



Ms Stella McArdle  
Clerk, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development  
Room 243, Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw, Stormont  
Belfast, BT4 3XX

20<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Dear Ms McArdle

### **Inquiry into Better Regulation**

NILGA would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to give views in relation to the above inquiry, and welcomes the initiative of exploring how best to simplify and reduce the regulatory burden on farmers. NILGA has previously supported better regulation principles when the DOE and NIEA were carrying out a similar exercise in relation to environmental better regulation. Local government is heavily involved in environmental regulatory activity and ensuring council compliance with environmental regulations, so a substantive response to consultation exercises could be readily prepared.

In contrast, with regard to regulation faced by farmers there is little involvement for councils - either in regulatory activity or compliance. It is therefore difficult to give strong evidence-based views on the local government experience of farm regulation, particularly that originating from DARD.

NILGA acknowledges however, that agriculture is a mainstay of the Northern Ireland economy and given its importance, has recently reconstituted a Rural Development Working Group which will also keep a watching brief on agricultural issues, focusing on EU policy impacting locally. This Group is yet to meet, having been officially formed at the 5<sup>th</sup> June NILGA AGM.

At this point in time, I am therefore unable to give you a substantive policy position in relation to the terms of reference of the Committee's inquiry, but will ensure that the Group is made aware of the details of the inquiry at their first meeting (24<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

In the meantime, I will ensure that the survey for farmers is forwarded to elected members, so that the farmers amongst their number can complete it, and others can forward it to farmers in their acquaintance. I trust that the above is satisfactory and will assist the Committee in their consideration of the relevant issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'K Smyth'.

Karen Smyth  
Head of Policy