



He wants to kill ALL cattle to save environment

A TOP environmental economist has started a major beef with Irish farmers by claiming all cows in the country should be killed to reduce our greenhouse gas bill.

Dr Richard Tol, from the Economic and Social Research Unit, claims that culling the country's dairy herd is the cheapest way to reduce greenhouse gas **emissions**.

Ireland's seven million cows and sheep emit 16 per cent of the country's greenhouse gases by belching more than 100 times a day.

With Ireland failing to meet the targets set down by the Kyoto Agreement, the penalties are expected to run close to

■ By **LYNNE KELLEHER**

€1 billion a year in the lead-up to 2020.

He said: "The cheapest way to meet our greenhouse gas **emissions** target for 2020 is to cull all the cows... politicians don't dare say this in public yet.

Slaughter

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

RTE's flagship rural show Ear to the Ground, examines how methane emissions could be lowered and who will bear the cost of the cattle's emissions on tonight's programme.

Dr Tol suggests that Ireland

should 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.

"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."

He added: "Between 2008 and 2012 we are allowed to run over 13 per cent in greenhouse gas **emissions** and at the moment we are about 25 per cent over.

"The greenhouse gas bill varies depending on the forecast but it will definitely be up around half a billion euro to €1bn a year.

"If we got rid of even half the cows or all the cows we would-

n't be paying this money but I don't think it will happen."

There are almost twice as many cattle in Ireland as people and this is one of the few countries on the planet where cows outnumber people.

Diets

Agriculture is the largest sector contributing to greenhouse gases in Ireland, accounting for 27 per cent of total **emissions**.

Methane produced by cattle makes up more than half of those greenhouse gases.

Scientists from Teagasc, the **Agriculture** and Food Development Authority, and UCD in the middle of a three-year research programme into sheep and cattle, aimed at finding alternative diets for the livestock.