

NIAPA Submission to the Committee Inquiry into Better Regulation

We note in the previous action plan that better regulations, a core priority for the EU, aimed at cutting red tape and improving the quality of legislation for consumers and businesses alike

Anyone involved with farming would state that if anything, the implications of red tape and bureaucracy have increased over the intervening period. In fact, under new CAP reform there was mention of reduction in the above but this is proving to be the contrary.

If we look at the Hampton Principles regarding regulation they talk about risk assessment, accountability, easily understood unnecessary information and not having to give the same piece of information twice etc. Including allowing and encouraging economic progress and only to intervene where there is a clear case for protection.

Considering responses from farmers regarding regulating bodies, we can see that complaints cover many of the aspects noted above.

We do recognise the need for regulations and in fact the benefit they have for our marketing of produce, the environment etc. but we feel there may be lack of consistency, duplication and an over zealousness in some cases in the application of regulatory practice.

In order to comply fully with regulation, people must be fully aware of what compliance entails. In many cases when penalties are applied it is only then that explanations may be offered in relation to breaches when in fact it is too late.

We have EU and national legislation which overlap and for which there may be separate regulatory bodies.

Within agriculture we have DARD and NIEA both regulating farm businesses where there can be overlaps. We also have local government input in some aspects of regulation. There are then the “voluntary schemes” in which producers participate to enable them to market produce at what is not perceived as a discounted rate. On top of this, individual purchasers may have additional demands. These are generally on top of what is required through legislation.

A farm is a working environment where people work long hours often in isolation in stressful conditions. There are also situations which are more prevalent now e.g. many farmers have off farm employment and are forced to take time off for inspections etc.

What farmers require is better communication, more co-operation, less duplication, assistance in compliance as opposed to training by enforcement.