

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party  
*for the South East of England*

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
DEFRA  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

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Dear Secretary of State,

This week MEPs voted on proposals to extend the terms of the EU's Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive to new sectors, including farming. Although the Parliament chose to limit the scope of any application to the agriculture sector - by rejecting plans to lower thresholds, introduce species specifications and exempt farmers in areas covered by the terms of the Nitrates Directive - many British farmers will now face much stricter controls on the practice of spreading manure and slurry on farm land.

I support the extension of the Directive to the agriculture sector, as I believe that there will be considerable benefits in terms of improved groundwater, air and soil quality. However, I am very concerned that the permit systems and associated costs mean that farmers here in the UK will be financially penalised for better protecting the environment. There is certainly no requirement in the terms of the Directive that permits be used as a way of enforcing standards, nor that costs be so high. It would also appear that the UK is intending to impose a far higher financial burden on farmers than other member states. For example, a permit for a pig farmer here in the UK will cost around £25,000 whereas an equivalent permit in Denmark costs around £600.

So, I would like to take this opportunity to urge you to reconsider the UK system for implementation of the Integrated Pollution and Prevention Control Directive, in order to ensure that costs passed on to farmers are kept to a real minimum. At the very least, all fees for permits should be proportional to the turnover of the farm. DEFRA must recognise the importance of providing incentives for farmers to better protect the environment and not charge them for doing so.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.

cc Harvey Bradshaw, Environment Agency, Southern Region  
Howard Davidson, Environment Agency, Thames Region