Brother and sister team Ross and Lee Paton milk around 170 cows at Torr Farm, a 389 hectare (ha) organic dairy farm on the Solway coast, about 20 miles west of Dumfries. About 100 ha of the farm are either planted with trees or used for rough grazing. Most is sown in grass for summer grazing and to be made into silage for feeding the cows over the winter months. Nearly 80 ha are used for growing cereals like winter wheat and spring barley, some of which is made into an arable silage, also for animal feed.

Torr is one of four farms taking part in the Scottish Government funded Farming for a Better Climate initiative.

What steps are being taken at Torr to help to combat climate change?

- Saving energy - Milking cows twice a day uses a lot of electricity. Simple steps like making sure hot water heating timers and thermostats are correctly set, replacing lagging on hot water tanks and pipes and upgrading milking equipment makes it more efficient and helps reduce energy waste. Ross and Lee now make a note of all fuel used on the farm. A ‘smart meter’ monitors their energy use and helps them find ways to reduce it.

- Farm woodlands - trees on the farm can be used for fuel. Managing trees, or planting more for future use can be cost effective, benefit wildlife and reduce the demand for fossil fuels.

- Carrying out a nutrient budget. Along with clover and crops in the pea and bean family, cow dung and slurry (the runny stuff) is another good way to put nutrients for growing crops back into soils. A computer program called PLANET Scotland helped Ross and Lee to plan how much dung and slurry to add to which fields, making the best use of the nutrients they already have on the farm.

- Keeping the cows happy - the quality of their food, how quickly they grow and how old they are when they have their first calf can all help to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in terms of kg beef or litres of milk produced.

Organic farms like Torr can’t use inorganic fertilisers to add nutrients to the soil to help plants grow. Instead they have to think about other ways to get nutrients into the soils. And cow poo is a key ingredient!

Did you know?

Want to find out more?

Pick up a leaflet about Farming for a Better Climate at Stewart Tower or visit www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

Get in touch

We would love to know what you think. Email the project at climatechange@sac.co.uk. You can follow Farming for a Better Climate on Twitter at #SACFarm4climate and keep up to date with Stewart Tower on their facebook page via www.stewart-tower.co.uk