

TAKE FIVE

Ways to improve farm sustainability in five steps



THRINGS

SOLICITORS



Ways to improve farm sustainability

1. Use or produce renewable energy

Farming is very energy-intensive - so finding ways to minimise the use of electricity from fossil fuels is one of the biggest changes you can make to reduce the carbon footprint of your activities.

This can be as simple as choosing an electricity provider that generates its power from renewable sources. You can make a much bigger difference by generating your own electricity on your land using photovoltaic (solar) panels or wind turbines. On a small scale this can contribute to the energy needs of your farm - but if you have room and investment to create significant amounts of power, this can be sold to the National Grid, providing a new source of income as well as helping the planet.

2. Be smart with crops

Rotating crops can help combat diseases because increasing the diversity of species grown on an area adds to the mix of micro-organisms in the soil. It can also reduce food sources for pests that thrive on a particular crop, so they die out before they become too prevalent.

Another greener technique is to keep ground covered with “plant cover crops” during times when it is not being used to grow harvestable crops. This can help preserve nutrients in the soil and keep weeds under control. Grazing livestock on these areas also saves on the cost and environmental implications of using animal feed.

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3. Look for alternatives to pesticides

There may be ways you can use more sustainable alternatives to traditional pesticides, or a combination of natural and chemical methods.

Careful targeting when spraying crops to keep it to specific areas or types of pests reduces costs - financial and environmental - and the impact on the environment as well as protecting nearby wildlife. Natural pest eliminators such as birds, insects and beetles can be an alternative to chemicals if carefully managed.

When using chemical pesticides, manage stock to reduce waste from pouring away out-of-date materials. Dispose of empty containers safely according to the manufacturer's instructions or through a licensed waste disposal contractor. Where possible, containers can be cleaned so they can be re-used.

4. Use water wisely

[Reports](#) estimate that up to 70% of freshwater is used for agriculture in most regions of the world. We can't avoid using water to grow crops - but we can take measures to carefully manage water resources to reduce waste.

Newer irrigation methods such as "drip and sprinkle" systems, where water gets into a plant's roots rather than being sprayed from above, are more efficient. Automated scheduling of watering times -

for example, so that crops are watered at cooler times of day - can reduce the amount of resource needed. Using rain barrels or creating reservoirs to store water ready to be recycled for watering crops can help reduce the distance water needs to travel and reduce consumption.

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5. Get connected

Technology that may have a significant impact on the world of farming is at an exciting stage in its development. The growth of high-speed internet and especially the super-fast 5G mobile network is enabling Internet of Things (IoT) systems that can connect devices, collect data and increase efficiency.

For example, the collection of data to analyse soil quality or water supplies can be automated using connected smart sensors. In the future we may see increasing use of self-driving tractors, automated farm equipment and drones that can feed back crop information in real time.



Would you like to know more?

Please contact one of our expert lawyers in this sector:

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