

New working group launched to support tenant farmers

The Environment Secretary has announced an independent review dedicated to looking at how tenant farmers and tenancies can be better supported as farming in England is reformed to be more sustainable.

The Tenancy Working Group will be chaired by Baroness Kate Rock. It will provide tenant farmers and associated stakeholders a further opportunity to make sure the new environmental land management schemes work within agricultural tenancies.

In England, policy is moving away from the arbitrary land-based subsidies and top-down bureaucracy of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. These will be replaced with a new package of schemes that support farmers in their roles as both food producers and stewards of the natural environment.

Defra is working in partnership with farmers, landowners and tenants to design the new schemes and support the choices that they make for their own holdings. This group enhances and complements that ongoing engagement and builds on the successful joint working around the design of the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

For Defra's reforms to agriculture to be successful tenant farmers must be able to fully engage in these schemes and contribute to a more sustainable agricultural sector.

Objectives for the group will be to provide independent advice to include:

- how Defra can use scheme design to facilitate participation of and benefits to tenant farmers in new Government ELMs and related schemes
- consideration of what policy initiatives will secure the long-term sustainability of tenant farming in England
- how best to foster positive and long-term relationships between tenants and landlords
- providing advice on ways to minimise any potential loss of land from the tenanted sector to avoid damaging its resilience; and
- consideration of why it might be necessary to look for new legislative or regulatory powers in the future

A report will be published by the Working Group later this year setting out the main conclusions and providing a set of recommendations to Defra.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:

We are designing our new schemes in partnership with farmers, and this group will focus specifically on the tenanted sector. We want to identify and explore ways to really make sure that our new schemes work for tenant farmers, and the breadth of knowledge and

expertise within this group will allow us to do so.

Baroness Kate Rock, said:

“Tenant farmers are crucial to our farming industry, our farmed environment, and our farming future. Access to the new schemes will be of utmost importance to secure the long-term sustainability of tenant farming in England. I am delighted to be chairing this timely working group and look forward to engaging fully with all stakeholders involved in the tenanted sector.”

Tenant Farmers Association Chief Executive George Dunn said:

“The TFA welcomes this initiative from DEFRA. It is incredibly important that tenant farmers can access the new schemes being developed to replace the Basic Payment Scheme and at the same time we protect against the loss of land from the tenanted sector of agriculture.

“It is hugely important that the new working group is established quickly so that its recommendations can be built into the design of the Environmental Land Management scheme. However, it is also important that the working group looks longer term at issues which may need regulatory, legislative or wider policy change. The TFA has every confidence that Baroness Rock will steer this work with diligence and creativity.”