

NI dairy sectors comments on the UK Agriculture Bill

Schedule 6: Provisions relating to Northern Ireland

Part 1: Financial support after EU exit

- We are content with Part 1 of Schedule 6 since it enables NI to roll forward Pillars 1 and 2, as well as CMO matters, and, where appropriate, to make simplifications.
- Part 1 will allow DAERA to continue to provide support for Rural Development

Part 2: Intervention in agricultural markets

- We agree that DAERA should have powers to deal with market disturbances by providing financial assistance to agricultural producers whose incomes are adversely affected.
- We agree that DAERA should have powers to use public intervention and private storage mechanisms

Part 3: Collection and sharing of data

- We agree with the provisions in this Part

Part4: Marketing standards and carcass classification

- It makes sense that during the Transition period the provisions in this Part are in place. However, it needs to be recognised that post Transition NI will operate to EU standards on SPS matters.
- There is no recognition in the Bill that future divergence between UK and EU Marketing standards will impact NI and how DAERA will apply its devolved powers in this area.

Part5: Data protection

- We agree with this Part

In relation to other parts of the Bill:

Clause 32: Identification and traceability of animals.

- This clause should not apply to NI for the following reasons:
 - NI will have to adhere to EU Regulations and standards for animal identification and traceability. With the potential for UK and EU approaches to diverge, allowing NI to have its own systems avoids the complexity of divergence.
 - One of the areas that the NI dairy sector uses in its positioning in export markets, and to gain competitive advantage, is in its robust and long standing traceability system. Buyers in export markets have a number of key purchase criteria, one of which is product quality and safety. The proposition to purchase NI dairy products is based on the confidence and trust that buyers can have in our products; and this is based, in part, on our traceability system. Having a one size fits all approach for the whole of the UK minimises this positioning and proposition to buy NI dairy products because this clause would remove the direct control that is currently exercised by DAERA, and would dilute NI's competitive advantage in this area.
- The Bill raises issues around matters that are reserved, those that are devolved, and those that come under the Protocol. The tensions that will emerge in these areas should be recognised, but at the moment there is nothing in the Bill to address this matter.

Submitted by Dr mike Johnston, CEO, Dairy Council for Northern Ireland