

Press release: Farming regulation changes proposed

A major simplification of the way we regulate farming has been proposed in an [interim report published today](#) by Dame Glenys Stacey, Chair of the Farm Inspection and Regulation Review.

The interim report sets out the problems with the current system of regulation, largely borne out of the requirements of membership of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It finds that farmers and regulators alike are exasperated by the demands of regulation, which are unduly precise and inflexible. As we leave the EU, there is an opportunity to rebuild trust between the regulating authority and the farmer, which would maintain high standard on farms and support farmers to comply.

The way we regulate now exasperates responsible farmers and regulators alike. Some of our regulations are unduly precise and inflexible. Tightly-drawn European regulation can have adverse consequences for farm businesses and lead to a lack of transparency in the food chain. It inevitably sours relationships between the farmer and the regulatory authority. Inflexible regulation can lead farmers to hide their mistakes and naturally, that undermines any trust between the regulating authority and the farmer.

The Review estimates 150,000 farm inspections are carried out each year by multiple agencies such as the Rural Payments Agency, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England and local authorities to meet the strict criteria of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

The report discusses the opportunity to use a single field force to conduct more meaningful farm inspections, as part of a more flexible, proportionate regulation. A simpler and more targeted regulatory system would be an immensely powerful tool in achieving the government's environmental objectives and supporting farmers to uphold standards.

Farming legislation has evolved and accreted in a piecemeal way over many years. Farmers face an unduly extensive and complex array of regulatory requirements. Some of those requirements seem illogical as well as inflexible, bringing farming regulation into disrepute.

The interim report also recommends better use of technology such as satellite imagery to check compliance. This could maximise the information gathered ahead of any inspection to support comprehensive visits for farmers and regulators alike. The Review is due to complete its work by the end of this year and will publish a final report with recommendations.

Dame Glenys Stacey, Chair of the Farm Inspection and Regulation Review said:

Farmers have long been frustrated by the way farms are regulated. As we leave the EU and as government sets out new expectations for

farming, we have a unique opportunity to transform the way we do things.

This interim report sets out a direction of travel for farming regulation. We do not suggest piecemeal adjustments. Instead we think more radical change is necessary, to make the most of the opportunity we have now, and to best enable farmers to produce and market food while also meeting the other expectations government has of farming.

I do encourage all farmers and land managers who are frustrated with regulation, but resigned to how things are, to read our report and to think that things could be and should be different.

Secretary of State Michael Gove said:

Dame Glenys makes a thorough and compelling case for fundamental changes to the existing inspection and regulation framework. The regulation on farmers under the CAP has imposed an extra bureaucratic headache on farmers, with no room to recognise innovation or good intent.

The interim findings of this independent report will be a key consideration in the plans for our future Environmental Land Management Scheme, for which an effective regulatory regime is crucial. This will work to enhance the excellent work farmers do to manage and protect the environment.

The independent review was announced in February to simplify the way farmers and landowners are regulated as we leave the EU. The strict requirements of the CAP mean that many inspectors are currently not able to use discretion or exercise their own judgment.