

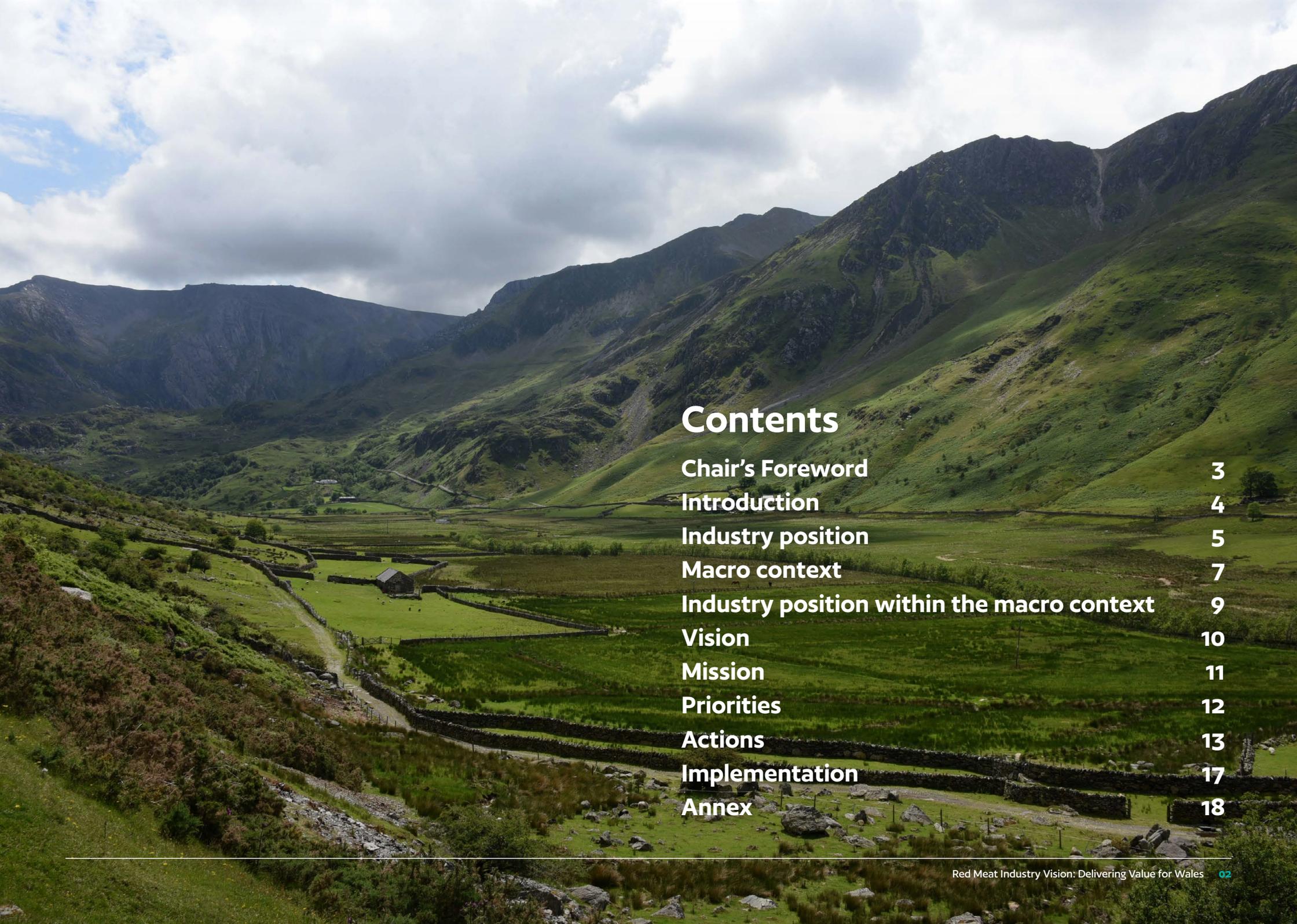


Red Meat Industry Vision: Delivering Value for Wales



Hybu Cig Cymru
Meat Promotion Wales

March 2026



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Chair's Foreword



HCC's vision for the Welsh red meat industry is for a competitive, profitable, efficient and sustainable industry which embraces its social and environmental responsibilities. This will deliver for levy payers, consumers and the wider Welsh society.

This Vision document presents HCC's strategy for the next four years, along with an assessment of the current state of the red meat industry. It highlights both the growth opportunities and the challenges the industry is facing today.

The intrinsically interconnected nature of the Welsh red meat industry is distinct and needs to be supported to ensure the diversity and variety of Welsh farming systems continue to thrive. This goes wider than purely farming; other businesses within the supply chain, such as auctioneers, processors and the wider food sector, are all reliant on a strong and consistent supply of livestock from our industry. This document will act as a blueprint for HCC to support and unite all elements of our sector and supply chain to bring about future success and growth for our industry.

The food and farming sector is at the heart of Wales's rural economy, culture and heritage, and is essential to support the preservation and growth of the Welsh language. That's why HCC is committed to ensuring the Welsh red meat industry and its supply chain are ready to meet the challenges of the future - from productivity and profitability to food security and climate change - while continuing to enhance the sector's reputation and competitiveness in both national and global markets.

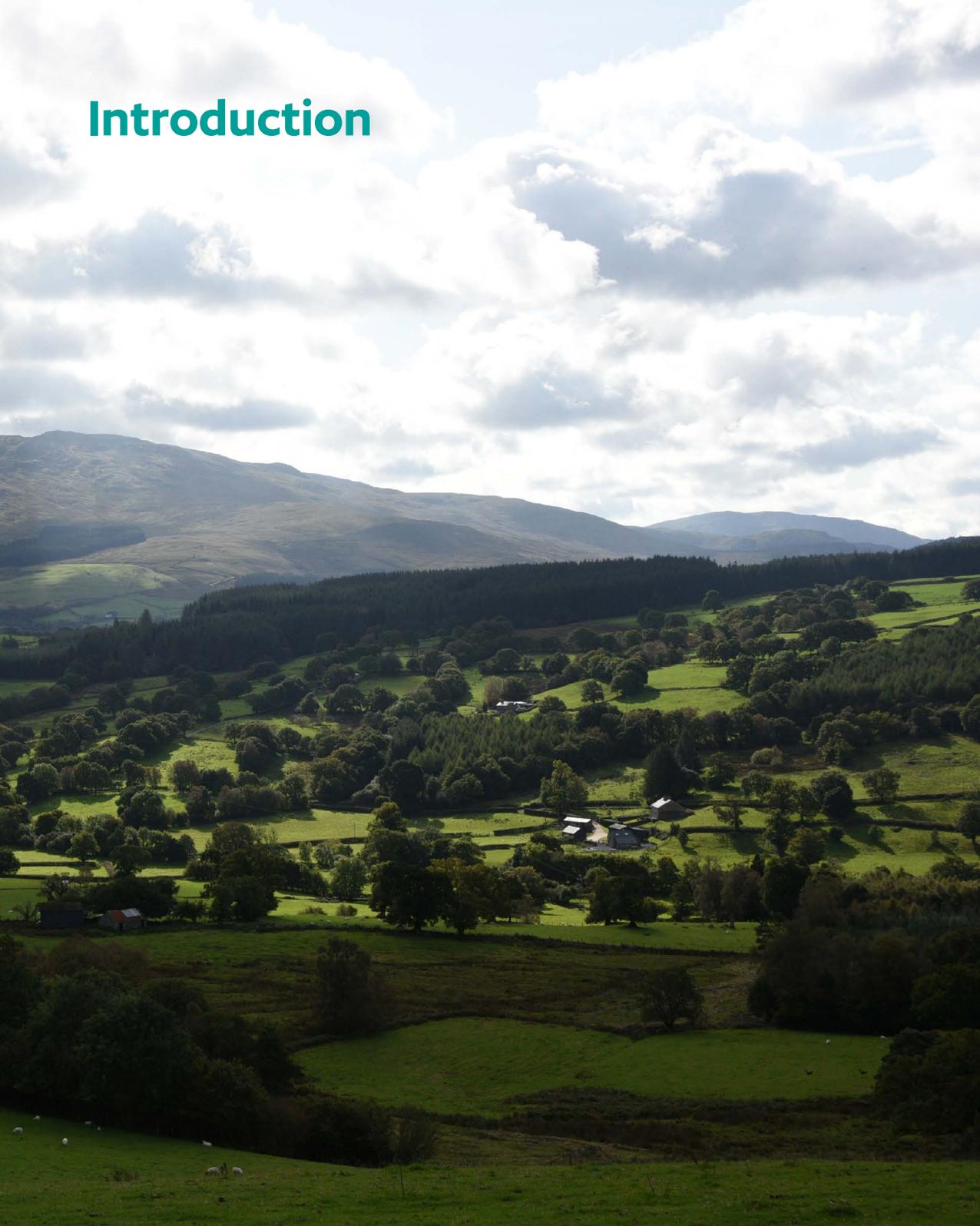
We are committed to strengthening our industry's competitiveness, this can be achieved through high animal health and welfare, use of superior genetics and optimal grassland management. Together with ongoing

developments in processing, these initiatives enhance productivity while reducing total emissions, ensuring the Welsh red meat industry builds on its strong reputation.

By fostering collaboration, driving innovation and maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability, HCC will work to ensure that Welsh red meat is recognised for its quality, integrity and its vital role in supporting a resilient and prosperous Wales.



Introduction



Hybu Cig Cymru - Meat Promotion Wales (HCC) was established in 2003 as the body responsible for the strategic development, promotion and marketing of Welsh red meat.

HCC works in proactive collaboration with individuals, businesses and organisations across the supply chain to increase the volume and value of red meat sold from Wales whilst also seeking to enhance the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of the industry. HCC is dedicated to the continued success and development of its brands; PGI Welsh Lamb, PGI Welsh Beef and Porc Blasus.

To prepare this document HCC has extensively engaged with stakeholders, levy payers and others within the supply chain. The engagement included representation from producers, processors and wider stakeholders, and a levy payer questionnaire and an industry call for views.

To achieve the priorities identified in this document, HCC will work with industry, government, academia and other levy bodies to target additional funds to maximise impact and compliment core levy activity. If not delivering activities directly, HCC will lead, influence and inform. This will ensure levy money investment supports tangible positive results for the red meat industry in Wales.

This ambitious Vision has also been developed to deliver the requirements of current legislation, Government action plans and policy context; these are outlined in Annex 1 (Page 18).

INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE

FARMING AND PRODUCTION



Breeding ewe numbers in Wales (June 25) is

4.1m

10% below the figure recorded in June 2016.

Current beef breeding cow population **133,500 head**, 21% below the figure 10 years previous. In June 2025 there were **2,150** breeding pigs on Welsh holdings.

NUMBER OF HOLDINGS (June 2024)

6,341



13,625



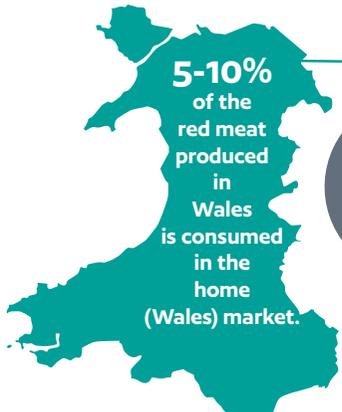
1,271



In **2024-25** the average farm business income for a cattle and sheep LFA farms increased by **68%** at current prices to

£37,200 per farm

from the previous year.



It is estimated that nearly **two-thirds** of the sheep meat and approximately **80%** of the beef produced in Wales will be consumed in England.

PROCESSING



15 red meat abattoirs in Wales (2025)

In 2025, the abattoirs employed a combined,



circa. **2,000** people

In 2025, the 15 abattoirs processed:



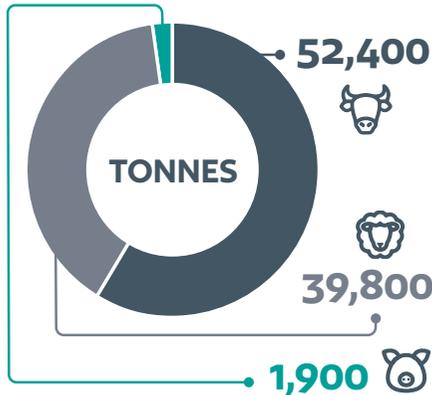
176,000 head



1,995,900 head



21,000 head



TRADE

GB RETAIL IN 2025*

PRIMARY LAMB

Sales
50,200 t (-9.6% year-on-year)

Average Price
£12.27/kg (+4.1%)

Spend
£615.8m (-5.9%)



PRIMARY BEEF

Sales
235,000 t (-6.4%)

Average Price
£11.52/kg (+17.6%)

Spend
£2.7bn (+10.1%)



PRIMARY PORK

Sales
138,700 t (+2.7%)

Average Price
£6.39/kg (+2.2%)

Spend
£885.9m (+5.0%)



* Retail data for 52 w/e 28 Dec 2025



EXPORT

In 2025

Exports of sheepmeat from Wales -

£230.5m



Exports of beef from Wales -

£112.4m



94%

of Welsh red meat exports go to EU countries

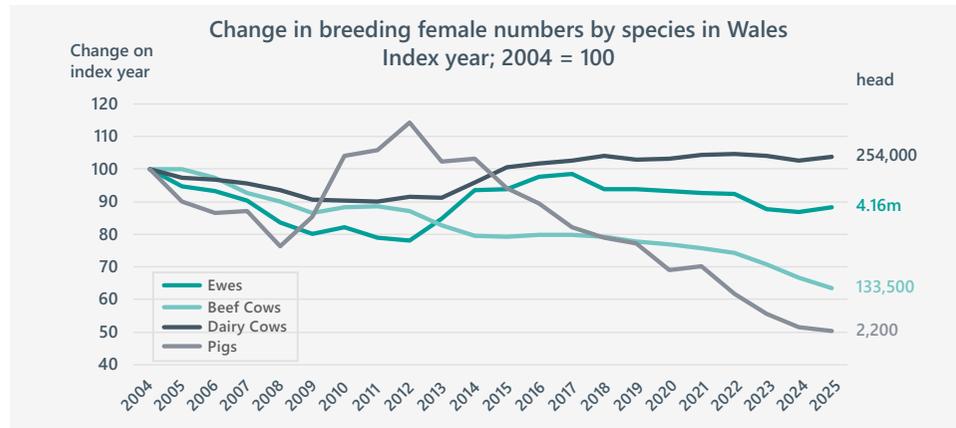


Potential markets



Global population of **8.3bn** and growing

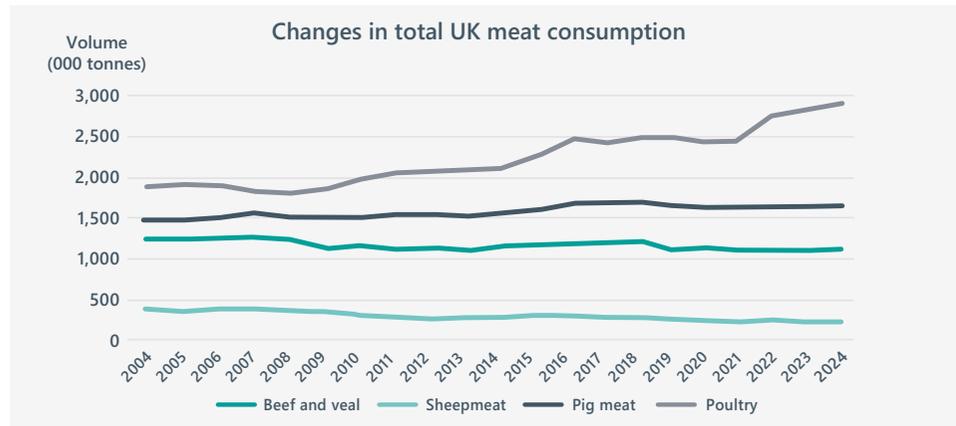
Livestock numbers



Source: Welsh Government

Long term trends show clear structural shifts in Wales's livestock sector. Sheep numbers were broadly stable but have declined steadily since 2017. The beef breeding herd continues to contract, while dairy cow numbers show consistent resilience and moderate growth. Pig breeding numbers remain volatile, underscoring the vulnerability of this smaller, cost sensitive sector.

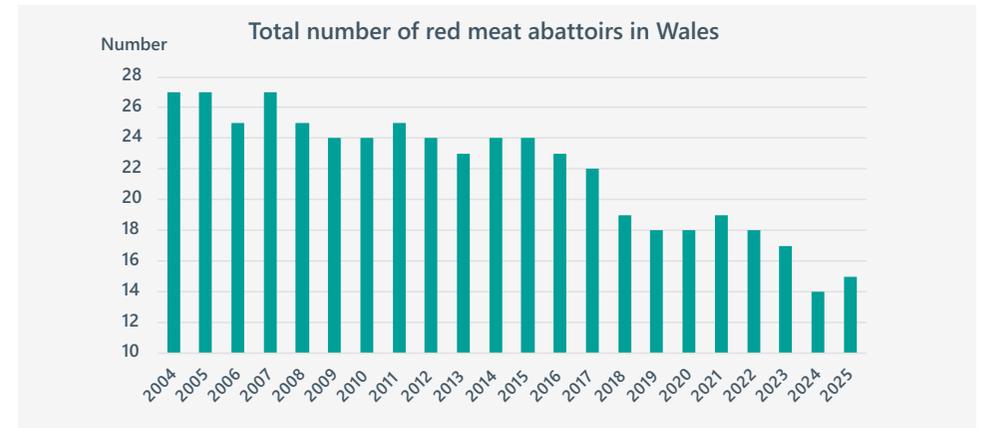
Consumption



Source: AHDB, Defra, UK HMRC compiled by Trade Data Monitor LLC

Beef consumption in the UK has held relatively constant over the last 20 years, while pig meat has shown a modest upward trend. Sheepmeat consumption has gradually decreased but has seemed to have stabilised in the last few years. These trends illustrate a structural shift toward lower cost, versatile proteins, particularly poultry, while red meat consumption continues to demonstrate a resilient baseline demand.

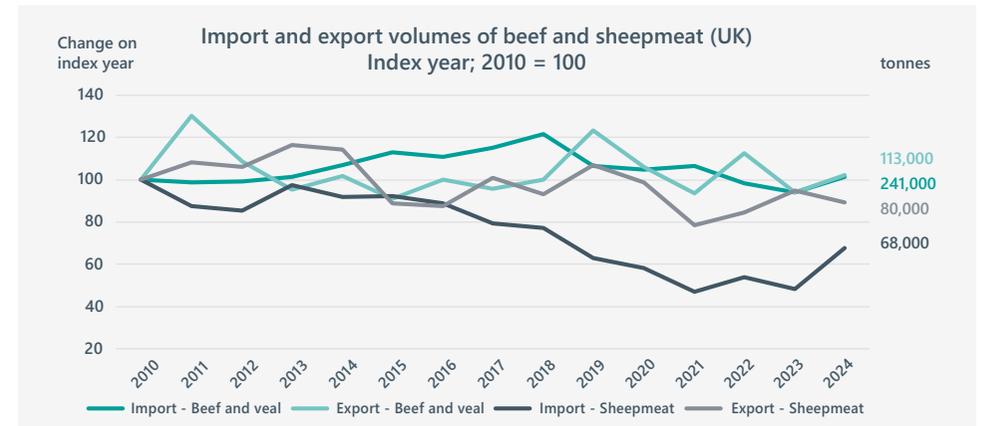
Processing plants



Source: HCC

The number of red meat processing facilities operating in Wales has reduced significantly over recent decades, reflecting structural pressures within the sector and across the wider supply chain. As of 2025, fifteen primary red meat processing sites remained in operation, with four of these accounting for approximately 80% of total throughput.

Trade



Source: HMRC

Beef and veal import volumes have declined slightly since 2018 while export volumes have fluctuated but broadly remained close to or slightly above the 2010 baseline. Sheepmeat export volumes initially increased but, as a result of domestic supply constraints, have been relatively stable in the last few years. Sheepmeat imports, which initially tracked close to the 2010 level have followed a downward trend but showed recovery in 2024.

Macro context

The red meat industry in Wales operates within a complex and evolving landscape influenced by a diverse range of external influences, namely political, economic social, technological, legal, and environmental factors. It is easiest to make sense of this complex operating environment by examining it using the PESTLE framework (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental).



Political

Political priorities - most notably reforms to agricultural support and the commitment to achieve net zero by 2050 - are reshaping incentives, compliance expectations and investment decisions within the industry. As support structures and sustainability requirements evolve, producers will need to adapt business practices to increase efficiency and where possible seek reward for carbon reduction, supporting biodiversity gains and demonstrating resilient land use. Trade policy developments continue to present both opportunities and threats. Greater access to export markets can unlock value for premium Welsh product, while increased competition and shifting tariff arrangements require vigilant industry representation to secure fair market conditions and recognition of Wales's high production standards.



Economic

Inflation has elevated costs for energy, labour and transport, compressing margins across the supply chain. Broader cost of living pressures are reinforcing price sensitivity and increasing the risk of consumers opting for cheaper proteins or imported meat. Currency volatility adds further uncertainty, affecting the cost of imported inputs and the competitiveness of exports. To protect profitability in this challenging trading environment, the industry must pursue operational optimisation - driving efficiency through technology, seeking collaborative procurement and data led process improvement - while strengthening premium positioning to defend value against lower cost competitors. Active risk management, including market diversification, will be essential for business resilience.





Social

Social dynamics are altering both the demand characteristics for red meat and the availability of labour. Persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers call for investment in workforce development, attractive career pathways and selective automation to alleviate pressures. On the demand side, global population growth and rising affluence sustain long term consumption potential, but UK consumer behaviour is fragmenting under the influence of health, ethics and environmental concerns. Concurrently local sourcing and food security have become more salient issues. Welsh red meat can respond by engaging proactively on provenance, welfare, nutrition and community value - supported by tailored products, such as convenient formats and portion sizes, and segmented marketing that meets diverse consumer expectations.



Technological

Technology is a decisive lever for competitiveness. Artificial intelligence, precision farming including genomics, and automation are enabling smarter breeding, improved animal health, targeted inputs and lower waste - all of which enhance productivity and support sustainable systems. Digital tools can also transform consumer engagement, using data to personalise communication, substantiate claims on origin and welfare and build trust. Innovation in packaging and shelf life extension will reduce waste and strengthen the value proposition to retailers and consumers. At the same time, ongoing investment in meat alternatives and cultivated proteins will reshape the competitive landscape.



Legal

The trajectory of UK alignment with EU rules, the terms of trade deals, and the application of tariffs and non tariff measures will influence costs, compliance, market access and overall competitiveness. A critical risk is the introduction of imports produced to differing animal health, welfare and environmental standards; this could erode consumer confidence and place Welsh producers at a disadvantage. Robust advocacy for parity of standards, clear labelling and transparent enforcement will be vital. Tighter rules on advertising, health claims and food labelling may constrain marketing flexibility and increase administrative burdens. Building strong compliance capabilities, embedding legal foresight into product development and maintaining constructive dialogue with regulators will help turn regulatory change into an opportunity for trust building.



Environmental

Environmental requirements are both a strategic necessity and a market differentiator. The climate emergency and the UK's nature recovery agenda demand integrated approaches that balance productivity with ecological stewardship. Wales's climate outlook - warmer, wetter winters and more frequent summer droughts - requires adaptation in grassland systems, water management and animal health strategies. Persistent, resilient pastures with strong nutritional value combined with improved soil health will underpin long term viability, whilst ensuring carbon storage and sequestration. Farms and systems that measure, manage and transparently report environmental outcomes will earn reputational advantages and strengthen their case for premium pricing and preferential procurement.

Overall, the strategic outlook for the Welsh red meat industry will be shaped by evolving policy reforms, rising demand for product transparency and provenance, changing land use priorities and shifting trade conditions. Businesses that proactively plan for these developments, enhance their productivity, and adapt their operations, will be best placed to remain competitive and compliant in an increasingly competitive and regulated marketplace.

Industry position within the macro context

Based on the strategic context previously highlighted, the following analysis delves deeper into the Welsh red meat industry's characteristics, identifying the key strengths and weaknesses, as well as the specific opportunities and threats that arise within this complex landscape.

Strengths

- Predominantly grass-fed lamb and beef systems, has strong environmental credentials and welfare appeal
- Optimum climate and topography for grassland, supporting low-impact sustainable farming
- Red meat proven to be nutrient dense, offering a positive health proposition
- Family farms bring expertise, as well as social and cultural value
- Recognised global reputation for extensive pasture-based production methods
- Established sales channels with respected and recognised PGI brands
- Diverse auction market and abattoir sector enable flexible market access
- Strong varied export markets, particularly lamb, allow for optimum carcass balance and pricing

Weaknesses

- Structural dependence on support payments for positive farm business returns
- Comparatively higher on-farm production costs reduces competitiveness in global market
- Fragmented producer supply limits innovation and ability to generate supply-side market insight
- Difficulties in attracting and retaining new entrants and workers
- Lamb seasonality can impact supply chain practices and availability
- Limited scale limits market presence and potential growth into new and emerging markets
- Political uncertainty and attitudes towards trade and agriculture increases supply chain risks and volatility
- Limited exploitation of advancing animal and plant genetics, and technology for productivity gains

Opportunities

- Position the 'Welsh Way' as sustainable and distinctive
- Use PGI status to differentiate product, highlighting traceability, provenance and sustainability
- Development of a centralised data hub to underpin claims and improve transparency
- Better market knowledge can support improved business performance
- Strategic expansion of upland cattle herds will increase product availability while managed grazing can improve biodiversity
- Global population and demand for red meat is rising; with new markets emerging
- Efficiency, training, and technological progress, through R&D, innovation and automation will improve productivity and lower costs
- Targeted messaging to potential new health-conscious ethical consumer
- Work with supply chain to ensure optimum consistency of products and all year-round availability

Threats

- Public misconceptions and misunderstanding of red meat production methods, impacts and health benefits
- Potential emissions offshoring or carbon leakage through poorly designed policy measures
- Reduced consumer spending power, leading to increase price sensitivity
- New trade deals leading to increased imports
- Changes and greater unpredictability within weather patterns could impact production systems
- Declining livestock numbers
- Shifts to alternative proteins and flexitarian diets
- Ongoing economic and workforce pressures in supply chain
- Competing land-use priorities risk reducing land availability for livestock production
- Animal health issues could undermine both performance and consumer perception
- Shifts in climate patterns could exacerbate threats to animal health and welfare, including spread of vector borne and zoonotic diseases



Vision

Our vision for the Welsh red meat industry is for a competitive, profitable, efficient and sustainable industry which embraces its social and environmental responsibilities. This will result in a productive, resilient and growing industry.

HCC's role within the Welsh red meat industry will be to provide informed authoritative leadership to grow the industry by enabling and promoting improved productivity, increased competitiveness, trade development and marketing of the product.

HCC will seek to ensure that the Welsh red meat industry and its wider supply chain are best-positioned to address the challenges of economic viability, food security, climate change and evolving consumer demand while sustaining and growing the presence of Welsh red meat in both national and global markets.

Competitiveness, sustainability, premiumisation, trade success and enhancing the industry's reputation are all at the heart of this Vision as we continue to establish an ambitious and progressive outlook for Wales as world-leaders in red meat production.

Our Mission



HCC will lead and support the Welsh red meat industry to increase its market presence, economic resilience and global competitiveness whilst striving to have a positive environmental impact.

HCC will drive and enable improved productivity, expand trade opportunities and promote the distinctive quality of Welsh red meat through authoritative leadership and collaboration across the supply chain.



Priorities



The three key focus areas that HCC will deliver against are:



Actions

Our approach

We will work collaboratively, driven by a common purpose, ensuring that we operate efficiently and effectively, and remain focused on delivering meaningful outcomes to enhance the red meat industry in Wales.



Priority 1: Increase the volume and value of branded Welsh red meat sold

Expanding the market share of branded Welsh red meat is essential for driving both economic growth and industry resilience. By focusing and evidencing assurance on quality, traceability, and sustainability, and by strong branding, our work will both increase demand through enhanced consumer access and foster greater loyalty. Our approach will also help to differentiate Welsh red meat in a competitive marketplace, supporting financially sustainable returns for the supply chain.

Support and facilitate listings in domestic markets

We will work closely with retailers, processors, wholesalers and foodservice partners to maintain strong relationships and secure new listings, making it easier for consumers to choose Welsh red meat. This will be achieved through a strategic proactive approach to working with the supply chain to ensure Welsh red meat can deliver for changing consumer preferences.

Develop export markets - strengthening established, growing emerging and identifying new

We will invest in market insight, trade missions and international partnerships, to increase sales of branded Welsh red meat in export markets. By adapting to the specific requirements and preferences of each market, we can maximise export opportunities to complement domestic demand.

Increased consumer recognition and demand for Welsh red meat

Through strategic marketing and engagement initiatives, we will build and maintain a strong brand identity that resonates with consumers both at home and abroad. Promotional activities tailored to audience needs and market conditions will further enhance product visibility, support sales growth, and reinforce the reputation of Welsh red meat as a premium, sustainable choice.





Priority 2: Develop and lead the implementation of initiatives that improve economic and environmental sustainability

To ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the Welsh red meat industry, it is imperative to balance economic performance with environmental stewardship. This priority encompasses the importance of understanding the industry's current status, fostering ongoing improvements in productivity, and integrating sustainability principles throughout the supply chain. Through collaboration and a commitment to innovation, the industry can remain resilient, competitive, profitable, and contribute positively to Wales's natural environment.

Measure the current position and identify activities to drive improvements

We will commission and deliver comprehensive assessments to establish clear benchmarks for both economic performance and environmental impact across the Welsh red meat industry. By identifying strengths and areas for improvement, we will set realistic targets and track progress over time. This evidence-based approach will ensure that interventions are targeted and measurable, supporting long-term industry resilience.

Research opportunities that improve productivity, adapt to and mitigate climate change, and enhance Wales's biodiversity and natural capital

Ongoing investment in research and innovation is vital to drive productivity gains and ensure the industry can adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. We will support projects and research that promote productivity improvements, sustainable farming practices, efficient resource use, and the protection and enhancement of Wales's natural capital. By ensuring that we are at the forefront of scientific developments and their application at farm level, the industry can increase its competitiveness while safeguarding and enhancing the environment for future generations.

Lead the collaboration with appropriate partners to ensure the adoption of improvements identified

We will actively foster collaborations with partner levy bodies, research institutions, government bodies, knowledge transfer deliverers and industry stakeholders to accelerate the adoption of best practice. By working together, we can overcome barriers to change and ensure that improvements are implemented effectively across the supply chain. This collaborative approach will help embed sustainability at the heart of the Welsh red meat industry.



Priority 3: Provide proactive, robust and evidence-based advocacy of the industry

In a competitive trading and evolving policy landscape, the Welsh red meat industry needs a unified voice to promote its interests, defend its reputation and engage stakeholders and policymakers for future growth and success.

Develop and deploy an evidence-based approach to industry advocacy

Our advocacy efforts will be grounded in robust, Welsh focused, data and evidence, ensuring that our stated positions are credible and persuasive. By undertaking and sharing research, we will inform public debate and policy decisions, highlighting the positive contributions of the Welsh red meat industry. This approach will help build trust with stakeholders and policymakers together with evidencing the Welsh brands distinct identity.

Advocate the wider economic and social importance of the Welsh red meat industry

We will actively communicate the vital role the red meat industry plays in supporting rural economies, sustaining communities, preserving cultural heritage and environmental stewardship. The work will also advocate for the importance of a red meat as a part of a healthy, balanced diet. By showcasing real-life stories

and economic data, we will demonstrate the industry's value, helping secure ongoing support and recognition from the public and decision makers.

Champion the interests of the red meat industry within Welsh and UK public policy

We will challenge and engage constructively with government at all levels to ensure that the needs and priorities of the Welsh red meat industry are understood and reflected in policy discussions and decisions. By representing the industry's interests in suitable forums and formats, we can influence the development of supportive regulatory and funding frameworks. This proactive stance will help safeguard the future of the industry in a changing policy landscape.

These priorities and actions will specifically benefit the Welsh red meat industry. HCC will also collaborate with other levy bodies to support, drive and advocate activities that will bring benefit to the wider GB industry. Examples of this activity include seeking additional international market access, adding value to fifth quarter, researching the nutritional benefits of red meat and elements of industry advocacy and defence.



Implementation

HCC will implement, with measurable outcomes and clear accountability, the priorities outlined in this document. It is envisaged that to ensure successful delivery of these priorities there will need to be significant augmentation of HCC's funding, which in 2025/26 is almost exclusively Welsh Red Meat Levy. Additional supplementary funds will be actively pursued to support and enhance delivery of activities against the priorities outlined.

HCC also publishes a Business Plan, which will outline how this strategy and the priorities identified will be delivered in detail.





Annex 1: Legal and policy context

Below outlines the legal and policy context on which this document rests:

- Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023
- Agricultural Soil Policy Statement
- Animal health and welfare strategy
- Anti racist Wales Action Plan 2024
- Clean Air Plan for Wales: Healthy Air, Healthy Wales
- Climate Adaptation Strategy for Wales
- Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy
- Economic Mission - Priorities for a Stronger Economy, & the Foundational Economy
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- Net Zero Wales
- Programme for government
- Resilient Ecological Networks
- Strategic Vision for the Food and Drink Industry
- Sustainable Farming Scheme, (SFS)
- Tourism industry strategy
- Wales Community Food Strategy
- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act