

## AGENDA

**RURAL & FARMING EXECUTIVE  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 13 MARCH 2024**

**2.00 PM**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND  
HALL, COUNTY ROAD, MARCH, PE15 8NQ**

Committee Officer: Helen Moore  
Tel: 01354 622461  
e-mail: [memberservices@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:memberservices@fenland.gov.uk)

- 1 Appointment of the Chairman for the Municipal Year
- 2 To Receive Apologies for Absence
- 3 Appointment of the Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year
- 4 To Report Additional Items for Consideration which the Chairman deems Urgent by Virtue of the Special Circumstances to be now Specified.
- 5 To Receive Members Declaration of any Interests Under The Local Code Of Conduct or Any Interest Under The Code Of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the Meeting.
- 6 Committee Terms of Reference Update 3.3.3 Rural & Farming Executive Advisory Committee. (Pages 3 - 4)  
  
To confirm to members the revised Terms of Reference for the Committee as agreed by Full Council in February 2024
- 7 Recent Motions To Full Council in Relation to Farming & Rural Matters - Next Steps (Pages 5 - 8)

To consider the motions which have been agreed by Full Council and identify and agree the next steps.

8 Rural England Prosperity Fund (Pages 9 - 14)

To consider the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet and to note that a further update report will be presented.

9 Anglia Water Reservoir Update

To consider the report and make any recommendations

10 Climate Impact Assessment For UK Farming (Pages 15 - 24)

To provide an update on how Local Farmers are managing climate adaptation, specifically in relation to the unique Fens environment and for members to note the summarised DEFRA report.

11 Advisory Committee Work Programme Discussion

For information.

12 Items which the Chairman has under item 4 deemed urgent

Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Members: Councillor T Taylor (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Count, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor C Marks and Councillor G Booth

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|-----------------|--|--|
| Agenda Item No: | <b>6</b>   |  |
| Committee:      | <b>Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee</b>                    |  |
| Date:           | <b>13 March 2024</b>   |  |
| Report Title:   | <b>Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee Terms of Reference</b> |  |

## 1 Purpose / Summary

To confirm to Members of the Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee the revised Terms of Reference for the Committee as agreed by Full Council in February 2024.

## 2 Key issues

- During the July 2023 meeting of Full Council Members agreed to establish 3 new Executive Advisory Committees including the Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee.
- The newly formed Executive Advisory Committee was to consist of 7 substantive and 5 substitute seats
- The original specific Terms of Reference agreed by Full Council for this committee were: -
  - To act as a mouthpiece for the needs of Fenland's most rural communities, including the farming and wider agricultural sectors;
  - To reflect any concerns that Fenland's most rural communities (including the farming and wider agricultural sectors) may have in matters for which Fenland District Council is responsible.
- During the February 2024 meeting of Full Council, Members agreed that due to the recent flooding issues in the District, adding an oversight of matters relating to flooding would be a helpful and useful role for the Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee and therefore this has been added to the terms of reference as follows
  - Reflect upon flooding issues affecting the District

## 3 Recommendations

- For Members of the Rural and Farming Executive Committee to note the updated Terms of Reference for the Committee

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Wards Affected</b>         | All |
| <b>Forward Plan Reference</b> |     |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Portfolio Holder(s)</b>  |  |
| <b>Report Originator(s)</b> | Peter Catchpole Corporate Director<br>Anna Goodall - Assistant Director  |
| <b>Contact Officer(s)</b>   | Peter Catchpole Corporate Director<br>Anna Goodall - Assistant Director  |
| <b>Background Paper(s)</b>  | Council, Constitutional Amendments Report, February 2024<br>Council, Constitutional Amendments, Establishment of Executive Advisory Committees Report, July 2023<br>Council, Committee Balance, Proportionality Balance and Allocation of Seats Report, May 2023 |

## October 2023 Full Council Meeting

Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor WEEDS In April 2023, with neither consultation nor (so far as we are aware) notice, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) decided to cease all cyclical spraying to suppress weeds on our pavements, roads and in our gullies.

On September 8th a letter was sent by Frank Jordan (Executive Director for Place & Sustainability at CCC) to all Councils in the county, recognising "that the County Council should have engaged with its partners in district and parish councils more effectively at the time when this policy change was being considered, and then when it was implemented, and that is something we wish to improve upon" and advising that CCC is "reviewing the impact of the change in both rural and urban areas" and that CCC "will be considering changes to [their] approach when [they] have the assessment results and presenting this to members" of CCC. Many residents have complained that our roads and footpaths have already become unsightly as a result of this new policy to cease cyclical spraying on our highways. If the policy isn't reversed by CCC, this will only become worse with time. Council notes with concern the reports in September after periods of intense rain in Manea, March and Whittlesey that road surface water did not drain as quickly as would otherwise have been possible because drains and gullies were blocked or impeded by weed and grass growth which was a direct result of the change of policy stopping cyclical spraying, creating a safety hazard for road users and increasing flood risk in adjacent properties.

Council further notes the spurious justification for the policy to cease cyclical spraying that glyphosate, the most commonly used chemical for this purpose, is unsafe. We note that the use of glyphosate as a weed suppressant is approved in the UK and by the European Union, and that a recent study showed that glyphosate is less toxic to humans than vinegar or table salt. In failing to take preventative action to suppress weeds, a significant increase in roadside Ragwort has been noticed. Ragwort is poisonous to ruminants generally and to horses in particular. The County Council as Highways Authority is under a statutory duty to remove and prevent Ragwort, and should do so in accordance with DEFRA's best practice guidance. The resumption of cyclical spraying should be an important preventative element as part of the County's control strategy in respect of Ragwort.

Council therefore agrees to respond to CCC advising them of the contents of this motion and our desire to see cyclical spraying recommenced to suppress weeds on our roads, pavements and in our gullies

## December 2023 Full Council Meeting

1. Fenland District Council recognises and notes the huge contribution made by Fenland's farmers, growers and wider food and drink industry to the local economy, environment, and rural communities.
2. Fenland District Council commits to further enhancing our partnerships with local arable, livestock and dairy farmers to enhance our magnificent countryside.

3. Fenland District Council commits to supporting our local farmers, growers and food and drink sector by, where possible, ensuring that food and drinks provided at council organised events are sourced from local suppliers. If plant-based produce is provided, meat and dairy options should also be provided.
4. As part of furthering Fenland District Council's environmental priorities, the Council will consider ways to encourage residents, where possible, to shop locally, taking advantage of home-grown, affordable, and nutritious produce, including meat, dairy, and plant-based options, thus reducing food miles to our tables, and boosting the local economy

## **February 2024 Full Council Meeting**

### **BLUETONGUE & BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS**

#### **Council Notes:**

1. That Bluetongue is a viral disease, most commonly spread by midges, which primarily affects sheep and, to somewhat lesser amounts, cattle, deer, goats and camelids (such as llamas and alpacas).
2. That vaccination is the standard and most effective measure that farmers can normally use to protect their livestock, but unfortunately there is not yet a vaccine developed which is effective against the serotype currently spreading around Europe.
3. That within England, at the time of writing this motion, 99 bluetongue cases have been identified at 55 premises across 3 counties: Kent, Suffolk, and Norfolk.
4. That the nearest suspected outbreak has been at Emneth, although this has now been found to have been a false alarm.
5. That, worryingly, DEFRA have not yet been able to confirm that the current bluetongue outbreak is being transmitted by midges, which had been the transmission vector for all previous serotypes.

#### **Council Further Notes:**

1. That Bovine TB (bTB) results from a bacterial infection, most commonly spread directly between cattle.
2. That bTB is a disease which presents very slowly in infected livestock, months or even years after infection.
3. Given that bTB is a zoonosis (humans can be infected), that bTB is a notifiable disease which is primarily detected through routine testing of cattle rather than as a result of animals becoming symptomatic.
4. That routine tests for bTB in the UK either use a skin test (Single Intradermal Comparative Cervical Tuberculin – SICCT) or they use a blood test (Gamma Interferon).

5. That the frequency of testing depends upon the location of a farm, with Fenland currently being defined as being in a low-risk area. Nevertheless, the 'edge risk' area requiring 6 monthly testing now reaches the border of Northamptonshire.

**As far as Fenland's farmers are concerned, Council notes:**

1. That the risks posed to their herds and flocks is very real.
2. That farmers have a real commitment to the health and welfare of their animals.
3. That farming businesses can be significantly damaged financially in cases of bluetongue or bTB, either in their own animals or even if the outbreak is at another farm in the locality.
4. That farmers are experiencing increasing amounts of stress generally, exacerbated by the threats of bluetongue, bTB and other pressures to the extent that there should be concerns as to some farmers' mental welfare.

**Council therefore resolves:**

1. To contact our Member of Parliament, Steve Barclay, requesting that routine testing for bTB be conducted using a blood test (Gamma Interferon) rather than a skin test (SICCT) since blood testing is more accurate, produces far fewer false positives, results in fewer uninfected cattle being unnecessarily slaughtered (at considerable cost to farmers) and because blood tests have a quicker turnaround time than using SICCT.
2. To contact our Member of Parliament, Steve Barclay, requesting that testing for bluetongue be allowed to be conducted by any qualified local veterinary surgeon, as opposed to the current requirement for testing to be done only by a DEFRA vet, as the DEFRA vet service currently has a 12 week waiting time for such visits, leading to an increased danger of both intra-flock and onward transmission and increased costs to farmers. Additionally, to request that our MP supports a greater priority being given to developing a vaccine for the current bluetongue serotype.
3. To contact CCC Public Health and the North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Care Partnership asking them both to include farmers' mental health as a specific item on their register of mental health risks, with a view to generally promoting awareness of mental health risks to farmers together with identifying and dealing with any farmer's mental health issues at the earliest possible stage

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| <b>Agenda Item No:</b> | 8   |  |
| <b>Committee:</b>      | <b>Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee</b> |  |
| <b>Date:</b>           | <b>13<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>                     |  |
| <b>Report Title:</b>   | <b>Rural England Prosperity Fund</b>                  |  |

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 In 2023 the Government allocated Fenland £436k Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) for the two years 2023-2025.
- 1.2 REPF must be allocated for business or community/place purposes and used to fund capital projects such as a buildings or equipment.
- 1.3 The two-year REPF allocated for Fenland will be paid on an annual basis by DLUHC/DEFRA to the CPCA with all funding to be claimed by Fenland no later than March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee is requested to consider the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet.
- 2.2 To note that a further update report will be presented to the Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Wards Affected         | All  |
| Forward Plan Reference |  |
| Portfolio Holder(s)    | Cllr Ian Benney  |
| Report Originator(s)   | Anna Goodall, Assistant Director<br>Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager   |
| Contact Officer(s)     | Dawn Caplin, Investment in Business Officer<br>Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services   |
| Background Papers      | Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK<br>( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus#Introduction">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus#Introduction</a> ) |

## Report:

### **1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES**

- 1.1 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) builds on, and is complementary to, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The REPF is a top-up to the UKSPF and is available to eligible local authorities in England. It succeeds European Union funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England.
- 1.2 The REPF objectives sit within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment priorities for:
- Supporting Local Business
  - Community and Place
- 1.2 The REPF provides capital funding to support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams. It also provides funding to support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.
- 1.3 The REPF sits alongside existing Defra schemes, including:
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
  - The Farming Investment Fund
  - The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund
- 1.4 The Government has allocated £3.2m REPF for the four rural districts of Cambridgeshire over a two-year period commencing 2023/24. The allocation for Fenland is £436k with £109k in 2023/24 and £327k in 2024/25. The allocation is based on factors developed in line with the scheme objectives including the size of rural populations.
- 1.5 The two-year REPF allocation for Fenland is paid on an annual basis by DLUHC/DEFRA to the CPCA. In accordance with the standard CPCA Funding Agreement the District Council will claim in monthly arrears the funding for each of the projects delivered in Fenland from the CPCA.
- 1.6 The REPF in Fenland covers all the District except for Wisbech which is classed a non-rural urban location.
- 1.7 In 2023-24 the Council decided to allocate the whole of the 2023-24 REPF of £109,000 to the Supporting Local Business priority and a single project providing capital grants to rural businesses. The Council also decided that for 2024-25 the £327,000 be split equally between Supporting Local Business and Community/Place with each allocated £163.5k.

## 2 DELIVERY

2.1 In 2023-24 we supported 16 businesses and allocated £80,000 on UK Rural Prosperity grants. The remaining £29,000 of the 2023-24 budget will be carried over into 2024-25.

2.2 The funding has made a significant difference to the businesses receiving a grant for example, Bankside Nursery, Guyhirn;

- *The process of applying for the grant was simple and straight forward.*
- *I was fully supported for the entire process of applying.*
- *I was kept fully informed, and any questions were responded to very promptly.*
- *This grant will improve production, which will mean more British production rather than importing. Also securing hours for my current staff and creating more job opportunities.*

Joe Perry's Snooker & Pool Palace, Chatteris;

- *I found the process in applying for the UK Rural Prosperity Grant pretty straight forward and quite easy to understand.*
- *We received more than adequate support from Fenland District Council mainly due to Dawn Caplin who was a great help and support from beginning to end.*
- *We were fully always informed and kept updated with how things were going when we inquired.*
- *With this grant we were able to open the business in a far more professional way with the desired equipment (pool tables) at the very beginning and not having to make do until the business became more established. It enabled us to make a very good first and hopefully long lasting first impression.*

2.2 The Supporting Local Business grants programme in 2024-25 will deliver capital grants to an estimated 20 businesses and has allocated £163,500 towards the Fund.

2.3 The programme for 2024-25 will be the continuance of the Business Growth Grant Scheme currently being delivered in 2023-24. In consultation with the Council's Rural Executive Committee minor changes (highlighted below) have been made to the scheme's key features for 2024-25:

- A maximum grant of up to £10k per business (maximum £5k in 2023-24).
- Businesses will need to contribute a minimum of 50% towards the total cost of the project.
- Only businesses with between 2 and 20 employees will be eligible (minimum 3 employees in 2023-24).

- Only businesses located within the defined Fenland REPF area.
- Capital grants will be available for businesses to promote business growth and for the purchase of, for example, capital equipment, expansion of business premises and so on.

2.4 The criteria used in assessing applications for REPF includes:

- Projects that create and sustain rural jobs.
- The diversification of income streams.
- Certain types of rural businesses will receive priority including farming and tourism business.

2.5 The Business Grant Scheme will continue to be delivered by the Council's Economic Growth Team. The final decision on whether to support an application will be made by the Council's SPF Grants Team consisting of Officers from Finance, Audit, Communications and Economic Growth.

2.6 The Community/Place programme in 2024-25 allocated £163,500 will deliver three projects:

Project 1:

**Funding for the improvement of green spaces and local cultural and creative activities**

FDC manages and supports community cultural events throughout Fenland. An issue that hampers the viability of local events is the provision of electrical power. Running events in certain green spaces are more problematic due to a lack of electrical infrastructure.

REPF will provide £25,000 for the development of an electrical power supply into the Furrowfields open space in Chatteris. This infrastructure will allow facilitation of community events throughout the year and ensure that events remain viable as the expensive hire of large capacity portable generators will be unnecessary in the future.

Project 2:

**Funding for the improvement of green spaces and local cultural and creative activities**

Another community cultural event that requires improvements in electrical power is Whittlesey's Straw Bear and the Whittlesey Festival. Whilst these take place in the town, improvements to electrical infrastructure are required in the marketplace. Again, a budget of £25,000 has been allocated to facilitate these improvements.

These improvements will make running the events more viable due as large portable generators will no longer be needed allowing an increased number of community events to take place on the marketplace.

Project 3:

**Setting up community-led repair cafes / maker spaces and Men's Sheds**

There is a men's shed in Wisbech, but otherwise Fenland is a 'cold spot' on a map of this sort of community led facility. Community-led repair café's do not exist in Fenland and maker spaces are not available.

This project will improve the currently empty and unused space at Station Road Cemetery Chapel in March, converting it into two spaces that can be used by different community groups throughout the week. The space is close to the town centre and local housing and sits within the most special green space in Fenland.

This project will bring the community together to improve mental and physical health and strengthen the local community in March. The prospect of a community-led repair cafe will give life to the current empty buildings. The opportunity for community group sessions using the facility as a makerspace focussing on creativity and culture, will provide a unique opportunity to residents in the town.

To renovate the inside of the two chapel buildings - that have recently been repaired externally – and to then add in equipment to allow use of the spaces as a Shed and repair-café / maker space will utilise the rest of the REPF funding of £113,500.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 The REPF is a specific funding opportunity with no comparable alternative options. Acceptance of the funding provides an opportunity to deliver the outcomes specified in the REPF Prospectus. The CPCA's REPF Grant Funding Agreement is a requirement of receiving the funding and has been subject to appropriate legal oversight to ensure that Fenland District Council's position is adequately protected.

### **4 IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Legal Implications**

- 4.1 The CPCA's REPF Grant Funding Agreement is a standard document and is fit for purpose from a legal perspective.

#### **Financial Implications**

- 4.2 The REPF is external funding that FDC has been successful in securing via the CPCA from Central Government and as such whilst FDC will be responsible for administering the various projects there are no significant implications for the FDC budget.

#### **Equality Implications**

- 4.3 All individual projects and services have been assessed to ensure equality of access, etc.

### **5 SCHEDULES**

None

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| <b>Agenda Item No:</b> | 10  |  |
| <b>Committee:</b>      | <b>Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee</b> |  |
| <b>Date:</b>           | 13 March 2024   |  |
| <b>Report Title:</b>   | <b>Climate Impact Assessment for Farming</b>          |  |

Cover sheet:

**1 Purpose / Summary**

- 1.1 Rob Wise, Environment Adviser for National Union of Farmers, is attending committee to provide members with a verbal update on how local farmers are managing climate adaptation, specifically in relation to the unique Fens environment. To support this conversation, members are presented below with a summary of a recent report from Defra for their information.
- 1.2 Defra have published their annual Agri-climate Report which presents the latest available estimates on the greenhouse gas statistics for farming.
- 1.3 The Defra report is summarised here and sets out the trends in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions over the past 30 years and the results of the 2023 Farm Practice Survey questions relating to farmers intentions and actions on this topic.

**2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 The report indicates that total agricultural greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 12% between 1990 and 2021.
- 2.2 The 2023 Farm Practices Survey indicated that 62% of farmers thought it important to consider greenhouse gases when making farm business decisions, while 32% considered it as not important.

**3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members note the content of this summarised Defra report in relation to the changes in farming practices and the motivators therein.

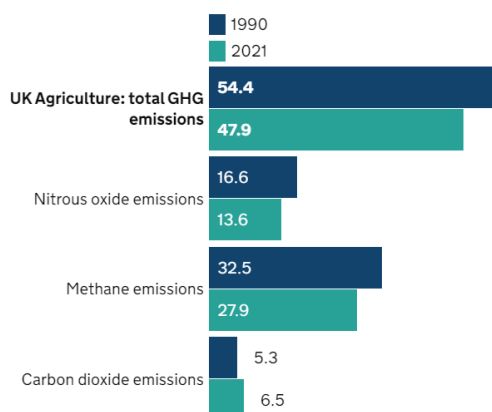
|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Wards Affected         | All   |
| Forward Plan Reference |   |
| Portfolio Holder(s)    |   |
| Report Originator(s)   | Mark Mathews Head of Environmental Services |
| Contact Officer(s)     | Peter Catchpole Director and S151 Officer   |

## 4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This annual DEFRA report sets out the trends in estimated agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over the past 30 years (in overview) and the results of the 2023 Farm Practice Survey questions relating to farmers intentions and actions on reducing GHG emissions.
- 4.2 Agriculture contributes to emissions of Green House Gases nitrous oxide, methane and carbon dioxide. It is attributed as a major source of both nitrous oxide and methane emissions in the UK, accounting for 71% of total nitrous oxide emissions and 49% of all methane emissions in 2021.
- 4.3 In contrast, agriculture only accounted for about 1.9% of total carbon dioxide emissions. Agricultural carbon dioxide emissions come from livestock, agricultural soils, stationary combustion sources and off-road machinery.
- 4.4 Between 1990 and 2021, greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture decreased by around 12%. This occurred mainly during the 2000s, due to a fall in animal numbers and a decrease in synthetic fertiliser usage, and since then emissions have remained at a similar level.

### Change in GHG emissions, 1990 - 2021

Figure 1.1 UK estimated Green House Gases (GHG) emissions for agriculture, 1990 and 2021 (million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent, MtCO<sub>2e</sub>)

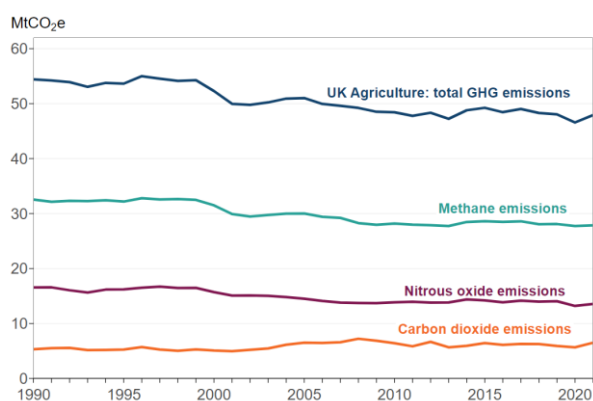


- 4.5 The change in emissions for GHGs between 1990 and 2021:
- Total GHGs decreased by 12%
  - Nitrous oxide decreased by 18%
  - Methane decreased by 14%
  - Carbon dioxide increased by 22%

### Total emissions



Figure 1.2 GHG emissions from UK agriculture (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e )

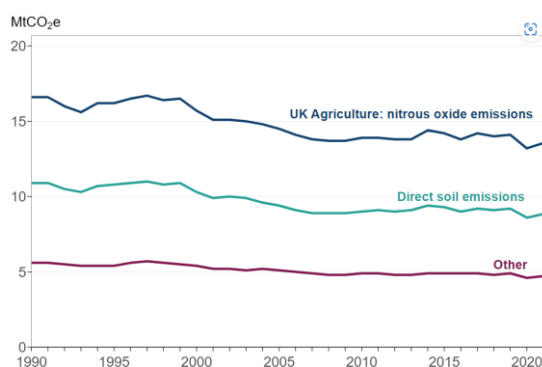


4.6 Figure 1.2 provides an overall picture of the level of estimated GHG emissions from agriculture. In 2021, when compared to total emissions from all sectors, agriculture was the source of:

- 11% of total GHG emissions in the UK
- 71% of total nitrous oxide emissions
- 49% of total methane emissions
- 1.9% of total carbon dioxide emissions

### Nitrous oxide emissions

Figure 1.3 Emissions of nitrous oxide from UK agriculture by source ( MtCO<sub>2</sub>e )



Notes:

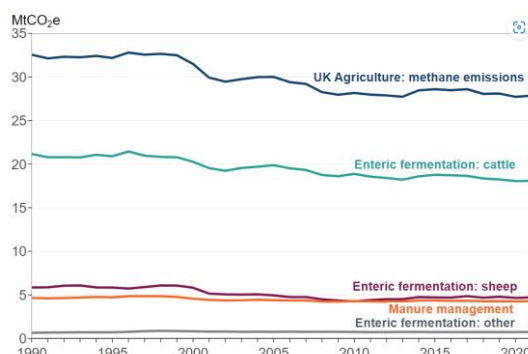
1. 'Direct soil emissions' consists of leaching/runoff, synthetic fertiliser, manure as an organic fertiliser, atmospheric deposition, improved grassland soils, crop residues, cultivation of organic soils, N-fix crops, deposited manure on pasture (unmanaged).
2. 'Other' includes: stationary and mobile combustion, wastes and field burning of agricultural wastes.

4.7 The total emissions of nitrous oxide from agriculture in 2021 was 13.6 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, up 2.7% from 2020. Agriculture is estimated to be responsible for 71% of total nitrous oxide emissions in 2021, similar to 2020 levels. The majority of agricultural nitrous oxide emissions come from soils, particularly as a result of nitrogen fertiliser application, manure and leaching/run off.

4.8 The fall in estimated nitrous oxide emissions (18%) over the last twenty years has been driven by substantial reductions in the overall application rate for nitrogen fertilisers, particularly to grassland, whilst arable application rates have remained relatively stable. The decline in cattle numbers is thought to have contributed to the decrease of nitrogen use on grassland, possibly in conjunction with improvement in manure use efficiency. After the decline in emissions up to around 2006, levels have since remained fairly similar

### Methane emissions

Figure 1.4 Emissions of methane from UK agriculture by source (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e)



Notes:

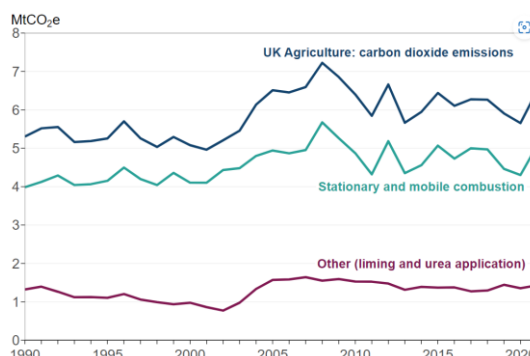
1. 'Enteric fermentation: other' is goats, horses, pigs and deer.
2. 'Manure management' is the sum of wastes from livestock (cattle, dairy, sheep, pigs).

4.9 The total emissions of methane from agriculture in 2021 was 27.9 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, an increase of 0.5% on 2020. Agriculture is estimated to have been the source of 49% of the UK's methane emissions in 2021, compared with 48% in 2020. Methane is produced as a by-product of enteric fermentation and from the decomposition of manure under anaerobic conditions.

4.10 The majority of the fall in estimated methane emissions since 1990 (14%) is due to reductions in the numbers of cattle and sheep in the UK. However, since 2009 the long-term fall stalled, and methane emissions have remained at similar levels.

### Carbon dioxide emissions

Figure 1.5 Emissions of carbon dioxide from UK agriculture by source (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e)



4.11 In contrast to nitrous oxide and methane, to which agriculture contributes a large proportion of total emissions, only 1.9% of carbon dioxide emissions (6.5

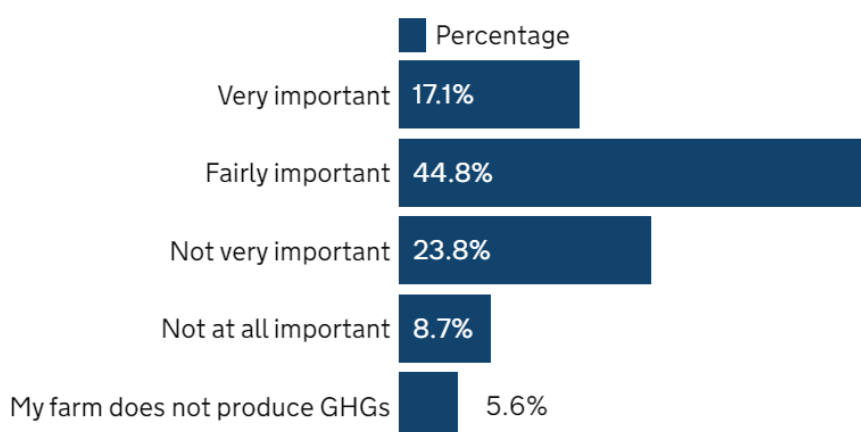
MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) in the UK were attributed to agriculture in 2021, a similar proportion to 2020. Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from agriculture relate mainly to fuel use. Since 1990, there has been an overall increase (22%) in estimated carbon dioxide emissions from agriculture.

### Farmer attitudes and uptake of on-farm mitigation measures in England

- 4.12 The following section provides key summary statistics on farmer attitudes and views on GHGs and their uptake of a range of mitigation measures. It links to data on farmer understanding and awareness of actions towards reducing GHG emissions.
- 4.13 Understanding what practices are adopted, and why, can help to highlight motivations, barriers and provide an indication of the ease with which mitigation measures can be actioned. However, improving understanding and attitudes towards GHGs are not a guarantee of the adoption of mitigation practices, as business sustainability and financial implications are also important drivers for change.

#### Awareness of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

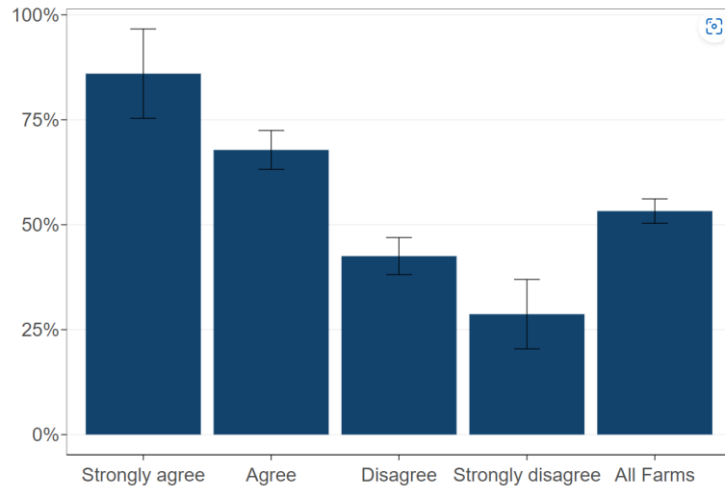
**Figure 3.1 How important is it to consider GHGs when taking decisions about crops, land and livestock?**



Source: [Farm Practices Survey 2023 – greenhouse gas mitigation practices \(https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/farm-practices-survey\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/farm-practices-survey)

- 4.14 The [2023 Farm Practices Survey \(FPS\)](#) indicated that 62% of farmers thought it important to consider GHGs when making farm business decisions, while 32% considered it not important. There were a relatively small number that believed their farm did not produce GHGs (5.6%). Mixed and dairy farms placed the greatest importance on GHGs, while grazing livestock farms placed the least importance.

**Figure 3.2 Proportion of farms taking action to reduce GHG emissions categorised by their views on whether taking action will improve farm profitability**

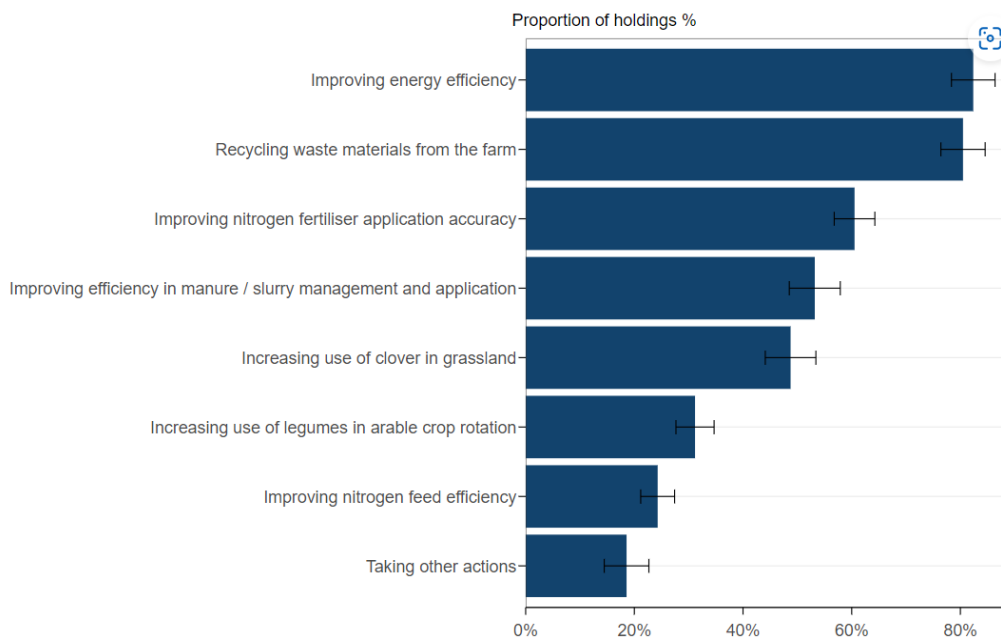


Source: [Farm Practices Survey](#)

- 4.15 In 2023, 44% of farmers thought that reducing emissions would improve farm profitability. Dairy farms were the most likely to agree that reducing emissions would improve profitability, while less favoured area (LFA) grazing livestock farms were least convinced.
- 4.16 Of those that strongly agreed reducing GHGs increases profitability, 14% still did not take any action to reduce their emissions. However, 29% of those who strongly disagreed that reducing GHGs would increase profitability still took action to reduce their emissions.

### What farmers say they do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

**Figure 3.3 Actions being taken by farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**

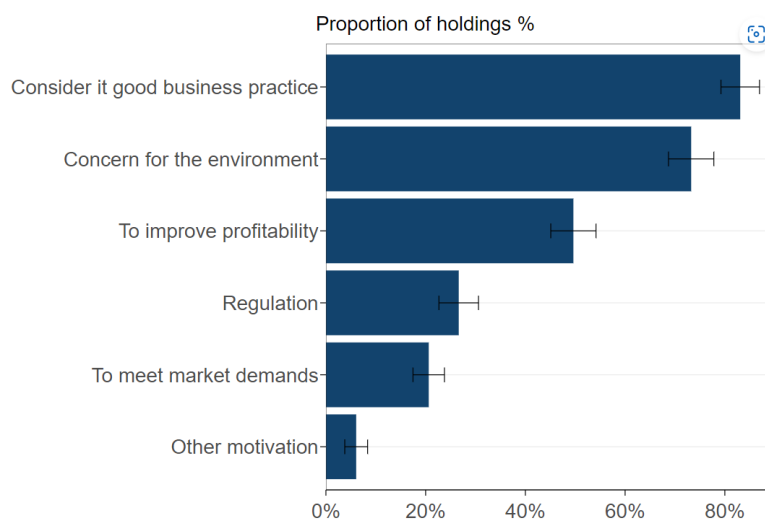


Source: [Farm Practices Survey](#)

- 4.17 The 2023 results indicated that 53% of farmers were taking actions to reduce emissions. Larger farms were more likely to be taking action than smaller farms. Less favourable areas and lowland grazing livestock farms were less likely to be taking action than other farm types (with 28% and 45% taking action respectively). Unsurprisingly, those who think that reducing emissions is important are more likely to undertake an action to reduce emissions. 83% of farmers who thought it was very important to consider GHGs when making farm business decisions took action, whereas only 18% who thought it not at all important took action.
- 4.18 The most common actions to reduce GHG emissions were improving energy efficiency (82%), recycling waste materials on the farm (80%) and improving nitrogen fertiliser application accuracy (61%).
- 4.19 While most farm businesses should be able to implement key actions not all measures are suitable for all farm businesses. In general, larger farms were more likely to take action to reduce GHGs; however there were some key differences between farm types:
- Grazing livestock, dairy and mixed farm types had the highest uptake of clover in grassland.
  - Cereals, other cropping and dairy farms are more likely to take actions to improve nitrogen fertiliser application compared to grazing livestock farms, but it is also recognised that not all enterprises (such as organic farms and some grazing livestock farms) apply nitrogen fertiliser.

### What are the main motivations for undertaking the actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

**Figure 3.4 Main motivations for taking action to reduce GHG emissions**



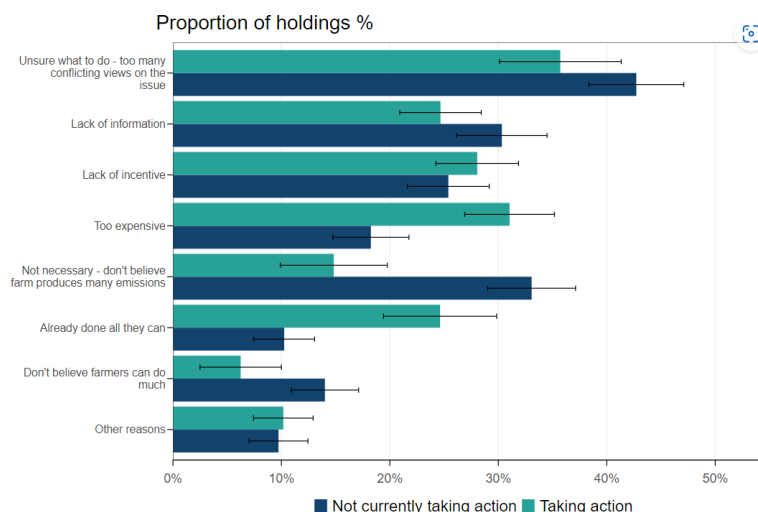
Source: [Farm Practices Survey 2023](#) –

- 4.20 The main motivations for farmers to take action to reduce GHGs were that it was considered good business practice (83%) and concern for the environment (73%). This was fairly consistent across farm size and type.
- 4.21 Many farmers recognise the significance of GHG emissions, but some remain unconvinced about the business benefits of reducing emissions, with only 50% reporting that a main motivation was to improve profitability. There were

some differences between farm types, with just 30% of grazing livestock less favourable areas and 38% of grazing lowland farmers motivated by profitability, compared to higher proportions for pigs and poultry (66%), dairy (65%) and mixed farms (60%).

## What farmers say are the barriers to reducing emissions

Figure 3.5 Factors preventing action to reduce GHG emissions



Source: [Farm Practices Survey 2023](#) –

4.22 While research suggests that most practices to reduce GHG emissions could save farmers money (and many farmers are likely to be influenced to change their practices because it makes good business sense), there are several key barriers to uptake that are non-financial, or not directly financial. These include a lack of willingness to undertake practices (e.g. limited trust in what is being asked and the outcomes that will result) and a lack of ability to undertake them (e.g. a lack of understanding, skills, time or capital).

4.23 For farmers not currently undertaking any actions to reduce GHG emissions:

- The most reported reason for not taking action was being unsure on what to do due to too many conflicting views (43%). These informational barriers are important as 30% responded that a lack of information was another key reason for not taking action.
- There is a wider issue around willingness to adopt mitigation practices, with 33% not believing it necessary due to the fact they believe they do not produce many emissions.
- Actual financial barriers are smaller in comparison, with 18% saying it was too expensive and 25% saying there was not enough incentive.

4.24 For farmers who were already taking actions to reduce GHG emissions:

- Financial barriers were a bigger issue, with 31% saying it was too expensive.
- Despite already taking steps to reduce GHGs, informational barriers still proved to be important, with a lack of information (25%) and uncertainty due to conflicting views (36%) preventing some further action.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Legal Implications**

### **5.2 Financial Implications**

### **5.3 Equality Implications**

## **7 SCHEDULES**

- 7.1 The Defra publication referenced and summarised is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agri-climate-report2023/agri-climate-report-2023>

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