

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

AGRICULTURE MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH, AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

18 NOVEMBER 2020

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-seventh North South Ministerial Council Agriculture meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, and by videoconference on 18 November 2020. The meeting was attended by Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Nichola Mallon MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, Charlie McConalogue TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development. Minister Poots chaired the meeting.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

2. The NSMC noted the collaborative approach to further studies of Covid-19 risk in meat processing plants and the current position with regard to the ongoing difficulties being experienced on agricultural markets and the associated measures introduced to address these difficulties.
3. Ministers noted the continuing close contacts between officials from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Department

of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) on a range of issues associated with the pandemic.

IMPLICATIONS OF UK WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EU

4. The Council noted the work being carried out to prepare for the end of the transition period and agreed to further investigate the potential for co-operation to address specific challenges which may arise in the sector.

REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME

5. Ministers noted that DAERA, DAFM, and DRCD will hold a workshop in early 2021 to review the work programme in the Agriculture Sector, and that an update paper will be brought to the next Agriculture Sectoral meeting.

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) ISSUES

6. The NSMC noted that DAERA intends to launch its Future Agricultural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland in the coming months, and the simplifications DAERA intends to make to the rules governing Direct Payments for the 2021 scheme year, and the longer term approach to Support Payments being considered by DAERA. The Council also noted the future plans being developed by DAFM for the agri-food sector under the latest CAP proposals.
7. Ministers noted the close contacts between officials from DAERA and DAFM on areas of mutual interest in the agri-food sector, in particular on significant environmental issues, as they relate to the implementation of future agriculture policy.

CO-OPERATION ON ANIMAL HEALTH

8. The Council welcomed the continuing work and progress achieved on the delivery of the 'All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Action Plan' since the last NSMC Agriculture meeting.
9. Ministers encouraged officials from both jurisdictions to seek ways to maximise existing co-operation on animal health and welfare and looked forward to the continuation of practical and effective co-operation on animal health and welfare, and disease control in both jurisdictions, in order that the health and welfare of livestock is maintained at the highest level.

CO-OPERATION ON PLANT HEALTH AND PESTICIDES

10. The NSMC noted the progress made with the review of the 'All-Ireland Chalara Control Strategy' by officials from DAFM and DAERA in response to ongoing

scientific and surveillance evidence and the research being undertaken to develop a population of Irish planting stock tolerant to the Chalara Ash Dieback disease.

11. Ministers noted the ongoing commitment of DAFM and DAERA to continue to work towards the shared objective of achieving and maintaining good plant health status on the island.
12. They welcomed the continued cross-border co-operation in dealing with tree and plant health, and in the shared approach to regulation, as evidenced through a common approach to Oak Processionary Moth risk management. They also welcomed the joint approach to the continued sharing of science and diagnostic capability and in the regulation of the use of pesticides.

CO-OPERATION ON FARM SAFETY

13. The Council welcomed the continuing co-operation between both Administrations and the ongoing work to improve farm safety.
14. Ministers welcomed the issuing of a joint North South press release in relation to increasing awareness of farm safety across both jurisdictions, the sharing of information in relation to 'On Farm Ground' and the EU funded COST Action programme on Farm Safety, the sharing of the NI Farm Safety Partnership fourth Action Plan, and the sharing of commissioned farm safety research results.

CO-OPERATION ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

15. The NSMC noted the ongoing work in both jurisdictions to develop rural policy and the strong commitment to further enhancing the sharing of information and best practice on rural development policy.
16. Ministers noted the good progress made in both jurisdictions in implementing the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme including under areas of co-operation, and the excellent progress towards developing a co-produced rural development support package for inclusion in the new PEACE Plus cross-border programme that will further contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

UPDATE ON EU FUNDING

17. The Council welcomed the ongoing good collaboration between DAERA and DAFM aimed at maximizing the drawdown of EU funding under Horizon 2020 and the €102m in funding secured to date by successful applicants in both jurisdictions for the Agriculture, Forestry, Food and Marine sectors and the bioeconomy.

18. Ministers noted the progress made in funding projects, in both jurisdictions, under the DAFM National Competitive Call and the agriculture research themes under the US-Ireland R&D Partnership.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19. The Council agreed to hold its next Agriculture meeting in early 2021.

**Joint Secretariat
18 November 2020**

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