

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development Report on the Public Bodies (Abolition of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides) Order 2014 Assembly Consent Motion

Powers

1. The Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Assembly Standing Order 46.
2. The Committee has power:
 - to consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
 - to approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
 - to call for persons and papers;
 - to initiate enquiries and make reports; and
 - to consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Background

3. On the 7th March 2011 the Assembly agreed to a Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) on the Public Bodies Act 2011. This allowed certain public bodies to be dissolved or abolished. One of these bodies was Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP). ACP was a non-departmental body established under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to give independent advice to government on all matters relating to pesticides.
4. The UK Advisory Committees on Pesticides (ACPs) were established under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to give independent advice to government on all matters relating to pesticides. Appointments to the ACPs require the approval of the four Agriculture Ministers. The Advisory Committee on Pesticides covers England, Scotland and Wales and The Advisory Committee on Pesticides (NI) covers Northern Ireland. In practice the same body of experts has been appointed for both, meaning that there is a single committee serving as both legal entities.
5. The Government has proposed to abolish the ACPs and to replace them with an expert committee of Defra. This committee would work for the UK departments, including the FSA and the devolved administrations including DARD. The new expert committee on pesticides will be formed and operate to terms of reference (TOR) agreed by Defra and the Devolved Administrations. The main outcome expected from the abolishment of the ACPs and replacement with an expert committee is greater transparency and more effective working. It is considered a non-controversial issue as it is an administrative change only.

6. A consultation was carried out UK wide, 45 responses were received none of which were from Northern Ireland.

Committee Consideration

7. At its meeting of Tuesday 9th December 2014 the Committee considered papers, attached, from the Department on the proposal to abolish the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and a copy of the draft consent motion as laid in the Business Office. The papers provided to the Committee indicated that this Order would have a minimal impact in Northern Ireland.
8. The Committee further received an oral briefing from DARD on the matter at its meeting of Tuesday 13th January 2015, the Official Report of this meeting is attached for information.
9. Having considered this evidence, the Committee was content for the Department to proceed in seeking the Assembly's consent to the Public Bodies (Abolition of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides) Order 2014.