



EU targets farms as part of low-carbon plans

For more information, please contact Chris Wright on 01945 465767



By Chris Wright

The European Union (EU) has published a draft law which requires European countries to record any changes in CO₂ emissions that result from forestry or farming activities.

However, it stopped short of requiring this information to be included in its Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

While the current European Commission rules for the farming and forestry sectors cover methane and nitrous oxide (two of the main greenhouse gases), the third – CO₂ – is not yet included.

One side effect of excluding land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) is that the emissions from burning biomass fuels, such as

wood, have been counted as zero. This would have to be monitored under the proposals, while targets for land use are not included.

Should a number of years of such reporting prove to be effective, the European Commission would consider including LULUCF in its ETS.

"What we propose today is harmonised rules to account for forests and agriculture emissions. This is the first step to incorporate these sectors into the EU's reduction efforts," said the EU Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard.

"The proposal will also contribute to protect biodiversity and water resources, support rural development and have a more climate-friendly agriculture.

The new rules will now be reviewed by the European Parliament and environment ministers, with no set date for them to be implemented.

"Super dairy" plans in spotlight again

For more information, please contact Bill Creasey on 01775 711333

The controversial issue of "super dairies" has arisen once again after legislators in Wales intervened in a planning application for a 1,000 cow dairy in Powys.

The plans have recently been given the go-ahead by local councillors, but Welsh ministers will now make the final decision following concerns.

In a letter to Powys County Council, Welsh environment minister John Griffiths said the planning application appeared to "conflict" with national policies on pollution control and on conserving the historic environment.

"Consequently, the minister hereby directs that the planning application... shall be determined by the Welsh ministers," his letter said.

The NFU said that while they cannot comment on individual cases, they believe there should be a positive climate for investment in the industry.

Rob Newbery, chief dairy adviser, said: "The NFU certainly supports modern, progressive dairy units.

"Investment has been lacking in the industry for the past 10 years, so to see a farmer willing to invest is encouraging."

Animal welfare groups welcomed the move. Compassion in World Farming chief executive Philip Lymbery said dairying in the UK was under threat from "mega dairies", and the Welsh government's decision to call in the application was important "not just for those in Powys who object to the application, but for the UK dairy industry as a whole".

Government slashes red tape for farmers

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By Bill Creasey

Farmers are to be freed from unnecessary red tape that is holding back the sector's competitiveness.

In February, agriculture minister, Jim Paice announced that the government would take action on 86 percent of the recommendations made by the independent Farming Regulation Task Force. Its report last May recommended more than 200 ways to ease regulatory burdens on farmers and food processors.

Key commitments include:

- ◆ A pilot to increase data sharing between government agencies that, if successful will be extended, leading to less form filling.
- ◆ Closer industry involvement in policy making, to identify non-regulatory approaches wherever possible.
- ◆ A Defra-NFU staff exchange programme.
- ◆ Simplifying messages to farmers about environmental protection rules so they know exactly what they have to do to comply.
- ◆ Fewer inspections for farmers who already meet high environmental and animal welfare standards, as a result of NFU-led regional networks co-ordinating

government agencies, local councils and assurance scheme providers.

"This government wants to help to create the right conditions for businesses to thrive and remove unnecessary burdens which hold back UK economic growth," Mr Paice said.

He added that the government's response to the Farming Regulation Task Force demonstrated a commitment to actions that would make it easier for farmers "to get on with their jobs" and make the most of opportunities.

Farmers will also be able to benefit from changes to the legislation governing environmental matters. Following the Red Tape Challenge, 132 of the regulations covering this area will be amended, with another 53 repealed. According to the NFU, farmers can take advantage of proposals to:

- ◆ Use other forms of evidence for waste transfer notes.
- ◆ Simplify the guidance on hazardous waste.
- ◆ Hold a ministerial summit on ways to tackle fly-tipping.
- ◆ Remove the registration requirement for micro businesses which transport their own waste.
- ◆ Facilitate environmental permitting.
- ◆ Develop a Wildlife Bill to simplify the rules regarding wildlife, landscape and conservation.
- ◆ Improve working practices.
- ◆ Identify the scope for guidance rationalisation.



Farmers urge better water security

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By Andrew Heskin

Farmers have urged the government to provide better water security in order to protect producers in a time of drought.

The call follows a crisis meeting between farmers and water companies, after which environment secretary Caroline Spelman confirmed that large parts of the country were officially in drought.

Areas affected include large parts of the East

Midlands, East Anglia and South East of England.

The news marks the earliest time of year ever that a drought has been declared, and comes after two dry winters in a row.

Paul Hammett of the NFU said: "We want to see evidence from government that it is giving food producers a fair crack of the whip.

"Government must get the balance right between environmental protection and food production. For food security, we need water security."

Farmers have warned that the drought could

see a rise in food prices, unless the government was ready to assist farmers.

Many producers have already taken drastic action in the face of the crisis, including switching to shorter season crops, or even reducing the amount they plant.

Following the summit, Spelman called on the whole country to find ways to save water. "It is not just the responsibility of government, water companies and businesses to act," she argued. "We are asking for the help of everyone by urging them to use less water, and to start now."

Farmers urged to take advantage of growing food and drink exports

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By Chris Wright

Exports of UK food and non-alcoholic drinks grew by 11.4 percent in 2011, according to the latest figures from the Food and Drink Federation.

Agricultural products fared particularly well.

While dairy exports increased by 19 percent, those in the meat sector were now valued at £1.8 billion. Beef was the star attraction, with 32 percent growth year-on-year, followed by lamb (20 percent), poultry (17 percent) and pork (15 percent).

Speaking at Food and Drink Expo 2012, the agriculture minister, Jim Paice urged farmers to take advantage of this surge by looking to export and open up new markets.

"Food and drink exports are growing and we are working to open new markets to help build a business mindset," he said.

"We want to encourage small and medium businesses to explore industry overseas. I will be visiting China in May to look at how we could do just that."

Indeed, exports to China grew by 55 percent year-on-year in 2011, while those to South Africa surged by 66 percent. Despite this, 77 percent of exports were to European countries – more food was exported to Belgium in 2011 than all the high growth markets, such as China and India, combined.

"We also have the perfect opportunity with the Olympics to showcase everything which is good about Britain to the rest of the world," Mr Paice added.

Farmers looking to take advantage of the growing market for food and drink exports will be able to benefit from the Farming, Food and Drink Exports Plan developed by Defra, UK Trade and Investment, industry trade associations and top exporting companies in order to make it simpler to export British food.

The action plan aims to remove trade barriers and encourage more companies and food producers to export and champion British food abroad.

"British food is already known the world over for its quality and, with surging world population growth and demand for western products, there are huge opportunities for our producers to tap into emerging markets," Mr Paice said at the time.



- ◆ Raising finance
- ◆ Succession issues
- ◆ Taxation planning
- ◆ Outsourcing
- ◆ Land transaction planning
- ◆ Tax legislation
- ◆ Property transaction planning
- ◆ New ventures and diversification

McDonald's aims to make a difference

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By Andrew Heskin

Restaurants giant McDonald's has launched a long-term programme to support British and Irish farming.

The Farm Forward programme, launched on 23rd March, will

support existing farmers and help young farmers into the industry.

McDonald's spends more than £320 million per year on its UK supply chain compared to £269 million in 2009 and buys ingredients from more than 17,500 British and Irish farmers.

Farm Forward, which will invest £1 million in its first year, has been created in collaboration with leading farmers and agricultural experts including the National Farm Research Unit and beef and lamb industry organisation EBLEX. It will launch with three projects:

- ◆ A training programme for young farmers, starting in July this year, which will enable agricultural students to complete a 12-month

placement to gain experience across the whole spectrum of the agricultural supply chain, from farm to abattoir to restaurant.

- ◆ A free carbon calculator to help livestock farmers measure and understand how to change their working practices in order to drive greater efficiencies on their farms and improve environmental performance. In 2012, more than 200 farmers will trial the calculator before it is modified as necessary and made available to beef farmers across the UK and Ireland next year.
- ◆ Funding new research and innovation to encourage improvements in animal welfare standards by providing evidence and practical guidance for farmers.

Brian Mullens, Senior Vice President, Supply Chain, McDonald's UK said: "We know the farming industry faces some challenging issues, and as a big customer of British and Irish farming, we want to do more to support the industry.

"Supporting the next generation of farmers is vital if we are to secure the future of farming

in this country, and our new work programme for young farmers is designed to help them develop the blend of skills and experience that progressive, modern farmers want and need."



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