

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Farming Regulation Task Force

Implementation Update

December 2012

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Introduction

1. This document provides an update on progress made by Defra towards meeting the commitments made in response to the Farming Regulation Task Force (“Task Force”) recommendations.

Context

1. The Farming Regulation Task Force, led by Richard Macdonald, published its report in May 2011. It made over 200 challenging recommendations directed at Government and industry. The Task Force suggested a new approach to, and culture of, regulation. It also called for a strengthened relationship between Government and industry, and for a risk based approach to regulation, which rewards good practice with less frequent inspections.
2. Defra published a full response to the Task Force in February 2012 where we committed to taking action to reduce regulatory burdens on farmers.

Update

2. Good progress is being made by Defra, our agencies and other government departments to implement the commitments made in response to the Task Force with a number of commitments met so far, including:
 - Setting up the Regulatory Scrutiny Panel to take a strategic overview of the way Defra is shaping and implementing regulation across all sectors of the economy, and the Task Force Implementation Group, chaired by Richard Macdonald, to hold us to account in meeting our Task Force commitments.
 - Reviewing the data protection rules governing how we hold farmers’ information in Defra and the agencies. We have effectively busted the myth that data sharing is not possible across the different Network databases.
 - Completing a review of cross compliance measures looking at the opportunities available for making inspection and enforcement more outcome-focused (where this can be done without compromising environmental outcomes or breaching EU law). The results of this review are now feeding into CAP negotiations.
3. We are on target to meet the majority of our Task Force commitments. We are working closely with the Implementation Group and industry representatives to overcome challenges where they are encountered, such as in the roll out of an earned recognition approach and of changes to animal movement regimes.

Table 1 focuses on progress made to date in the Implementation Group's priority areas. A more detailed assessment of progress will be published in early 2013.

| Table 1: What we've achieved so far | |
|---|---|
| Earned recognition & Inspections | <p>We have applied an earned recognition approach to the Nitrate Regulations inspection regime resulting in reduced inspections for those with a Nutrient Management Plan.</p> <p>New Nitrates regulations, in force early in 2013, will include some exemptions from record keeping for low intensity farms.</p> <p>As reported in the Government response to the Task Force report we have also adopted earned recognition for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Farm animal welfare inspections</u>. As a result, producers who are members of Accredited Welfare Assurance Schemes were not selected in 2012 for a risk-based animal welfare inspection under cross compliance. - <u>Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) inspections for pigs and poultry</u>. The Environment Agency has encouraged the industry to participate in the IPPC Farm Assurance Scheme, and; - <u>Dairy hygiene inspections</u> – Earned recognition introduced by the Food Standards Agency in 2011 (estimated saving to dairy farmers of £1.32m per year). <p>We are working hard to identify other areas in which earned recognition can be applied, and will set these out in more detail in early 2013.</p> |
| Data Sharing | <p>We are seeking out opportunities to reduce the burden of paperwork on farmers by encouraging our agencies to share more data with each other.</p> <p>We have produced a guide for agencies to show how the legal framework can be navigated to promote increased data sharing, helping to reduce the burden of information requests and communications on farmers. This has already resulted in increased data sharing; for example, the Environment Agency has gained access to Customer and Land (CLAD) data, showing the location of all farm businesses with name, address and geographic land boundaries, allowing them to target helpful communications to farmers in a particular geographic area.</p> |

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| <p>Animal Movements</p> | <p>We have rolled out electronic movement reporting for pigs, and work is underway to introduce a similar system for sheep by April 2014.</p> <p>We secured changes to European legislation deferring the introduction of individual movement reporting until 31 December 2014 for the historic national sheep flock. Without this change, UK sheep farmers would have had to record individual numbers manually on movement documents for sheep born before 31 December 2009 or retrospectively EID them at a cost of between £4 -11.5m.</p> |
| <p>Fly-tipping</p> | <p>Fly-tipping continues to be a very complex and difficult issue. A Ministerial fly-tipping summit was held in July 2012 to launch the draft Fly-Tipping Partnership Framework which aims to encourage local solutions to tackling fly-tipped waste.</p> <p>The Framework went out for consultation over the summer and a final version will be published early in 2013.</p> |
| <p>Culture Change</p> | <p>We are working hard to embed meaningful culture change within the department.</p> <p>We have developed a new policy scrutiny process which will ensure that legislation is only introduced when absolutely necessary.</p> <p>We are rolling out a range of measures to ensure closer working with industry representatives and other stakeholders. These measures include a series of farmer led seminars for Defra staff and the rollout of industry immersion visits.</p> |

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