

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC AGR 2 (16) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

AGRICULTURE MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

26 OCTOBER 2016

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-sixth North South Ministerial Council Agriculture meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 26 October 2016. The meeting was attended by Michael Creed TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Ring TD, Minister of State, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Michelle McIlveen MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Chris Hazzard MLA, Minister for Infrastructure. Minister Creed chaired the meeting.

IMPLICATIONS OF UK REFERENDUM

2. Ministers discussed the implications of the result of the recent UK Referendum on EU membership. They noted that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have undertaken an initial scoping exercise to assess the impact of the UK decision.

UPDATE ON EU FUNDING

3. The NSMC welcomed ongoing collaboration between DAERA and DAFM aimed at maximising the drawdown of EU funding under Horizon 2020 for the

Agriculture, Forestry, Food & Marine sectors and the bioeconomy and the €26m secured in funding to date by successful applications from both jurisdictions.

4. Ministers noted the progress made in funding projects, in both jurisdictions, under the DAFM National Competitive Call and the extension of the US-IRE R&D Partnership to include agriculture research themes.

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) ISSUES

5. The Council noted the ongoing progress made by DAFM and DAERA on the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms agreed in 2013 and the up-to-date situation with regard to the implementation of DAFM's and DAERA's Rural Development Programmes.
6. Ministers also noted the potential implications on future CAP funding as an outcome of the result of the UK's decision to leave the EU and the determination of DAFM and DAERA to implement European Commission proposals for CAP simplification and push for further simplification where appropriate.
7. The NSMC noted the current position with regard to the ongoing difficulties being experienced on agricultural markets and the associated measures introduced to address these difficulties and the continuing close contact between officials from DAERA and DAFM on a range of issues including, CAP Reform implementation issues and the impact the UK decision to leave the EU will have on the agri-food and fisheries sectors in both jurisdictions.

CO-OPERATION ON ANIMAL HEALTH

8. The Council welcomed the continuing work on the delivery of the 'All-Island Animal Health & Welfare Strategy Action Plan' since the last NSMC Agriculture meeting of 20 January 2016 and, in the context of the recent UK Referendum, 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.

Key points noted included:-

- (i) the introduction of a mandatory Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication programme by DAERA on 1 March 2016 similar to that introduced by DAFM in 2013;
- (ii) that on 29 September 2016, the Executive agreed the recommendation for DAERA to submit an application to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Negligible Risk (NR) status for Northern Ireland. The application has been submitted and a decision will be taken by the OIE in May 2017;
- (iii) that agreement was reached, at a meeting of the "*North/South Disease Control & Trade Working Group*" (March 2016) on ways to enhance trade between the two jurisdictions, and in particular agreement on how to streamline the health certification processes for deer and pigs being moved to Northern Ireland for slaughter;

- (iv) that a shared contract for the emergency supply of CO₂ for whole-house gassing of poultry has been in place since June 2016 and will be valid for 3 years; and
- (v) that a Memorandum of Understanding for sharing livestock culling teams in the event of an exotic disease outbreak in either jurisdiction was signed by the Chief Veterinary Officers from DAFM and DAERA in June 2016.

CO-OPERATION ON PLANT HEALTH AND PESTICIDES

9. The Council 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; the research being undertaken to develop a population of Irish planting stock tolerant to the Chalara Ash Dieback disease and 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.
10. Ministers 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 Epiatrix risk management and 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

11. The NSMC welcomed the continuing co-operation between both jurisdictions, the on-going work to improve farm safety and the agreement between the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) on the joint development of farm safety e-learning packages.
12. Ministers welcomed the success achieved in raising public awareness to the inherent dangers to health and safety on farms during the International Farm Safety Week 2016 and the forthcoming tripartite meeting of HSENI, HSA and the Health and Safety Executive, Great Britain, to discuss farm safety that will take place on 1 December 2016.

CO-OPERATION ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

13. The Council welcomed the good progress made in both jurisdictions in implementing the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme and that the DAERA and DAHRRGA have organised a LEADER Co-operation event to be held in Newry on 8 and 9 November 2016 to launch co-operation between Local Action Groups from all Regions of the UK and Ireland.
14. Ministers also welcomed the opening of a new Social Farming Capital Grant Scheme in Northern Ireland to complement the existing Support Office in Cookstown.

15. They also noted progress made on the Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) funded Social Farming grant scheme and Ireland's new Town and Village Scheme and agreed that officials should explore opportunities to share experience gained from initiatives aimed at sustaining rural settlements.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

16. The Council agreed to hold the next Agriculture meeting in spring 2017.

**Joint Secretariat
26 October 2016**

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