

Press release: Dame Glenys Stacey review proposes farm regulation shake-up

A more supportive, flexible and incentives-led approach to farming regulation has been recommended as part of wide-ranging review into the sector published today (Thursday 13 December).

The final report by Dame Glenys Stacey, concludes that the current regulation of the farming sector – with its one-size-fits-all rules-based approach – is far too inflexible. Leaving the EU provides the opportunity to do things differently.

The report recommends a new independent regulator that would be supportive of farmers' individual circumstances, offering them practical advice, guidance and helping to incentivise good practice.

This means local advisers would be able to visit farmers to discuss issues such as biosecurity, soil quality or animal welfare, rather than turning up to impose an automatic sanction. In other words, the regulator should work alongside farmers – to “do with” rather than to “do to” in order to ensure high standards.

The report, which was [commissioned by Environment Secretary Michael Gove in February](#), also recommends better use of technology. For instance, through satellite data and drones to monitor field margins and other public goods that the land manager is contracted to deliver.

Changing the balance between ‘on foot’ and remote surveillance would make inspections more efficient for the regulator and less burdensome for the farmer.

Dame Glenys Stacey said:

As things are, farmers are subject to a number of pernicky and sometimes nonsensical rules. There is little practical advice or guidance given to ensure compliance. Instead, automatic financial penalties have become the norm when at times they are unfair.

The large majority of farmers want to farm responsibly but some need guidance, advice and support to do that. A regulator should provide that, and explain why any change on the farm is needed. Yes, sometimes swingeing sanctions are justified, but more often, more is achieved by a more supportive approach.

There is so much scope to regulate more effectively, by harnessing technology and local knowledge. A strong regulatory culture brings many opportunities – from getting on top of systemic issues such as

animal diseases, to improving plant health and our environment under the new farming system.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Dame Glenys and her team have done excellent work on this comprehensive review into farm regulation and inspections, drawing on what works best in other sectors.

It's clear that current regulation isn't working as it should. We commissioned this report because leaving the EU gives us the opportunity for a fresh and modern approach – one that is less onerous for farmers and also helps us to deliver on our environmental ambitions.

The government will respond to the review in the New Year.