Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Resources and Waste Targets Expert Group

Meeting minutes – 16 July 2021

Attendees

Expert panellists: Paul Ekins (Chair), John Barrett, Margaret Bates, Raimund Bleischwitz, Peter Hopkinson, Lucy O'Shea, Jacopo Torriti

Apologies: Phil Purnell. Other attendees: Defra group officials and representatives from WRAP

1. Resources and Waste Targets Update

1.1. Defra provided an update on ongoing Resources and Waste Targets work. There has also been recent consideration about the possibility of breaking down the targets further, e.g. by material for the residual waste target and by sector for the resource productivity target. RWTEG views sought on the relative merits of this approach, and how best to go about doing this.

1.2. RWTEG were generally supportive of breaking down the targets further, but commented that it would be important not to lose absolute figures if more disaggregated targets were put forward.

1.3. For the residual waste target, RWTEG commented that many materials are already covered by other commitments and that it would perhaps be better to consider setting a carbon-based residual waste target, rather than disaggregating by material streams. The potential to target individual materials with policy levers was also discussed.

2. Discussion on WRAP food waste deep dive for resource productivity target

2.1. WRAP presented recent deep dive work into policy pathways for the food waste sector. Percentage food waste reductions were based on published research where available. Where no scientific evidence base existed, these were instead typically based on a mixture of assumption and expert judgement, depending on the intervention.

2.2. RWTEG commented that it would be useful to shortlist policy interventions by analysing multipliers or synergies as well as trade-offs in policy interactions – these could be based on assumptions or expert judgement where necessary. Additionally, relatively simple assumptions of constant food waste have been used, and modelling has been done on an aggregate level such that swapping between products is not necessarily captured. Currently the

interactions between the impacts are not analysed owing to difficulties in determining the sequence of implementation for the policy interventions.

2.3. It was suggested that analysis should look to include impacts around food surplus, e.g. food used for biofuel or animal feed. The linkages between food waste and the residual waste target work were also noted, e.g. food waste used for animal feed would reduce residual waste but isn't necessarily the best use of resource.

2.4. It was recommended to consider further how the impacts of policies could be visualised and communicated effectively to external audiences.

3. **Discussion on baseline scenario development and proposed metric for residual waste target**

3.1. A presentation was given by Defra to highlight options around development of the baseline scenarios for the municipal waste model, as well as the proposed per capita residual waste metric.

3.2. The current modelling uses OBR GDP upside and downside forecasts to project alternative scenarios for gross domestic household income (GDHI), but this has little impact on household residual waste in comparison to the central forecast. Defra proposed that alternative scenarios around additional drivers should also be considered, to bring the approach more in line with that for the resource productivity target.

3.3. RWTEG commented on the importance of considering the fit of the current municipal waste model, before exploring alternative scenarios. The general consensus was that if changes in GDHI projections don't affect the projection by much then changes in other drivers are also unlikely to have a large impact and so not worth investing the time to investigate alternative scenarios. It was agreed that work should instead now be focused on modelling the impacts of residual waste policy interventions.

3.4. For the residual waste target, pros and cons were presented for potential alternatives to the proposed per capita municipal waste metric, namely municipal residual waste per household and absolute municipal residual waste tonnages.

3.5. RWTEG generally supported the proposed municipal residual waste per capita metric, given population is a variable that is outside government's control. Per household would unnecessarily introduce the additional factor of average household composition changing. Ethically, per capita makes sense, such that individuals are all entitled to a certain amount of the environment as a waste sink.

3.6. There was some support for an absolute target that would decouple waste growth from population. This would be more aspirational from an environmental point of view, but concerns were raised around whether policy levers would be able to reduce absolute tonnages, with population increases. It was also suggested that an absolute target might, to some extent, be easier to enforce.

3.7. RWTEG suggested that the ideal solution might be to have multiple metrics, i.e. both an absolute and a per capita target.

4. Next Steps

4.1. Resource productivity – To present results of literature review on construction-related policies during the next meeting in August. To further consider then the need for Delphi style workshops to estimate possible impacts of policies on resource productivity.

4.2. Residual waste – further thinking around the baseline scenarios, then moving on to start modelling the impacts of the collection and packaging reforms, and additional policies.

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