

June 2010



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

The Sustainable Livestock Bill 2010

A short guide

In June 2010 Robert Ffello MP chose to introduce a new Sustainable Livestock Bill following his success in the Private Members' Ballot (he was drawn in second place). This means there is a real chance of his Bill becoming law.

Mr Ffello is now consulting on his Bill before needing to publish it towards the end of October. He has said he will take as a starting point the Bill presented in the last Parliament by Peter Ainsworth (then MP for Surrey East). This Bill required the Secretary of State to introduce a strategy to improve the sustainability of livestock farming and the consumption of livestock produce. We believe this is the right approach and we are campaigning with Mr Ffello to get his Bill into Law.

This briefing outlines some of the detail of what this strategy could include, why these measures are proposed and how they could work.

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Livestock, climate change and deforestation

If we are to address global deforestation and runaway climate change, the considerable environmental and social damage caused by production and consumption of intensive livestock products must be addressed.

The hidden link that connects the meat and dairy products that we use to rainforest destruction and climate change is the feed farm animals eat. Intensive farming methods in Europe rely heavily on high-protein animal feeds, which have created a global food chain in which UK poultry, pigs and cattle depend on feed crops from the other side of the world. Soy, grown and imported from Latin America, has become the main source of protein in animal feed. It has led to the conversion of huge swathes of land in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina causing deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions and the loss of valuable wildlife habitat. The UN have estimated that the livestock sector globally is responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite these sizeable impacts, until a few years ago action on climate change was usually focused on transport or building efficiency, and rainforest campaigns on logging. Even as the major impact of the livestock sector has been understood, a fear has remained that this is an area that is in some way "too difficult" to tackle through Government policy.

In fact Government policy already affects this sector – it is just that it is often the wrong way. We are spending huge amounts of taxpayers' money on subsidies that make the problem worse, or buying food for our schools and hospitals that is not produced using the best farming methods. Government now has an opportunity to tackle this – there is broad agreement among farmers, citizens and NGOs that we need to take urgent action to reduce the impacts of intensive livestock..

There is no single silver bullet that will solve these problems – action in a number of areas will be required. The right package of policies can however bring about the necessary changes, both to how we farm in the UK, and how much meat and dairy are produced and consumed. They would provide gains for human health and animal welfare and reinvigorate a thriving, but sustainable, UK farming sector.

It is also important that the policy package supports farmers and enables them to make a transition to more planet-friendly farming. Policies must also be carefully designed so they do not simply displace damaging methods of feed production to other countries.

For this reason, we have been calling for a Sustainable Livestock Bill which will require the Secretary of State to consult widely, and then to lay out proposals for improving the sustainability of livestock farming and the consumption of livestock produce.

This briefing outlines the ideas put forward in an earlier version of the Sustainable Livestock Bill, put forward in Parliament by Peter Ainsworth, then MP for Surrey East. We believe this could form the basis for the new Ffello Bill. The briefing also outlines some policies which will be needed in the strategy, explaining why they are proposed and how they could work.

How the Bill could work

A Sustainable Livestock Bill should require the Secretary of State to prepare a strategy to improve the sustainability of livestock farming and the sustainability of the consumption of livestock produce. This must be done within two years, and following wide consultation. It also must be designed in such a way that the policies improve total global impacts, not simply UK impacts. We do not want policies that would displace production from the UK to Poland, or Brazil simply so that emissions do not appear on the UK balance sheet, for example.

Once produced, the strategy should be presented to and approved by Parliament. The Secretary of State must then take the steps necessary to implement it, and report on progress in coming years.

The Bill need not specify the detailed policies required in the strategy, but should specify key areas that must be addressed. These areas are below, along with some information on the kind of policies we believe should be included in the eventual strategy.

1. The use of subsidies and grants to encourage or discourage the use of particular practices, methods, feeds and crops

Existing farm subsidies should be used to support a switch to grass-based and extensive meat and dairy production and to promote home-grown protein crop production. Support from farm subsidies would also be used to ensure the UK maintains traditional livestock farming such as on the uplands which has major benefits for landscape, biodiversity and carbon emissions and allow sustainable high animal welfare farming to compete in the marketplace.

The UK position and public debate on the 2013 reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should focus on how all subsidies and other supports underpin a move to demonstrably sustainable, low carbon livestock farming and feed systems.

Background

Friends of the Earth has calculated that an estimated £700 million of English taxpayers' money was spent on propping up factory farming through the CAP in 2008.¹ Small farms are losing out to factory farms - the most damaging link in a chain that connects the food on our plates to forest destruction in South America. UK factory farms also contribute significantly to the UK greenhouse gas emissions and undermine rural livelihoods.

Instead, we should be using the agriculture and rural development funds available under the CAP and in domestic programmes to ensure: the growth of mixed farming systems; the use of home-grown protein for animal feed and reduced reliance on the need for

¹ This figure is therefore based on the best available information and calculated on the basis of subsidies spent on:

- Subsidies for cereal production which are used in animal feed in factory farms
- Export subsidies which largely go to companies and processing industries
- Untargeted direct payments which are increasing money being received by the intensive pig and poultry sectors
- Historical payments that award the biggest payments to the farms that produced intensively in the past
- Dairy payments that are based on historical production quotas

Lowland grazing livestock untargeted subsidies that do not support extensive models adequately and therefore continue to support the increasing tendency to intensify or exit the farming sector

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imported animal feed and oil-based fertilizers and pesticides; and systems like organic, which build up soil fertility and locks up soil carbon - providing climate benefits - as well as providing local wildlife benefits.

Although much of the finance comes via the EU, the UK can decide how it spends much of the CAP funding. It must make changes and redirect as much of this money on small and planet-friendly farming. The CAP will be reformed in 2013 - Ministers must use their voice in Europe to bring about a new CAP that delivers planet-friendly farming in the long term.

2. The use of taxes or levies to encourage or discourage the use of particular practices, methods, feeds and crops

Livestock systems can create significant air and water and soil pollution. The government must make far greater efforts to enforce strong pollution controls (water, soil, air, waste) effectively so that the most intensive livestock systems pay the costs of the damage they incur, and that good practice is rewarded. The Government should investigate whether new taxes or levies would provide an effective incentive to achieve more planet friendly farming in the UK.

3. Policies affecting the public procurement of livestock produce

The Government should commit to assessing the impact of meat, dairy and eggs bought with taxpayers' money. It should ensure that all livestock products (meat, dairy, poultry products) procured publicly, do not damage important biodiverse sites, do address carbon reduction targets, do follow national environmental legislation and which do support local sustainable livestock production such as organic where possible. This should affect meals in the government estate, in local and national government, schools, hospitals, care homes, and other publicly funded food service and the armed forces.

This will inevitably require a reduced reliance on cheaply procured meat and dairy processed products and an emphasis on local quality produce, such as grass fed meat. This would provide health, environmental as well as local economic benefits. It should also include changes to menus, and education and awareness-raising schemes to encompass a change in overall consumption and the use of measures such as standard-setting and best practice, skills development in the procurement sector.

Background

£2.2bn is the estimated public spend on food in schools and hospitals, prisons and care homes of which around 2% is spent on local suppliers. Standards for the quantity and types of food provided are largely related to baseline safety and nutrition. It is not currently possible to say how much of the £2.2 billion is spent on meat and dairy purchases but data from household expenditure surveys suggest the amount could be around £0.77bn.² This spend has immense potential to help transform supply chains and production standards, but is being squandered on a top-down 'cheapest is best' mentality.

² Approximately 35% of total average weekly household spend is on meat and dairy products (£16.60 of £46.90). http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Family_Spending_2006/FamilySpending2007_web.pdf

The Netherlands government has already announced that it will aim for 100% sustainable procurement by 2010, to include sustainable food – with criteria relating to agricultural chemical use, farming methods, animal welfare, tackling food packaging and waste, fair trade, and communicating sustainability to customers. The Organic Action Plan (OAP) for England, contains the aspiration that 50% of public authorities should specify organic food in contracts by 2010. The NHS has also said that procuring less meat for patients could save 18,000 lives a year.³

4. The use of public information campaigns to encourage or discourage particular consumer behaviours

The government should run a major public marketing campaign aimed at achieving specific dietary changes which incorporate less but better meat ('better' meaning reduced global environmental impact). To be effective it would need to reach different consumer audiences and provide support and advice for consumers as well as information on their choices. Industry action will be a valuable part of this measure but will not, by itself, be adequate to change the nation's diet. This could build on the lessons learnt in the Department of Health's five-a-day programme. Awareness of the five-a-day message is increasing, albeit slowly, as is fresh fruit consumption.

5. The positions to be taken by the Government in the EU and other international policy fora where policies affecting livestock farming and the consumption of livestock produce are agreed

The UK has a major voice in European policy making as well as in international fora such as the World Bank, the international climate negotiations and the World Trade Organization. In all these fora decisions are being discussed that will have major impacts on the way livestock and animal feed are produced and traded around the world.

European Agricultural Policy

As noted above, whilst the UK can decide how it spends some of EU agriculture funds and domestic grants – it must negotiate at EU level on the reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy which will be complete by 2013. They should push for a whole new framework of support for planet friendly farming systems. In addition to spending UK CAP funding to support sustainable livestock farming as proposed above, as negotiations begin on the European Agricultural Policy, the UK Government must also promote these ideas in European negotiations.

End Institutional Funding of intensive livestock

According to work carried out by ex-World Bank environmental chief, Robert Goodland, the private branch of the World Bank, the International Financial Corporation (IFC) has funded damaging livestock projects to the tune of \$672 million (£388million). All these projects have both local social and environmental impacts including greenhouse gas emissions but also global impacts through the required import of soya feeds. As a

³ On the state of public health: Annual report of the Chief Medical Officer 2009

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funder of the World Bank, this Government must commit to ensuring that the Bank instructs its IFC subsidiary to follow all WB policies and strategies which includes:

- a) The Livestock strategy which means no funding to industrial livestock production.
- b) Nutrition Strategy which does not recommend meat consumption.

Prevent subsidies for intensive production through the UNFCCC

In international climate negotiations the UK Government must ensure that neither intensive livestock production nor monoculture feed plantations are subsidized through the Clean Development Mechanism or carbon trading mechanisms.

6. The setting of targets for reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases and biodiversity loss arising from livestock farming and the consumption of livestock produce

It is possible to produce and consume meat and dairy in a way that enhances carbon storage and biodiversity in the UK and globally. Rather than accepting trends of rising intensive livestock production, the strategy must challenge it. It must include sectoral targets for GHG emissions and biodiversity loss to ensure that reducing livestock global impact is embedded in all policies affecting production and consumption.

The Government's Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) strategy attempts to measure and improve the sustainability of key products, services and materials to reduce their environmental impacts. This area of work has the potential to address some of the best and worst food products and to help refine the process of measuring and reducing the impact of all food consumed. But the current approach fails to acknowledge the impacts of the livestock sector and committing to action to address it, thereby omitting one of the most significant product areas that contribute to global environmental impact.

7. The ways in which research and development into livestock farming and the consumption of livestock produce are to be supported

In recognising the urgent need for new ways of farming to reduce global GHG and biodiversity impact, this government must increase public funding (or use existing funds) for research into modern sustainable farming systems which use lower levels of livestock, lower levels of inputs and which maximise the potential for mixed farming.

This research needs to investigate changes - for instance to livestock breeds, feed plant varieties, cropping systems - to deliver a UK farming system that matches need with environmental, rural development and public health goals. This should include setting up a Sustainable Agricultural Research Council to provide an appropriate and well-funded institutional setting.

Organic mixed farming systems in the UK provide a valuable base from which to start as they have benefited from a period of considerable investment in breeding, cropping and input testing to maximise outputs whilst minimising impacts. Public

funds must also be directed into finding ways to help consumers choose diets containing lower levels of livestock products.