



Gormley critical of Smith's speech on cattle and climate

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MINISTER FOR Agriculture Brendan Smith was yesterday taken to task by his Cabinet colleague **John Gormley** over comments that climate change must not damage Irish **agriculture**.

Mr Gormley, the Minister for the Environment, said he was "very surprised" to learn of a speech delivered by Mr Smith in which he argued against reducing cattle numbers to help Ireland meet the EU target of a 20 per cent reduction in **emissions** by 2020.

In a speech at a conference organised by Teagasc, Mr Smith pointed to **agriculture** contributing 27 per cent of all greenhouse **emissions** in Ireland, a much higher percentage than other EU countries. Most of this comes from **methane** produced from cattle.

Abatement measures such as a change in diet for cattle will achieve reductions of 4 per cent. Achieving the required **targets** is therefore likely to involve reductions in the cattle herd.

But Mr Smith yesterday argued that reducing cattle numbers would make no sense as Irish **beef** would be replaced by **beef** from other countries.

"If we cut our cattle numbers, our **beef** would simply be replaced on world markets by **beef** produced in a much less sustainable way - actually making the global climate change situation worse," he said.

Mr Gormley responded by saying that while he has always said it will be difficult to reach the **targets**, no special pleading could be made by any sector.

The Green Party leader said that if Ireland does fall short of its **targets**, the rising price of **carbon**

credits will invariably lead to enormous costs that Ireland simply could not afford.

He said the Government's sub-committee on climate change, which met this week, had strongly underlined the view that reductions needed to be made in every sector.

"The only way is to cut domestic **emissions** and I'm glad to say that there's a realisation about that. We had a good meeting of the climate change committee and the French presidency [of the European Union] wants to go ahead with a deal [that pushes for 30 per cent reductions by 2020]," he said.

"There is no free lunch. We have to deal with the reality. Nobody has suggested at any stage that there will be reduction in the herd. We have looked for reductions in **emissions** and how we can increase the **carbon** sinks," said Mr Gormley.