Farm of the Future: Journey to Net Zero

The Royal Agricultural Society of England’s report *Farm of the Future: Journey to Net Zero* was launched today, 8th March, at the Low Carbon Agricultural Show. The report follows a [COP26 policy brief](https://www.rase.org.uk/v_uploads/documents/website-report/Cop%2026%20Briefing%20Paper%20Farm%20of%20the%20Future%20-%20Journey%20to%20Net%20Zero.pdf) which was published by the organisation in October 2021.

The *Farm of the Future* report’s strong emphasis on the responsibility of rural decarbonisation lying in the hands of farmers outlines how interlinked factors will determine the rate of progress - such as accurate economic valuation of natural capital, technology and investment, plus knowledge exchange and, crucially, a modernising overhaul of rural digital connectivity.

Lord Deben, Chairman of the UK’s Climate Change Committee, said within the report, “The Net bit of Net Zero is therefore vitally important and crucially it’s largely in the hands of farmers,” adding that farmers need help and direction if they are to shoulder this essential task. “By 2050, fossil fuels will have no place on our farms, and to that end every year, serious reductions must be made.”

*The Farm of the Future* report was commissioned by RASE to pull together the latest science and its on-farm application, show what farmers can realistically achieve, and to identify practical steps they can take to decarbonise the farming industry. Farmers and land managers have a key role to play in developing a more circular, resource-efficient rural economy. Many farmers need help, advice, and support if they are to embrace transformational change, adopt new ideas and technologies, while make fundamental adjustments to the way that they farm.

Commenting on the report Phillip Gready, Chairman of RASE said:

“British farmers can play a pivotal role in developing sustainable land use which meets the objectives of feeding the population, whilst sequestrating more carbon than we emit and improving soil health, water quality and biodiversity.”

The report is practical in its guidance, highlighting the emissions reduction options available to farmers and growers, including improved resource management, renewable energy generation, use of low emission farm vehicles, replacement of fossil fuels and adoption of digital technologies.

Like much of the climate-related guidance for farmers from other organisations, RASE’s report has a very strong emphasis on improving soil health through investment in natural capital.

Its authors said that British farmers large and small, extensive and intensive, on Grade 1 land or on hill farms, will have to transform their operations, but that they all need government, research, industry and supply chain support.

Mr Gready said: “For transformation to happen, farmers need practical guidance on the decarbonisation options based on currently available and emerging technologies, along with independent advice and technology demonstration sites. To improve carbon capture, they need access to farm-level emissions accounting and benchmarking tools.”

The report cited that the need for changes to husbandry and management practices must be underpinned by workable policies that will initiate practical changes. And that effective, consistent, cross-sectoral policy development from across government, including Defra, BEIS, DfT and HM Treasury, is vital to help deliver rural decarbonisation.

Mr Gready added: “Farmers can contribute to rural decarbonisation by cutting food chain related emissions, while continuing to supply quality home grown ‘low-carbon’ food produced to the highest standards.

“Policy makers must work more closely together and engage with farmers and land managers to deliver a generational shift in farming practices. This includes deployment of new technologies - including those developed in the UK - that meet farmers’ needs. It extends to the replacement of fossil fuels - especially subsidised ‘red’ diesel - with low emission alternatives.”

Following the report, RASE plans to work with the industry to stimulate change. Phillip Gready said:

“Now and in the future, we will see many competing demands made of our rural landscape. Change will be inevitable, with new skills to be learnt and investment required from government and private sector to enable UK farming to embark on the journey to Net Zero.”

*The Farm of the Future* Repor*t* along with other specialist papers outlining ‘enterprise journeys’ can be found at [Reports - RASE](https://www.rase.org.uk/reports).

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662 Words

**Notes for Editors**

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**About the report**

The *Farm of the Future* Report has been funded by RASE with help from the following:

* Frank Parkinson Trust - [About AFCP | AgriFood Charities Partnership (AFCP)](https://www.afcp.org.uk/about-us)
* CENEX - [Cenex | Low Emission Vehicle Research & Consultancy](https://www.cenex.co.uk/)
* Midlands Energy Hub (hosted by Nottingham City Council) [The Midland Energy Hub | NCC Energy (energyservices-ncc.co.uk)](https://www.energyservices-ncc.co.uk/what-we-do/the-midland-energy-hub)
* EBNet [Environmental Biotechnology Network – A BBSRC/EPSRC NIBB (ebnet.ac.uk)](https://ebnet.ac.uk/)

The main report will also be presented at the [Low Carbon Agriculture Show](https://lowcarbonagricultureshow.co.uk/), at Stoneleigh (8-9 March 2022). In addition, the editors have commissioned specialist papers and contributions from a number of specialist authors. See also [Reports - RASE](https://www.rase.org.uk/reports).

RASE will continue to provide technical guidance on farm decarbonisation and support its sister charity [Innovation for Agriculture](https://www.innovationforagriculture.org.uk/) in producing practical guides on reducing farm GHG emissions.