

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC AGR 1 (15) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

AGRICULTURE MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

25 FEBRUARY 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty fourth North South Ministerial Council Agriculture meeting was held in Armagh on 25 February 2015. The meeting was attended by Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Ann Phelan TD, Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and Jim Wells MLA, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Minister Coveney chaired the meeting.

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

2. Ministers had a discussion on the opportunities that exist for the Agriculture sector in terms of various EU funding streams. Ministers welcomed the ongoing collaboration and co-operation in this area and agreed that every effort should be made to maximise the drawdown from these funds where it is mutually beneficial to do so.

COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY (CAP)

3. The Council noted the recent developments in plans for implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy reforms agreed in 2013, including administrative measures for Direct Payment Schemes. Ministers also welcomed the ongoing co-operation between the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

CO-OPERATION ON ANIMAL HEALTH

4. The Council welcomed the continued work on the delivery of the All-Island Animal Health & Welfare Strategy Action Plan since the last NSMC Agriculture Meeting.

Key points of note include:-

- (i) The ongoing high level of co-operation between both jurisdictions as manifested by participation in:
 - a successful and useful epizootic disease contingency planning exercise dealing with African Swine Fever in November 2014; and
 - a whole-house gassing exercise in October 2014.
- (ii) Parallel applications to the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) for Classical Swine Fever disease-free status.
- (iii) The introduction of a Common Chapter in the event of an outbreak of African Horse Sickness on the island.
- (iv) Progress made by DARD on its goal of submitting an application for OBF (officially brucellosis free) status to the Commission in March 2015. DAFM is maintaining cull cow monitor, abortion notification and post abortion sampling and will liaise with DARD colleagues on the timing of the removal of pre-movement test requirement.

CO-OPERATION ON PLANT HEALTH AND PESTICIDES

5. Ministers noted that in October 2014 the DARD/DAFM Plant Health Sub Group commissioned a scientific appraisal of further actions to implement the policy to eradicate and contain ash dieback in both jurisdictions. The scientific group concluded that the eradication of ash dieback was still possible and recommended a continued programme of surveillance and eradication.
6. The Council also noted that the EU Standing Committee of Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF), Plant Health Section, met on the 19-20 January and both the UK and Ireland secured agreement from Member States and the

Commission for ash dieback national measures to remain in place for 2015 whilst efforts continue to eradicate the disease.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Ministers agreed that in addition to the planned proactive support by DARD and DECLG for LEADER Cooperation activities - including the provision of appropriate staff resources - that there should also be a focus on wider opportunities for accessing support from other EU Funding programmes (non-European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development). They also agreed the provision of funding for 2015/16 initially to support the further development and promotion of Social Farming, and welcomed the continued ongoing co-operation of officials in closing respective current Rural Development Programmes, preparing for 2014-2020 programmes and developing rural recreation.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8. The Council agreed to hold the next Agriculture meeting in Autumn 2015.

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