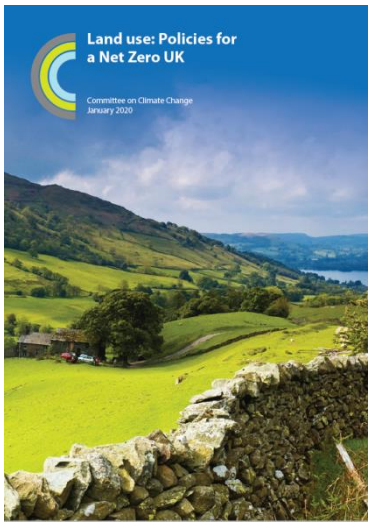
REA Members Briefing
Committee on Climate Change: Land Use Policies for a Net Zero UK



The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has released a new report on land use and its role in meeting the UK's 2050 net-zero decarbonisation targets.

Within the report, they call for major changes in how the UK uses its land to reduce emissions by almost two thirds by 2050. They also highlight how this change can drive opportunities for farmers and land managers to be rewarded for providing environmental services that actively help the UK cut its emissions.

It is encouraging that the role of bioenergy is recognised within the report, further strengthening the messages the REA highlighted in their Bioenergy Strategy last year.

The CCC set out five key objectives for the government to consider:

- ***Increase tree planting*** – increasing UK forestry cover from 13% to at least 17% by 2050 by planting around 30,000 hectares (90 – 120 million trees) of broadleaf and conifer woodland each year.
- ***Encourage low-carbon farming practices*** – such as 'controlled-release' fertilisers, improving livestock health and slurry acidification.
- ***Restore peatlands*** – restoring at least 50% of upland peat and 25% of lowland peat.
- ***Encourage bioenergy crops*** – expanding UK energy crops to around 23,000 hectares each year.
- ***Reduce food waste and consumption of the most carbon-intensive foods*** – reduce the 13.6 million tonnes of food waste produced annually by 20% and the consumption of beef, lamb and dairy by at least 20% per person, well within current healthy eating guidelines.

The REA put out a statement following the report's publication, highlighting that Government act quickly to put in place policies that secure demand for domestic bioenergy feedstocks.

There are a large number of regulatory and policy proposals put forward by the CCC which the Government will now need to consider. Those relevant to REA Members are highlighted below.

CCC Position on Bioenergy

The CCC calls for the expanded growth of energy crops by around 23,000 hectares each year to deliver 2 MtCO2e emissions savings in the land sector and an extra 11 MtCO2e from the harvested biomass (e.g. when used with CCS). Bioenergy crops are faster growing than new woodlands and are needed as part of the overall mix of land-based measures. However, risks of negative impacts of bioenergy crops need to be managed.

Recommendations

• The main instrument should be a market mechanism (e.g. trading scheme or auctioned contracts), which could be funded by emitting sectors (e.g. fossil fuel suppliers or airlines). This

mechanism could also apply to agroforestry schemes that deliver clear carbon sequestration benefits.
• Public money should fund the non-carbon benefits of afforestation, such as biodiversity and flood alleviation, which will also have benefits for climate change adaptation.
• Public money for carbon and non-carbon benefits of and broadleaf management.
• Adopt existing CAP cross-compliance rules on protecting hedgerows into UK legislation.
• The tax treatment of woodlands should be reviewed and, if necessary, amended to ensure there is no disadvantage to farmers from changing their use of land to forestry.

CCC Position on Afforestation and Agro-forestry

The CCC suggests that the UK should increase forestry cover from 13% to at least 17% by 2050 by planting around 30,000 hectares or more of broadleaf and conifer woodland each year. Together with improved woodland management, this would deliver annual emissions sequestration by 2050 of 14 MtCO2e in forests with an additional 14 MtCO2e from harvested materials.

Planting trees on agricultural land, while maintaining their primary use ("agroforestry"), could deliver a further 6 MtCO2e savings by 2050. Sustainably managed forests are important for reducing emissions across the economy. They provide a store of carbon in the landscape and harvested wood can be used sustainably for combustion and carbon sequestration in the energy sector (e.g. when used with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology) and as wood in construction, creating an additional stock of carbon in the built environment.

Recommendations

• Continue to exclude combustion processes that exclusively use biomass from the EU ETS or its UK successor.
• Continue to support biomass generation through existing market mechanisms in the short term. Support should transition to best uses longer term.
• Introduce a requirement for biomass combustion facilities to source a fixed proportion of their crops from the UK.
• Concessionary finance to top up funding to cover the loss of annual income while the crop is being established.

CCC On Food Waste

Along with recommendation to help consumers shift diets, reducing consumption of meat, the CCC calls on the government to tackle the 13.6 mn tonnes of food waste per year by implementing steps to reduce food waste from the farm to the householder. This should include immediate low-cost measures (e.g. target setting in the public and private sectors); measures to 'nudge' consumers towards best practice and **mandatory separate food waste collection.**

CCC on Low-Carbon Farming Practices.

The CCC highlight that practices such as controlled-release fertilisers, improving livestock health and slurry acidification can reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from soils, livestock and manure management by 10 MtCO2e by 2050.2

Recommendations

• Adopt existing environmental stewardship rules that have benefited mitigation in UK legislation.
• Extend coverage of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones to all of the UK.
• Include measures that reduce methane emissions in the Clean Air Strategy.
• Include low-cost and low-regret measures in future baseline regulation.
• Provide public money for more expensive measures above the baseline.
• Mandate UK feeds producers to incorporate methane inhibiting additives in compound feed.

Note: It is disappointing that the CCC has not made stronger recommendations around compost and anaerobic digestion. The REA will be pushing for reference to low carbon farming practices in government policy to include the application of organic derived soil improvers and fertilisers like composts and digestates which can help build up the carbon in the soil and replace carbon-intensive chemical fertilisers. Anaerobically digesting slurries at farms are a significant opportunity with 90 million tonnes of slurries and manures generated in the UK every year.

CCC on Peat Land Restoration

CCC state that restoring at least 50% of upland peat and 25% of lowland peat would reduce peatland emissions by 5 MtCO2e by 2050 while allowing food production to continue on the most productive land.

Recommendation

• Ban rotational burning on peatlands.
• Mandate all peatland within a Site of Special Scientific Interest to be under restoration.
• Mandate water companies to restore peatland under their ownership.
• Public money to fund the carbon and noncarbon benefits of restoration.
• In the longer-term, the use of market mechanisms to pay for the carbon benefits.

Making the Economic Case for Land Use Management

The CCC's analysis shows that delivery of their recommendations, necessary for reaching a net-zero land-use scenarios, will require an additional expenditure of £1.4 billion per year. However, this investment is expected to deliver a net social benefit of £3.3 billion per year. This includes private benefits brought about through livestock farming practices (e.g. take-up of improved breeding practices), the anaerobic digestion of waste on farms, the sale of wood and bioenergy products from woodland creation, broadleaf management and bioenergy crop production.

The CCC, therefore, make clear a strong connection between sustainable land use activities and the growth of bioenergy feedstock. The demand for such feedstocks must, therefore, be maintained to ensure farmers and land-managers are rewarded for such investments. This is an important message the REA wish to further highlight to government in 2020, building on our Bioenergy Strategy from last year.

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