

Agriculture can seize opportunities from transport's road to zero emissions



Andy Eastlake
Chief Executive, Zemo Partnership

Andy Eastlake, Chief Executive, Zemo Partnership, discusses the advancements being made to decarbonise our transport sector, and the important role farmers will play...

Low Carbon Agriculture 2023 comes at an important moment as we accelerate down the road to net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Government has already set a 2030 deadline for the phase-out of sale of conventional petrol and diesel cars, and all new road vehicles must produce zero harmful emissions at the tailpipe by 2040. The non-road and mobile machinery (NRMM) sector doesn't have similar targets (yet) but the writing is clearly on the wall for the conventional combustion engine and fossil fuels. Virtually all manufacturers are now turning ever more of their attention to alternatives and, particularly, the opportunities for electrification of the vehicles they sell.

By the end of October 2022 there were more than one million plug-in vehicles registered to drive on UK roads; nearly 60% of those, fully battery electric models, with the remainder PHEVs. In the last five years, the number of plug-in vehicles registered in the UK has increased approximately ten-fold.

Cars and, now, vans show where electrification is most feasible, but several other sectors are also ripe for change; electric mopeds now represent around 50% of sales and electric buses, too, have made good progress (as they often require

modest range). There's recent encouraging progress in the electrification of larger vehicles; several medium-sized and urban delivery trucks and even some heavier and longer-haul models are now available, albeit currently at higher prices.

Farmers and others involved in the agriculture sector have long embraced alternative options, with biomethane tractors in full production and several electric tractor manufacturers vying to end the dominance of diesel in this vital sector.

Electrification isn't the only game in town for the agriculture community. There's growing interest in hydrogen as a potential energy carrier, both in fuel cells and as a direct combustion fuel.

Whatever direction the green transport revolution takes there are opportunities for farmers and landowners interested in sustainability to lead the way. Whatever powers the agricultural vehicles of today and tomorrow, it will have to be based on verified renewable energy, be that biomethane or biodiesel, hydrogen or, indeed, electricity.

My organization, Zemo Partnership, is working with over 240 member

organisations in all these areas; doing whatever it takes to accelerate the transition and maximise transport's contribution to the mitigation of climate change, while also tackling air pollution.

In the areas where the transition to electrification is becoming commercially beneficial, Zemo has facilitated the cross-sectoral Electric Vehicle Energy Taskforce which brought together a wide range of stakeholders, previously unfamiliar with each other, to work out how to maximise the opportunities to both the energy and transport sectors from the transition. A key focus for our fuels team is optimizing carbon savings from the use of renewable fuels in the vehicles of today. We've developed the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme which addresses one of the significant barriers to the adoption of low carbon renewable fuels by vehicle fleets and are just about to publish a revision to our Renewable Fuels Guide. We've also been examining hydrogen production pathways and the potential of hydrogen to cut emissions over the lifecycle of vehicles.

There's certainly a great deal to discuss about how the revolution in transport decarbonisation is going to impact on the agricultural sector. I'm looking forward to the debate on February 7th!

Please visit: www.zemo.org.uk