

# COMMON SOLUTIONS

– FOR NATURE AND AGRICULTURE



# The Danish Agriculture & Food Council and The Danish Society for Nature Conservation's common solutions

The main interest organisations for agriculture and nature have worked together in an unprecedented cooperation and are now presenting the parties of the Danish Parliament with a major proposal, which could ensure a substantial reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions due to agriculture by approximately 10 percent, help the agricultural sector and establish more continuous natural areas by reorganising or decommissioning a total area twice the size of the island of Falster. Entitled “Common Solutions – for nature and agriculture”, this proposal is the result of several months of cooperation between the two organisations.

With this proposal, they wish to show that it is possible – as of today – to initiate actions that can give more space to nature and reduce the impact on the climate, while still benefiting the agricultural sector. Their solution consists of an ambitious repara-celling scheme and a modernised approach to the issue of ammonia. The proposal made by The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council focuses on taking agricultural land of poor quality out of production or converting it in return for compensation, while giving farmers the opportunity to obtain better and more continuous agricultural land – a proposal in favour of both the farmers and the environment.

## A modern approach to the issue of ammonia

Common recommendations from The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council.

**The Danish Society for Nature Conservation (DN) and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council (DAFC) agree that** the approach to the ammonia issue and the ammonia regulation written in the law on livestock farming could be improved.

Today, the regulation concerning ammonia emissions from livestock facilities that are then found in the surrounding environment pose challenges for livestock producers who want to modernise their facilities and develop their operations, as well as for the environment, which must support the ammonia.

The current regulation can lead livestock producers located near natural areas sensitive to ammonia to find themselves stuck in a situation where they cannot modernise their livestock facilities, but are, on the contrary, forced to continue to produce in existing facilities for a long period of time, with the result that the surrounding environment remains exposed to the same high risk caused by ammonia.

The following four recommendations will create better conditions for the environment and for affected livestock producers. These four recommendations should be seen as a common approach to be implemented simultaneously.

### Alternative methods

- **The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council recommend** a more flexible regulation that gives the opportunity to choose alternative methods to meet the ammonia requirements of the law on livestock farming, while allowing the surrounding natural areas to develop and acquire greater environmental richness.
- These alternative methods could for example be grazing, haymaking, reducing or stopping the application of fertilisers, all of which have a positive effect on nature. They should also encourage landowners to make an effort to protect the environment.

## **Differentiated protection of new natural areas**

- **The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council recommend** that new natural areas (determined by a deadline) established on a private and voluntary basis should not be subject to specific ammonia requirements under the law on livestock farming when a livestock operation is to be considered environmentally compliant. This measure should also encourage landowners to make an effort to protect the environment.
- The specific ammonia regulation in the law on livestock farming contributes to the fact that today, despite a willingness to establish new natural areas or to take care of existing ones, many farmers are reluctant to do so, because they fear that the environment will change so that they or their neighbours would be assigned ammonia requirement, for example if they wish to expand their livestock facilities.

## **Differentiated requirements in the vicinity of category 2 natural areas**

- **The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council recommend** to conduct a more in-depth study on how to implement differentiated requirements for category 2 areas (including large heathlands and pastures outside internationally protected natural areas), where requirements vary according to the environmental quality of the area.
- Today, the law on livestock farming provides a standardised protection of these category 2 areas, which may prevent the development of new, more environmentally friendly livestock facilities.

## **Compensation for the closure of facilities that are poorly located due to the proximity of an ammonia-sensitive natural area**

- **The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council recommend** to establish a buyback programme for the most poorly located livestock operations.
- The organisations further recommend that an analysis be carried out on the actual number of agricultural facilities that cannot be developed due to the current requirements.
- Many livestock farms are located near an ammonia-sensitive natural area. The environmental consequences are particularly important, and the possibility for farmers to develop or modernise their production is limited. This remains the case even when the modernisation of the installations would partially reduce ammonia emissions.
- Some of these livestock farms will not be able to benefit from the proposals outlined above. Therefore, it would be beneficial for both the environment and the livestock producers to set up a programme that would encourage, in return for compensation, the gradual abandonment of livestock production in order to reduce the impact on natural areas, since ammonia emissions would then decrease more rapidly than if the current rules were maintained.

## **Multifunctional reparation must be the central point of an agrarian reform**

Common recommendations from The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council.

**The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council agree on the need for an effort if we are to cope with and adapt to climate change, ensure a quality aquatic**

environment and a rich and diverse nature. The organisations agree that this effort must go hand in hand with a sustainable and competitive Danish agricultural and food production. Based on good common experiences from **Real Dania's Collective Impact initiative**, both the Danish Agriculture & Food Council and the Danish Society for Nature Conservation believe that a multifunctional reparcelling of the land is an essential tool for finding sustainable solutions to this need for effort.

- In a densely populated country like Denmark, space is a valuable resource. Therefore, we have a common interest in finding solutions that optimise the way we use the landscape, so that the same square meters can meet everyone's needs. This includes in particular providing sufficient space for nature and agriculture.
- **The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council recommend** that this effort be given priority, and therefore suggest that additional public resources be made available for the multifunctional reparcelling fund that was set up at the same time as the drought aid measures. They suggest that the fund should be allocated an amount in the order of 130 million euros.
- Sufficient resources must be allocated to achieve, within a few years, tangible results in the landscape, as a result of purchases and sales of land and voluntary agreements on the decommissioning of land or the de-intensification of farms on an area of up to 100,000 ha. This area, equivalent to 1 to 2 times the size of Falster island, would give more space to nature, to outdoor activities, etc.
- **The Danish Agriculture & Food Council and The Danish Society for Nature Conservation recommend** prioritising effort in river valleys, low-lying agricultural lands, carbon-rich soils and areas where authorities have decided to strengthen the protection of drinking water, as well as to overcome local challenges in areas where farms are poorly located due to the presence of ammonia-sensitive natural areas. It is in these areas that the best synergies between the different interests can be achieved, and thus the most profitable solutions.
- The results will be achieved in a wide range of areas, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing nitrogen discharges into the aquatic environment, ensuring the targeted protection of drinking water, improving flood prevention, increasing the space reserved for nature and providing the possibility of preserving and increasing the attractiveness of rural areas for real estate, as well as their tourist income. This will also contribute to the creation of growth and development in the agricultural sector through an optimisation of the land allocation process, an improvement in the quality of cultivated land and better investment security for farmers.
- **The Danish Agriculture & Food Council and The Danish Society for Nature Conservation recommend** that multifunctional reparcelling projects be guided by the concept present in Real Dania's Collective Impact initiative, namely that the multifunctional reparcelling should be carried out in close collaboration between landowners, citizens, interest organisations and the authorities, and that it can be initiated by both the public and the private sectors. It must be a bottom-up approach where the participation of landowners and the local community comes early in the process, thus providing the opportunity to find solutions at the local level. The organisations agree that multifunctional reparcelling projects are aimed at citizens who are interested in participating and at landowners who wish to engage their land.

## Results

The Danish Society for Nature Conservation and the Danish Agriculture & Food Council agree that the decommissioning of land or the de-intensification of farms on an area of up to 100,000 ha. would have beneficial effects for society, such as reducing nitrogen discharges into the aquatic environment, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, building a carbon reservoir in the soil, ensuring the targeted protection of drinking water, improving flood prevention, reducing the cost of maintaining watercourses, reducing soil erosion and phosphorus emissions, as well as providing the possibility of preserving and increasing the attractiveness of rural areas for real estate, as well as their tourist income.

At the same time, the reparcelling of land would contribute to the creation of growth and development in the agricultural sector through an optimisation of the land allocation process, an improvement in the quality of cultivated land and better investment security for farmers.