

The County Farms Estate
DEFRA Clean Air Strategy 2018

Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee notes the report and asks the land agents to ensure tenants are signposted to the specific guidance, advice, training and funding referred to in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7 below.

1.0 Draft Clean Air Strategy 2018

- 1.1 The draft Clean Air Strategy outlines ambitions relating to reducing air pollution in the round, making our air healthier to breathe, protecting nature, and boosting the economy. In the draft strategy, DEFRA set out a clear direction for future air quality policies and goals. The strategy sits alongside three other important UK government strategies: the Industry Strategy, the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- 1.2 DEFRA consulted on the draft strategy earlier this year with consultation responses due back by 14 August. The feedback will help inform the final UK Clean Air Strategy and detailed National Air Pollution Control Programme to be published by March 2019.
- 1.3 The draft Clean Air Strategy 2018 sets out actions to improve air quality by reducing pollution from a wide range of sources, including agriculture.

2.0 Proposed actions to reduce emissions from farming

- 2.1 The principal air pollutant emitted through farming that DEFRA seeks to tackle is ammonia (NH₃), methane (CH₄) and non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC's).
- 2.2 Ammonia is emitted during storage, land spreading and deposition of manures and slurries, and from application of inorganic fertilisers. Agriculture accounted for 88% of UK emissions in 2016. Ammonia reacts with nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide to form secondary particulate matter which significantly impacts on human health.
- 2.3 Cattle Farming, particularly dairy farming, accounts for a substantial proportion of ammonia emissions whereas extensively grazed livestock, which are not housed, make a small contribution to ammonia emissions.

- 2.4 A number of existing frameworks are in place to limit ammonia emissions from agriculture. Intensive pig and poultry farms are point sources of ammonia emissions and those over a certain size are regulated under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2018 (implementing the Integrated Pollution Prevention & Control Directive in England and Wales). Operators of intensive farms over specified thresholds must hold an environmental permit which requires adoption of Best Available Techniques for their production processes to reduce emissions to air, water and land. The use of these techniques reduces emissions from these facilities by around 30%.
- 2.5 Agriculture also accounts for around 51% of methane emissions and 14% of NMVOC emissions. These contribute to ozone formation.
- 2.6 The government is already acting to help farmers to reduce ammonia emissions. The focus of action so far has been on enabling farmers to invest in the equipment that will help to achieve this objective. As a first step, practical help for farmers was provided through the Farming Ammonia Reduction Grant Scheme which funded slurry store covers, and on-farm advice. Funding is now available through the Countryside Productivity Scheme to help farmers purchase manure management equipment including low emission spreaders and through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme for slurry tank and lagoon covers for farmers in priority water catchments.
- 2.7 DEFRA are also delivering a £3m programme of support to farmers over the next 3 years. This will start with demonstration events across the country in autumn 2018, showcasing low-emission spreading equipment and providing advice on other practical mitigation methods, such as slurry and manure storage, housing, animal feed and fertiliser use. Practical help to reduce ammonia emissions will be available to farmers in high priority water catchment areas through their catchment sensitive farming officer by the end of the year.
- 2.8 DEFRA are developing a national advisory code of good agricultural practice to reduce ammonia emissions in collaboration with farming organisations, which will be published later this year. They will explore whether the code could form the basis of a clean air standard within a wider gold standard for farmers.
- 2.9 DEFRA state that more still needs to be done to reduce emissions of ammonia in line with national targets. To achieve this, they will introduce clear, proportionate regulations. The three approaches proposed below could be introduced separately or in combination.

(a) Introduction of nitrogen (or fertiliser) limits

DEFRA will task a group of independent specialists to make recommendations by November 2019 on the maximum limits that should be applied for (organic and inorganic) fertiliser application, taking account of economic efficiency and commitments to reduce ammonia and greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and to protect sensitive habitats and water bodies.

(b) Extension of environmental permitting to large dairy farms by 2025

Ammonia emissions arising from dairy cattle accounted for around 28% of UK agricultural ammonia emissions in 2016. However, emissions from the dairy sector are not currently regulated. Given their contribution to ammonia emissions and other pollutants, there may be a case for adopting similar controls for the largest dairy farms to those currently applied to intensive pig and poultry units under the

environmental permitting regime. In the UK, around 60% of ammonia emissions from dairy farms are from farm premises with over 150 cows. This approach would require industry and government to agree appropriate emission limits and Best Available Techniques for the sector, and regulated farms would then be given time to implement the proposals. It is proposed that the requirements should be implemented on the largest dairy farms by 2025. It is anticipated that other policies would be needed, in addition to the extension of environmental permitting to large dairy farms, in order to meet the ammonia emissions reduction targets.

(c) Rules on specific emissions-reducing practices

DEFRA propose to introduce the following rules through regulation:

- a requirement to spread urea-based fertilisers in conjunction with urease inhibitors, unless applied by injection on appropriate land by 2020
- mandatory design standards for new livestock housing by 2022; DEFRA propose that the standards would be developed in conjunction with industry and cover at least poultry, pig and dairy housing
- a requirement for all solid manure and solid digestate spread to bare land to be incorporated rapidly (within 12 hours) by 2022
- a requirement to spread slurries and digestate using low-emission spreading equipment (trailing shoe or trailing hose or injection) by 2027
- the requirement for all slurry and digestate stores and manure heaps to be covered by 2027

3.0 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Alternative options have been considered and discounted as they are believed to either be contrary to current Estate policy and/or not in the best financial interests of the Estate.

4.0 Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

- 4.1 The views and opinions of the Devon Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and the Estate Tenants Association will be presented by the two co-opted members to the committee.
- 4.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations for or against the proposal have been received
- 4.3 The technical data is believed to be true and accurate.

5.0 Considerations

- 5.1 The Author is not aware of any financial, sustainability, carbon impact, equality, legal, risk management or public health issues arising from this report

6.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Author has prepared this report in accordance with the findings of the County Farms Estate Strategic Review (April 2010)

Rob Parkhouse, Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers:

None

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