

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Farming Regulation Task Force Implementation Group

Government response to the ‘One Year on’ Assessment

February 2013

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Introduction

I would like to thank Richard Macdonald and the Farming Regulation Task Force Implementation Group for their work in producing this report, and in helping us to drive forward the Task Force's agenda. Their expertise has been invaluable to Defra and has aided us greatly in our work to reduce regulatory burdens on farmers and food processors.

I am pleased that the Implementation Group has recognised the steps taken by Defra, our agencies and other government departments to implement the commitments made in response to the Farming Regulation Task Force. I recognise, however, that farmers are yet to see a tangible difference as a result of these steps.

Over the next year, one of my top priorities will be leading work in Defra, our agencies and across government to ensure we are doing all we can to reduce regulatory burdens on farmers so that the agriculture industry can become even more competitive.

Over the next year and beyond I want farmers to:

- see improvements in the way that inspections are co-ordinated and carried out;
- be able to earn recognition;
- experience simplified and, where possible, less, paperwork to complete;
- benefit from an approach which better understands what they need to run their businesses;
- embrace the part they have to play in policy-making through working in partnership with government;
- see Defra staff out on farms, getting to grips with the issues that are of importance for the farming industry;
- work with other interested parties on a local level to roll out a catchment-based approach to managing diffuse pollution;
- receive simple, clear guidance and messages about what the government is asking them to do;
- provide input into a new CAP which increases the competitiveness of the industry and can be implemented with minimal bureaucracy.

The actions which we will take in order to achieve these outcomes are detailed in our plan of action, which is set out in this document. I also welcome the challenge that the Implementation Group's report has set out to industry and hope that each farming sector can play a constructive part in freeing up farmers from regulatory burdens while

maintaining high standards of food safety, improving the environment and protecting the health and welfare of our livestock. I look forward to working closely with the farming industry and key stakeholders towards realising the bold vision set out by the Farming Regulation Task Force.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Heath', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

David Heath CBE MP, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food

Plan of action

Improving the co-ordination of inspections	
Action	Milestone
<p>In follow-up to the NAO report on Streamlining Farm Oversight, we want to achieve stronger co-ordination of our inspection regimes, and better targeting of inspections to where the risks of non-compliance are greatest. In order to achieve this, we need to increase our data- and intelligence-sharing between Defra agencies, and find improved methods of identifying higher risk premises. We are, therefore, exploring the potential for introducing a National Regulatory Information System (NRIS) tool for farm inspections. This 'Find-It' tool has transformed the way in which the Health and Safety Executive targets inspections in other industry sectors. We are carrying out a feasibility study to explore whether this tool can be used by Defra agencies to improve the co-ordination, and risk based targeting, of on-farm inspections.</p>	<p>Feasibility study to be completed in March 2013.</p>
<p>We think that allowing farmers an opportunity to provide feedback on inspections will aid us in fulfilling our commitment to improving the way that inspections are carried out. We will work with our delivery partners, including the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency, the Environment Agency, and the Rural Payments Agency to assess what feedback mechanisms exist and how these can be improved.</p>	<p>Assessment completed by May 2013.</p> <p>Actions in response to the assessment implemented by autumn 2013.</p>
Implementing an earned recognition approach	
Action	Milestone
<p>We are committed to implementing an earned recognition approach where feasible. In particular, we have been exploring the opportunities for incorporating earned recognition into cross compliance as well as on-farm poultry meat and egg marketing inspections. These were identified as priority areas to consider by the Farming Regulation Task Force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross Compliance - We have conducted research, led by the Food and Environment Research Agency, to investigate whether members of farm assurance schemes have higher rates of regulatory compliance with cross compliance requirements. Depending on the results of this research, we will work with the RPA to implement an earned recognition approach to cross compliance inspections in 2014. 	<p>Fera cross compliance research complete March 2013.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-farm poultry meat and egg marketing inspections - We are working with AHVLA and industry to investigate the potential for implementing an earned recognition approach within these inspection regimes. <p>We will publish our full assessment of the potential for implementing an earned recognition approach into on-farm inspections.</p>	<p>Preliminary assessment complete by March 2013.</p> <p>Published by summer 2013.</p>
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Reducing the burden of paperwork

Action	Milestone
We are searching for ways in which we can simplify access to online tools and services. For example, we are currently exploring the potential for allowing people to use their postcode and CPH number rather than their government gateway ID to log on to the June Agricultural survey, after successfully trialling this approach in the annual Sheep and Goats Inventory.	Lessons from trial to be incorporated into 2013 June Agricultural Survey.
We will systematically review our guidance to ensure that it is simple and clear, and that it provides a quick route to the information farmers have to know. This exercise will start with environmental guidance in time for the migration of documents over to the new gov.uk website.	Starting with environmental guidance by March 2014.
We are conducting a root and branch review of data collected from farmers to determine whether we are collecting the right information to serve our underlying objectives. Through this review, we will look for opportunities to reduce the burden of unnecessary information requirements.	Review complete by end of 2013.
From 2015, a new IT system for the Common Agricultural Policy in England will mean that farmers will only have to enter their details once to a single point of contact rather than for each scheme for which they apply.	System to be phased in during 2014 and fully in place by 2015.

Supporting farm businesses

Action	Milestone
Farmers will benefit from an approach which better understands the needs of their businesses. By 2015, they will be able to make use of the best superfast broadband network in Europe, with 90% of premises in the UK benefitting from superfast broadband and the remainder from a minimum standard connection. The Rural Community Broadband Fund will allow communities in hard-to-reach places to seek funding for projects where they can demonstrate a need for superfast broadband.	Third round of expressions of interest in Rural Community Broadband Fund expected to open in March 2013.
We will continue to work with the Department for Transport to examine the options around increasing speed limits for regular tractors and maximum weights of agricultural trailers and combinations, taking into account the need to ensure that road safety standards are maintained. An impact	Consultation published by autumn 2013.

assessment is being prepared in partnership with farming and agricultural engineering organisations. Subject to receiving the necessary regulatory clearances, the Department for Transport will publish a consultation later this year which will set out the options for a way forward.	
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Partnership working

Action	Milestone
We will continue to make use of farmer panels so that we can draw on their expert knowledge in order to help us make decisions. We will work with industry to evaluate our approach to culture change during 2013, focusing specifically on whether our improved approach to working with industry has yielded tangible results on the ground.	Evaluation complete by end of 2013.

Increasing farming expertise within Defra and our agencies

Action	Milestone
We are rolling out a strategic programme of farm visits and seminars for Defra staff during 2013 so that policy decisions are better informed by an understanding of the industry.	The first farm visit will take place in March 2013, and the programme will continue throughout the year.

Water quality

Action	Milestone
We will roll out the catchment-based approach during 2013 and 2014 to strengthen partnership work between the farming industry and wider interests at the local level. This will promote evidence-based local action on a range of water quality issues seen in the round. It will improve the quality of our water bodies, for the benefit of our environment and economy.	Policy framework for roll-out published in spring 2013.

Clear messaging

Action	Milestone
We are committed to delivering more integrated messages to farmers and the renewed Campaign for the Farmed Environment will help to do this. This will help to communicate the list of priority outcomes which was agreed between Defra agencies, key stakeholders and farming industry representatives, and published in the government's response to the Farming Regulation Task Force report .	The new Campaign will commence in April 2013.

<p>Through the Review of Advice, Incentives and Voluntary Approaches we will outline how we intend to deliver a more integrated, streamlined and efficient approach. This will provide more accessible, clearer advice to farmers and land managers.</p>	<p>Proposals for way forward published March 2013.</p>
<p>Animal Movements</p>	
<p>Action</p>	<p>Milestone</p>
<p>Farmers will be able to report the movements of their sheep and goats electronically.</p>	<p>During 2014.</p>
<p>CAP</p>	
<p>Action</p>	<p>Milestone</p>
<p>The UK is working to negotiate a simpler CAP which will increase the market orientation and international competitiveness of EU agriculture, whilst improving its capacity to deliver environmental outcomes. We want an efficient and responsive agricultural sector in the EU and globally, and we want the future CAP to help achieve this. This should be in the context of a substantially reduced budget.</p> <p>We are continuing to work with the European Commission to ensure that adequate time is available for effective implementation. We will work in partnership with the farming industry to ensure that implementation is as outcomes-focused as possible and involves minimal bureaucracy.</p>	<p>Implementation is likely to be delayed beyond 1 January 2014 and require transitional measures.</p>

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