seconder: Mr Tom Cannon

Background information provided by the Conservative Group:

The Government's changes to the long-established Inheritance Tax Relief for Agricultural Land as announced in the recent Budget, will introduce a 'Family Farm Tax' which will have a detrimental impact on the farming businesses of Kent. Farming is a key component of the local economy here in Kent, contributing in excess of £400m to the local economy and directly supporting jobs for over 13,250 people.

We believe that this taxation represents a breach of trust by the Government, as prior to the election, the Labour Party denied that any such tax would be introduced, and the prospect of this additional tax burden was not published within the Labour Party's Manifesto.

We believe that this new burden on family farms will have a hugely detrimental impact on the farming communities of Kent and more widely our local economy, by making it extremely difficult for our farmers to pass on their family farms to the next generation of skilled farmers. This undermines the rural way of life here in Kent and will negatively impact skilled employment prospects within our rural communities.

Kent is home to many long-established and successful farming communities and numerous family farms. We are the 'Garden of England' with 85% of our land classified as rural, and 62% of our land area is farmed. The total area of farmed land in the county stands at 224,535 hectares. At a time, when farmers in Kent are struggling profoundly with soaring costs and energy prices, this sudden and unanticipated tax rise will undermine the long-term security of land holdings across the County and negatively impact our local economy, our food security and the environmental sustainability of our County.

It is feared that this new burden on family farmers will inevitably force the sale of some family farms in Kent, which in turn will undermine our local economy and food security. Against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the impact of unpredictable seasonal weather on harvests and the prospect of agricultural land being destroyed through development and changes to the NPPF, we believe that the changes to the Inheritance Tax Relief for Agricultural Land come at a time when the Government should be supporting our farmers in the interest of our national security and therefore request that the County Council stands with Kent's framers in opposing the 'Family Farm Tax'.

Motion

The County Council resolves;

1. To declare our complete solidarity with the farmers of Kent in opposing the Government's decision to change the long-established Inheritance Tax Relief for Agricultural Land as announced in the Government's October Budget.

2. To recognise the monumental importance of farming to the local economy of Kent, which contributes in excess of £405m annually to our local economy and supports over 13,250 jobs across the County.
3. To commend the hard work and resilience of Kent's farmers and to acknowledge the important contribution that Kent farms make to the overall food security of the United Kingdom.
4. To request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at this decision, and further to call on the Government to reverse this decision, noting the detrimental impact that the Family Farm Tax will have on Kent's farmers and our local economy.
5. To request that the Executive calls upon all Kent MPs to protect the Kentish rural way of life by supporting their farming constituents, and more widely the residents and businesses of Kent, by proactively opposing the Government's decision to tax family farms in this way.
6. To request that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development engages with Kent's farmers and community representatives to better understand the difficulties faced by the farming sector at this time and to explore what further written support the County Council can provide to assist their campaigns.