

Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA)

Campbell Tweedie (President), Conall Donnelly (Executive Director)

Presentation to the ARD Committee,

Northern Ireland Assembly, Stormont, 20 October 2015

NIMEA represents eight red meat processing businesses in Northern Ireland, comprising a combination of 11 abattoirs and cutting plants. NIMEA represents our members' beef and lamb interests, although several members also operate in other meat sectors.

NIMEA will provide evidence on the following key areas:

- **ARD Committee Enquiry into Better Regulation on Northern Ireland Farms**
NIMEA welcomes the committee's initiative to investigate opportunities to reduce the burden of regulation faced by Northern Ireland farmers. Onerous implementation of regulation at farm level has implications for the entire industry. Pre-slaughter veterinary inspections for animal welfare should be examined. Members are committed to high standards of animal welfare in their businesses, but inconsistent and burdensome interpretation of legislation is a concern for members and suppliers alike.
- **Market Access Development**
In the area of market access, the industry is wholly dependent on government support. Members acknowledge the ongoing progress made in key markets and the important contribution from DARD and DEFRA. However, market access must be properly resourced by the UK government and we are concerned that the DEFRA trade budget is protected going forward.
- **Industry Support Measures outside the UK**
Despite the second highest beef price in Europe, we acknowledge that Northern Ireland farmers have continued to struggle with profitability. Meanwhile prices in mainland Europe have been significantly lower over the last three years, yet it is only recently that there have been European protests about farm incomes. We suspect that there may be more direct and indirect subsidies available in other member states and would welcome a thorough examination and evaluation of all support measures across the EU.