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EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01HRS MONDAY DECEMBER 10 2007

FARMING AND GOVERNMENT MUST WORK TOGETHER TO BE 'PART OF THE SOLUTION' TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Agriculture has an essential role to play in the fight against climate change but the Government must work with the sector to ensure all the tools are available to the industry and all the potential opportunities are maximised, a major cross-industry report said today.

'Part of the solution' is the report of a joint Climate Change Task Force, which was launched by the NFU, the Country Land and Business Association, and the Agricultural Industries Confederation last January to present a united stance against the threat climate change poses to agricultural production and the rural sector.

It sets out the industry's recommendations for action, and what it believes its future priorities should be, and says there will be substantial economic, social and environmental benefits in taking action now to ensure agriculture remains economically and environmentally viable.

NFU President Peter Kendall said: "Agriculture realises the central role it has to play in dealing with the challenges posed by climate change and the industry is committed to promoting energy efficiency, delivering best practice, and developing the wider potential for land-based industries to supply renewable energy.

"But to ensure we maximise the full potential of the opportunities available the Government has a key role to play alongside us, particularly in removing the barriers holding back farmers from investing in biogas from anaerobic digestion and in supporting research to refine the UK's greenhouse gas inventory."

Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, president of the CLA, said: “Land managers can make a positive contribution to mitigating the impact of climate change – through the provision of crops for renewable energy and through carbon storage in trees and soils. Our joint report highlights where long-term government commitments are needed to drive these carbon-friendly practices forward and where industry can offer land managers help and guidance.”

David Caffall, chief executive of the AIC, said: “There are around 4,000 trained advisers in fertilisers and agronomy who will be briefed and trained in the current and latest thinking for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from farming practices.

“They will be responsible for taking on the challenges of raising awareness and conveying science into practice. The role of professional people on the ground is critically important. We must not minimise the challenges and the need for their expertise.”

The publication of the report is being supported by HSBC Bank. Steve Ellwood, head of agriculture at HSBC, said: “HSBC Bank is a carbon neutral organisation and is pleased to be supporting the publication of the report.”

Notes to editors:

The five priorities set out in the report for the agriculture and land management sector are:

- Directed research on the UK greenhouse gas inventory to include: breakdown of components and emission factors more representative of land use and management; soil carbon and N₂O balance; reduced or zero tillage systems; and integrated models of whole farming systems
- Delivery of best available practices for integrated nitrogen management to improve current nitrogen efficiency, with support from the fertiliser industry, agronomists, advisers and animal nutritionists
- Raising awareness of energy and carbon accounting, and promoting energy efficiency and carbon management by farmers, land owners and foresters through financial incentives
- Removing barriers to the uptake of anaerobic digestion to harness methane emissions from animal manures as a source of heat and power, through education, capital and revenue-based support, cost-effective electricity grid connections, and establishment of a digestive standard

- Realising the wider potential for the land-based industries to supply renewable energy

For case studies of farmers involved in renewable energy production contact the NFU press office.

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