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MASS MOODER

Slaughter all Irish cows to cut emissions says expert

BY LYNN KELLEHER
news@irishmirror.ie

ONE of the world's top environmental economists has said all Irish cows should be killed to reduce the country's huge greenhouse emissions.

The country's seven million cows and sheep throw out - one way or another - almost a sixth of the country's greenhouse gases by passing wind more than a hundred times a day.

With Ireland failing to meet the targets set down by the Kyoto Agreement, the penalties are expected to run from €500,000 to €1billion a year in the lead-up to 2020.

Now Dr Richard Tol, from the Economic and Social Research Unit, has told RTE's Ear To The Ground show that culling the country's much-loved dairy herd is the cheapest way to reduce emissions.

▲ ECONOMIST Dr Tol

He said: "Certain departments in the Irish Government realise very well that that is the only realistic option to meet these targets.

"This is an option that is on the table when civil servants talk about things politicians don't dare say in public yet.

"If you are serious about reducing emissions in Ireland there is no future for beef and dairy."

Ear To The Ground will tonight examine how methane emissions could be lowered and who will bear the cost of the cattle's emissions.

Dr Tol suggests Ireland should simply stop breeding the native herd over the next few years.

He said: "I think we should slaughter and eat the cattle we have but just not replace them.

"Macro-economically the bill for cattle farmers wouldn't change much.

"Most farmers are on subsidies and you would take them off one subsidy and put them on another subsidy, the dole. But I don't think farmers would appreciate this idea."

Ear To The Ground is on RTE1 at 7pm.

▲ GASSY Dairy cow