



25 February 2021

Professor John FitzGerald  
Chair  
Climate Change Advisory Council & Adaptation Committee  
McCumiskey House  
Richview, Clonskeagh Road  
Dublin 14  
D14 YR62

Our Ref: DAFM-MMO-00107-2021

Dear Professor Fitzgerald,

I refer to your recent correspondence in relation to my Department's Ag Climatise roadmap. Given the important role that the Climate Change Advisory Council plays in the national climate debate, I am very happy to address the issues raised in your correspondence.

As you will appreciate, it was critical that this roadmap was published in 2020. The Department could not afford to lose another growing season by delaying publication until after the new Climate Bill was finalised. As clearly stated in the roadmap, the document will evolve over time to reflect government ambition in this space. Notwithstanding this, I am very aware of the content of the new Climate Bill going through the Oireachtas at the moment. All sectors of the economy will need to transition to become climate neutral by 2050. Agriculture is the first sector to produce a roadmap that sets out a credible plan to achieve this objective.

You refer to the issue of fertiliser use. The roadmap proposes a 50% reduction in nitrous oxide emissions associated with fertiliser use over the next decade. This is fully in line with the Programme for Government commitments and represents a significant level of ambition. The sector can achieve this reduction by an overall cut in nitrogen fertiliser use and by changing the type of N fertiliser that is used on Irish farms.

The issue of methane continues to create a lot of debate, both nationally and internationally. The vision, as set out in Ag Climatise, is to develop by 2050 a climate neutral food system compatible with the Paris temperature goals whereby the climate impact of biogenic methane is reduced to zero and remaining emissions are balanced by removals, along with a significant uptake of renewable energy on farm.

In effect, reducing the climate impact of methane to zero means stabilising or a modest reduction in biogenic methane levels by 2030 and reducing these levels by approximately 24-47% by 2050 which fully aligns with international science under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and that of the Climate Change Advisory Council.

I very much accept that the actions of the roadmap are strong on the "what" we need to do, but lacks detail on the "how". We are now moving to the implementation phase. It is at this point, under the formation of expert consultation groups, that a path to delivery for many of the actions will be considered. My Department is taking this approach in order to foster a spirit of collaboration between all relevant stakeholders.

In conclusion, I can assure you that the climate issue is a personal priority of mine in Government. If there was any sense that our objective of stable methane over the coming years was in doubt, I won't hesitate to take corrective action. I believe the concept of a climate neutral agriculture sector is very achievable and I am determined to play my part in advancing this concept. The challenge now is for other sectors to follow suit.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie McConalogue".

Charlie McConalogue T/D.  
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine