

Circulation: NFU staff and members

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Circular Economy- Opportunity to comment

Introduction

In December 2014, the European Commission announced an ambitious initiative for the promotion of the 'circular economy' by the end of 2015. Rather than just concentrating on ways to reuse or recycle waste already produced, the circular economy looks to see whether changes can be made to reduce waste production at all stages of the value chain, including:

- Production and transportation of raw materials;
- Processing and packaging;
- Consumption;
- Reuse schemes;
- Waste management and recycling.

There are currently no proposals by the commission on how this initiative will be implemented, however they are looking at this time at the barriers and limitations to the circular economy. The NFU is generally in support of the circular economy initiative, however we are aware of some potential implications, for example if there is an increase in the volume and range of waste types which are deemed appropriate to spread to land for agricultural benefit, it is vital this does not reduce the quality of biofertiliser on the market.

This consultation is concentrating on the barriers to the circular economy initiative. At this early stage it is necessary to highlight these barriers to ensure that unrealistic or impractical targets are not placed on waste reduction.

Key points for consultation:

The NFU has highlighted some barriers to the circular economy initiative below and would welcome responses on these issues and others which prevent waste reduction:

- Insufficient cooperation or exchange of information across the value chain. Most noticeably the impacts of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP) on waste production;
- Lack of written contractual agreements between growers and retail;
- Production programmes which lead to over production, late orders or collections later than previously agreed leading to a decline in produce quality;
- The rise in retail specification in the quality and aesthetics of produce;
- Consumer culture leading to a limited number of outlets for 'class II' produce;
- Regulatory barriers- for example not being able to spread particular waste types to land which you believe to be beneficial for your farm;
- Planning constraints- for example in the installation of anaerobic digester plants or other infrastructure which use or recover waste materials;

- Economies of scale- not being large enough to justify certain recovery practices;
- Geographic location- for example being in an area where plastic recycling firms for silage wrappers don't collect;

This consultation also asks for opinions on which types of waste materials are the most important to maintain or improve the quality of. Therefore evidence is required at this stage to demonstrate the importance of retaining good quality products such as compost and digestate.

It is important that at this early stage we publicise the implications of this work, please provide any responses by **Monday 13th August**. The full consultation can be seen [HERE](#)