

SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK BILL

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. These explanatory notes relate to the Sustainable Livestock Bill as introduced in the House of Commons on 30 June 2010. They have been prepared by Robert Flello, the Member in charge of the Bill, in order to assist the reader of the Bill and to inform debate on it. They do not form part of the Bill and have not been endorsed by Parliament.
2. The notes need to be read in conjunction with the Bill. They are not, and are not meant to be, a comprehensive description of the Bill. So where a clause or part of a clause does not seem to require any explanation or comment, none is given.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

3. The Bill creates duties on the Secretary of State to take steps to make the livestock industry more sustainable, and to make information on those steps and the progress being made openly available.
4. The driver for the Bill is the fact that much of the environmental impact of consumption of livestock produce in the United Kingdom takes place in other countries. For example, the growing of feed crops such as soy is leading to the conversion of rainforest and other wild areas to plantations. Such deforestation causes biodiversity loss and results in large emissions of climate change gases.
5. Existing programmes to reduce the environmental impacts of the livestock sector stem from legislation such as the Climate Change Act, which only address the environmental impacts in the United Kingdom. This Bill seeks to provide a framework in which Ministers can build on this, perhaps on similar lines to the kind of policies already developed to reduce demand for other products that lead to deforestation, such as timber.

COMMENTARY ON CLAUSES

Clause 1: Duty to ensure the sustainability of the livestock industry

6. This clause places a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure the sustainability of the livestock industry (subsection (1)).
7. The Secretary of State must, in determining how to carry out the duty, give consideration to the matters listed in subsection (2).
8. Subsection (3) requires the Secretary of State to ensure that the United Kingdom Government advocates and supports positions when negotiating international policies, laws and treaties (for example in the World Trade Organisation, or in the European Union) that are consistent with the duties under this Act, even if the final position is determined by the votes of other countries.
9. Subsection (4) requires the Secretary of State to ensure that the steps taken under this Act do not lead to livestock production moving overseas, with a higher proportion of the meat consumed in the United Kingdom being imported.
10. Subsection (5) requires the Secretary of State to consult organisations and persons with relevant expertise when developing policies.

Clause 2 – Provision of information on sustainability of livestock farming

11. This clause imposes on the Secretary of State an obligation to publish information on the steps to be taken to meet the duty in Clause 1(1), and indicators of progress made with such steps.
12. Subsection (1) requires the Secretary of State to publish the steps to be taken under Clause 1, along with a set of indicators that progress will be measured against.
13. Subsection (2) requires the publication of information on progress made towards meeting the duty in section 1, while subsection (3) requires that these progress reports include an assessment of progress against the indicators that the Secretary of State determined under subsection (1).
14. Subsection (4) requires publication of an overall review of progress every 2 years.

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as introduced in the House of Commons on 30 June 2010 [Bill 5]*

15. Subsection (5) defines “publish” as being either in electronic or hard copy.

Clause 3 – Interpretation

16. Clause 3 defines what is meant by ensuring “the sustainability of the livestock industry”. The definition requires that biodiversity loss and climate change impacts must be addressed in a global context, not solely their impacts within United Kingdom borders.

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