



## Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

COM/2023/770 Proposal for a regulation on the  
protection of animals during transport and related  
operations: British Agriculture Bureau; Ulster Farmers'  
Union

18 September 2025

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mrs Ciara Ferguson (Chairperson)  
Mr David Brooks (Deputy Chairperson)  
Dr Steve Aiken  
Mr Peter Martin  
Ms Emma Sheerin

**Witnesses:**

Ms Kate Adams	British Agriculture Bureau
Mr Alexander Kinnear	Ulster Farmers' Union

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** You are very welcome, Kate and Alexander. Go ahead when you are ready. I apologise for the delay in the schedule. There is a lot of business to get through, and we want to ensure that there is a quorum.

**Mr Alexander Kinnear (Ulster Farmers' Union):** Good morning, Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important subject. I am here today representing farmers from Northern Ireland, and I am joined by Kate Adams, senior European policy adviser from the British Agriculture Bureau (BAB). The BAB office has represented farmers and growers across all four UK farming unions in Brussels since 1972. Following restructuring after Brexit, we continue to hold membership of the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations-General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives (COPA-COGECA), which unites the voices of 22 million European farmers to promote the interests of agriculture in EU institutions.

We appreciate the scrutiny of EU laws and their implications for Northern Ireland, positive and negative, while recognising the scope within which the Committee must operate. Our concerns are outlined in two documents that have been submitted to the Committee. Those documents highlight several issues, including the scope of the legislation; supervision of loading and unloading by a veterinarian; journey times and feeding requirements; temperature limits during transport; development of the mobile application; fitness for travel; minimum vertical height; space allowances during transport; enforcement of the legislation; and, crucially, the overall cost to the industry.

It goes without saying that farmers in Northern Ireland are fully committed to maintaining the highest standards of animal welfare. Ensuring that livestock and poultry are transported humanely is of utmost importance to our members. Our concern is not with the principle of stronger welfare protections but with the practicality of legislation, which must be proportionate and feasible, otherwise there is a risk of undermining welfare standards and the viability of farm businesses. We are also concerned that, to date, too much of the responsibility for representing those interests in Brussels has fallen to the Ulster

Farmers' Union (UFU) and BAB. While we will continue to collaborate with partners on issues that affect the entire island of Ireland, the Government must accept their responsibility and not step back during what are seen as temporary circumstances. There is an urgent need for more coordinated and sustained lobbying from London and DAERA in Belfast to ensure the best possible outcome for farmers in Northern Ireland.

Access to the single market remains critical for our sector, and safeguarding that element of the Windsor framework is essential. However, there is a clear democratic deficit under the existing arrangements. Our consistent position has been to advocate for a comprehensive UK/EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) veterinary agreement. While such an agreement would not resolve every issue, it would go a long way towards delivering a fairer and more sustainable outcome for Northern Ireland.

We are happy to answer members' questions. Kate will address technical details, and I will be pleased to respond to broader queries.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** Thank you. I will open the meeting to the floor.

**Dr Aiken:** Alexander, thanks very much indeed, and welcome, Kate. Apologies for running late.

Alexander and team, we have heard a lot about the SPS and what it is and is not going to do. I have a declaration of interest in that I listen to 'Farming Today' every morning, and we heard a Minister say that the SPS agreement is not even going to be discussed until 2027 and any implications until 2028. Our concern is that divergence is beginning to increase. Bearing in mind that we are not going to see anything being done soon, what level of divergence will we see when those regulations come in and what will the impact be, particularly on the Northern Ireland agribusiness sector?

**Mr Kinneer:** You have hit the nail on the head about the timescales. The agreement will be welcome, and, hopefully, we will get there at some point, but there is no guarantee that we will. In a sense, therefore, nothing will change for Northern Ireland when the agreement takes effect. What will change is that GB will join us in sharing a lot of problems that we have experienced. The key point is the democratic deficit, which we have explained and can go into in further detail later.

Kate can come on to the technical detail about what is happening in GB. However, this measure will cause divergence, and if I may summarise what we want to get out of today, we want to explain to members that we need to be better represented in Brussels on what this will mean. It does not have to be all negative. As an organisation, and organisations, we have been clear in saying that so-called Brexit issues such as veterinary medicines, the use of agricultural machinery and all that are very much separate from future EU law. We have to trade in the single market, particularly for our sheep and dairy sectors. Hence, we will have to abide by the rules that that market sets. That does not mean, however, that we cannot mitigate and seek derogations etc.

Kate, would you like to explain where GB is with its legislation?

**Ms Kate Adams (British Agriculture Bureau):** Yes, absolutely. As has been correctly mentioned, with the future SPS agreement, we fully expect the legislation to be within the scope of that agreement, so in a few years' time, whenever that may be, we will all most likely end up being aligned with the rules and legislation. However, GB is not looking at amending its legislation on animal welfare during transport, so there could be divergence as and when the EU moves forward. As you said, discussions are still ongoing with the European Parliament and the European Council.

Things are a little bit delayed with both those institutions. As you can imagine, the discussions can be quite divisive and, in some instances, controversial. However, we could still end up in a situation whereby we see divergence between the EU and Northern Ireland and, of course, GB.

**Dr Aiken:** Looking at your submissions and having spent a lot of time talking to vets in Northern Ireland about the EU requirements for veterinary checks when loading and unloading, particularly for pigs, I see that we do not have enough vets. We are well short in the number of vets that we have at the moment. We have already introduced border posts at Larne and elsewhere where vets are required, and we do not have enough vets for that. Where are we going to get the vets to apply those standards, and, if we cannot get them, would the EU give us a derogation? Like anybody else, I probably already know the answer to that, but I just want to put it on the record.

**Ms Adams:** That has been a key issue for us and is probably our number-one concern with the European Commission's proposals. As you rightly said, there is not the required number of vets in either Northern Ireland or the rest of Europe. We just do not have the people to do that job. Separately, that requirement would come at a significant cost to the industry.

The UFU participated in an impact assessment by IFIP, a French research institute for pigs, that found that the average cost of a veterinary visit would be £155. That was assessed probably about a year ago, so we imagine that the cost has increased, and it will only increase over the next few years. For the pig sector specifically, the expected cost is about £2.5 million. If you consider the cost for other species and sectors, such as poultry, dairy, bovine and sheep, you could imagine the cost to the Northern Irish industry becoming huge.

Separately, we do not believe that vets are required to supervise loading and unloading. We mentioned that you uphold incredibly high animal welfare standards in Northern Ireland, where rates of mortality during transport are incredibly low. For example, for the pig sector, the rate is 0.02%, which is lower than the EU average of 0.25%. You already have incredibly high standards, so, from our perspective, vets are not required to do that job, because farmers, hauliers and transporters are already doing it incredibly well.

We are concerned that, if the regulation comes in, it could negatively impact on welfare. You can imagine a vet supervising the loading of animals in the north of the island and then having to travel to a different part of it. Any delays, such as getting stuck in traffic, would delay the vet's arrival at the second location and mean that it would take longer to transport the animals. We have huge concerns.

You may have answered your own question about a derogation. If the EU regulation comes in, I would be very surprised if we could secure any kind of derogation.

**Dr Aiken:** OK.

**Ms Adams:** Notwithstanding that, as we mentioned, discussions in the European Parliament and the European Council are ongoing. The Parliament has put forward several amendments to remove the requirements, but, as with all such things, you never quite know what will be in the final agreement until the end of the trialogue negotiations. It is so important to make sure that we put across Northern Ireland's views so that we can influence the procedures where possible.

**Mr Brooks:** I was going to ask you to paint the picture of the impact of divergence in that on not just the industry but the individual farmer. You have just done that to some degree, but, if you have anything more to say about it, do so by all means, because it would be helpful to have that on the record.

My second question is about an issue that the Committee has raised on a number of occasions, which is the need for greater resource to be channelled to the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and its office in London to make engagement on these issues more than a desktop exercise in London. We would be supportive of that. What, in an optimal situation, should engagement in Brussels look like relative to what goes on there currently? What should we do? While understanding that the Executive have resource issues at large and other priorities that we need to look at, what should we aspire to in that engagement, and what should be expected of Whitehall?

**Mr Kinneer:** I will make two points. To follow on from what Kate said, the bureaucratic pressure that the proposal places on farmers has to be taken into account. We see that pressure in various pieces of legislation, and the Assembly is very good at debating a lot of the stuff that adds pressure to farmers, which we are always keen to point out. As well as that, there is the cost of the requirement. Somebody has to pay for it, so either the farmer or, ultimately, the consumer will pay far more, and we can already see where food inflation is heading.

The point about engagement and resources is critical. We note that Lord Murphy ultimately said in his report what the business community has been saying for two years. Engagement on the issue has not been what we want, to be honest. As we said, the BAB office restructured post-Brexit. We, as one of four unions, maintained that office, which comes at significant cost to our members. There is a particular onus on DAERA to do an impact assessment. It admitted in evidence to the Committee that that has not happened; it should be done. We note that Minister Muir has made quite a thing of welfare and is making it one of his themes as Minister until such times as the Assembly finishes. This legislation is not mentioned. When farmers come forward with welfare concerns, we are often given

the cold shoulder. The focus is always on smaller animals, not that it should not be, but welfare goes right across the piece.

The Executive Office in Brussels clearly needs to be better resourced, and it needs the skills and expertise to match what we are doing. Our model is to consult with grassroots members in Northern Ireland. We discuss matters with our committees, they go to our executive, and we formulate a position. We then work with BAB, which is acting as the main force in Brussels for gathering information. The Governments come to us for information, not only on this legislation but on others. Whether that is in London or Belfast, it should not be that way around.

When we go to the Commission to put a case for Northern Ireland, the Commission then goes back to our Governments to ask whether what we are telling it is accurate and correct. Of course, DAERA and co are unable to prove it either way. Staff who understand the intricacies of what is going to happen are therefore needed.

The excuse that we heard a couple of years ago was that the Windsor framework was being discussed. When the framework was agreed, the next excuse was that it was being implemented. A third excuse, which we are hearing now, is that we are waiting on an SPS/veterinary agreement. As we all know, that day may not come. Hopefully, it will, but Northern Ireland will be governed by those EU laws, and for its obvious benefit. We have to make Northern Ireland's case, however, because the rest of the member states are making their cases.

We always hear from government officials that it is too early to do so, because the legislation has not been agreed yet. This is the time to lobby Brussels, and anybody who has been to Brussels will understand that.

**Mr Brooks:** Thank you very much. That is very helpful. I worked in Brussels for a number of years, and I understand the need for active lobbying. I am a Member for East Belfast, so, unlike Steve, I do not listen to 'Farming Today'.

**Dr Aiken:** You should. It is very educational.

**Mr Brooks:** I am not sure that I would know where to find it. That is useful information for me and for anyone who is listening, so thank you very much.

**Mr Martin:** Thank you for coming in today. I am not sure whether I should declare an interest, but my father-in-law is a hobby farmer in Fermanagh. He will not be watching the evidence session, but he did explain for me the difference between a cow and a heifer when I was dating his daughter. *[Laughter.]* I will start where colleagues finished. Alexander, you mentioned that there has been some engagement with DAERA. How helpful has DAERA been on the issue? How would you characterise the level of engagement and support that you have received from it?

**Mr Kinneear:** I read with fascination the transcript about the engagement that has happened and the levels to which we had been engaged, and quite a good summary was provided of what we had done. The question that I will ask is this: what has DAERA done to date on the issue? The Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels is trying its best in the midst of difficult circumstances. There is no doubt that. It can, however, only do so much with the people that they have.

When you take a step back and look at DAERA specifically, you will see that the topic is not being covered, and not only it but various pieces of future EU law. No forensic analysis is being done. We understand the pressures in Belfast around staffing, resources and trying to get people who are over the specific detail, but there will have to be better collaboration. The legislation is going to come in regardless. There is no doubt about that. There is no point in our sitting debating that fact. It is therefore about trying to put forward the best case, and that has been disappointing. That is the most diplomatic way in which to say it.

**Ms Adams:** I will add to Alexander's comments. We have not had an impact assessment to tell us what this will look like for Northern Ireland. For us, that has been a disappointment. It was disappointing that —.

**Mr Martin:** Sorry to interrupt, but why is that? Is it right that it is a DAERA impact assessment that has not been done?

**Ms Adams:** I assume that resourcing and staffing issues mean that DAERA has just not had the time to do one. We were very fortunate that we are still members of COPA-COGECA, and it decided to work with the IFIP, a French research institute, to do an impact assessment on pigs. After a bit of negotiation, we managed to convince it to allow Northern Ireland to be part of the impact assessment, which has shown that the economic cost for just the pig sector would be in the region of £4 million, but, realistically, that is probably a significant underestimate. Unfortunately, we have not had the opportunity to do the same for the other sectors. We have not looked at poultry, sheep, bovines etc, but when you consider the millions of pounds of impact on one sector, you can imagine what the cost would be if all sectors were considered. We are fortunate that we still have a good relationship with the people who can help us try to work out what the implications and impacts will be. I echo Alexander's point that more work could be done.

**Mr Martin:** Kate, you referenced chickens. You said that an impact assessment has been done in one area, with the help of an external organisation. My colleague Steve has a table on sales, and it is one of the most interesting things that we have seen today. If I am right, the figures show that we sell 750,000 chickens a year and buy 12 million. The impact of the legislation must therefore be huge.

I have also made a note that we buy lots of pigs from the Republic of Ireland. Interestingly, we do not buy many from GB or the EU. I am not an expert in the area, but those are startling figures. The figures will start to add up, and we will see what the financial impact will be on, for example, Northern Ireland farmers who are rearing livestock and selling it on. We then have this legislation, which will undoubtedly impact on the cost of that process. As you pointed out, Alexander, who is going to pay for that? Will it be the farmer or the consumer? The industry is a massive contributor. You may not have the answer, but, roughly, what will be the economic impact? How much do sales of cattle, pigs, chickens and sheep contribute to the Northern Ireland economy? Give us a broad-brush figure.

**Mr Kinneer:** That is a big question, and it will require a big answer. We are exporting about 80% of what we produce. We are an exporting nation. We always make that very clear. If we want to trade in other markets, we have to comply with their rules. You are right to focus forensically on those figures. They will fluctuate year-on-year, depending on market prices. The bluetongue episode in Europe has also had an impact, as has the lack of sheep in Europe and the demand for our sheep. Those sorts of things mean that the figures will change. The important thing is to try to keep markets open and to keep restrictions to a minimum.

The situation has been disappointing, however. If you speak to businesses about any topic that has to do with future EU law, they will tell you that the Government have been slack about actively working in Brussels. We are in the middle of the new normal, not at the beginning. Four years ago, we knew that this was going to happen. People therefore need to pull up their socks and get on with it. If they do not, we will be in a worse position in two years' time and even further down the road. Moreover, there is a great responsibility on us. We are, of course, going to represent our members to the best of our ability, but we cannot do the Government's work for them. We are very clear about that.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** Sorry for interrupting you, Peter. Steve has to leave. He wants to make a proposal before he leaves.

**Mr Brooks:** No, I want to make a proposal before Steve leaves, while we are quorate, if that is OK, Chair. Having looked at Lord Murphy's review of the Windsor framework and at what he has recommended, I suggest that we write to the Executive Office to see how it is engaging with the UK Government in particular on bolstering our resources in Brussels to deal with the issues and whether Departments are looking to station people in the Brussels office to assist the Executive Office. We should also write to the Cabinet Office, particularly in light of the recommendations in Lord Murphy's report, to ask how it is going to address the situation, given the fact that these are reserved matters. Although the Executive Office in Brussels carries out some of that work on behalf of the Executive, the ultimate responsibility for representing Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, in Brussels lies with the UK Government. How will the UK Government ensure that this place is properly resourced in order to carry out work on the issues? How will Whitehall support its own work and ensure that it feeds into the work of the Committee? I include in that the issues that the UFU has raised. My proposal is that we write to the Executive Office and the Cabinet Office on that basis.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** That is quite pertinent. The issue has continually been raised. As you said, it was well up there in Lord Murphy's report. It is early days, in that the Government are going to take six months to deliberate, but that should not stop us from saying that the issue is paramount and asking what steps are being taken.

**Mr Brooks:** The issues are live in the here and now. The Government can consider the Lord Murphy report in the round as they wish, but we are alive to the issues, and they should be as well.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** It would be really useful to see what is being looked at and by whom.

**Dr Aiken:** I am content to second that proposal. I have one quick observation to make about the SPS issues. I apologise, Alexander and Kate. I should have come to a hard stop 10 minutes ago, but I really wanted to hear your evidence. We have heard from the people who will be most affected by the SPS issue and the delays. Bearing in mind that Lord Murphy's report mentioned greater coordination, links, outreach and partnership, I have not heard anything about how outreach is happening to enable Northern Ireland to deal with the SPS issue.

**Mr Kinneer:** To be fair, officials are planning better engagement. They have said that they want to enact a better process than that in the Windsor framework, and that is good to hear. We have one last chance to get things nailed down and right. We cannot afford to miss that chance. No business can afford to.

**Dr Aiken:** Thank you very much. I apologise for having to leave.

**Mr Martin:** For the final 20 seconds that Steve is in the room, in order to get a further —.

**Dr Aiken:** William Crawley is going to be very upset with you.

**Mr Martin:** He will. Blame me. I propose that we write to DAERA and ask why it has not conducted the impact assessments, given the extraordinary impact that the proposals will have on the economy in Northern Ireland, not only on how we sell to GB but, based on the figures, on how we sell to and buy from the Republic of Ireland. The figures are startling. I am shocked that it has taken these folk having to engage with a third-sector organisation in France to get an impact assessment done for one sector. We buy and sell millions of chickens every year, yet DAERA has not provided resources to look at the impact of the legislation, should it come forward, on the poultry sector. We should therefore write to DAERA and ask it for its reasons for not having done an impact assessment and when it is going to do it.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** Do members agree with the proposals?

*Members indicated assent.*

**Dr Aiken:** My apologies to William Crawley. My interview is with another member of the media.  
[Laughter.]

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** Peter, do you want to ask any other questions? I cut you short, so I apologise.

**Mr Martin:** As long as we have agreed the proposals, we can keep talking, even though only three of us are left in the room.

You mentioned better representation in Brussels. Forgive me, as it may show a lack of understanding on my part, but we have a fellow in Brussels who represents Northern Ireland. I do not know —.

**The Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk:** Aodhán Connolly is at the bureau in Brussels.

**Mr Martin:** Do you have much interaction with Aodhán when it comes to raising issues? Do you feel that someone else — perhaps a second Aodhán — would be useful to bolster our representation? Alexander said that we need to be better represented in Brussels. What does that representation look like to an observer? Kate seems to be looking forward to answering that question.

**Ms Adams:** The UFU and BAB enjoy a really good relationship with the Northern Ireland Executive's office in Brussels. Its very small team covers a breadth of topics. Given all the organisations and government bodies that there are, the office could always do with more resource in order to help it cover more issues. From our side, we want to see more resources be dedicated to it. We have a very

good relationship with it. Every second month, Alexander and the UFU president, William Irvine, go to Brussels for the COPA-COGECA sitting, which we do not need to go into the details of. We always try to meet Aodhán and the team there. When we meet them, however, it is apparent that they do not have sufficient people to look at everything in the detail required. I will let Alexander come in.

**Mr Kinnear:** Kate has summarised the situation well. It is very much an open secret. We represent an industry worth £8 billion, yet that is not reflected in the number of personnel who cover the issues. We understand the difficulties with Brexit, with the Windsor framework and its roll-out and with the ever-changing picture. People need to be there now to get a hold of the situation, however. It is this today, but it will be something else tomorrow. We have weekly problems on a number of issues on this front. As Kate says, the office needs people and resources. It also necessary for it to have the authority to work across government, to liaise with the Cabinet Office and the Executive Office and to be able to get the information when it needs it. We have proven that that can be done, albeit we could do things a lot better, but we also have our own resource pressures and are covering a number of fronts. Bearing in mind how important it is to our economy, however, there has to be greater focus on the industry.

**Ms Adams:** I will come back in. I could probably talk about this all day, although I appreciate that we do not have all day to discuss it.

**Mr Martin:** If you were to talk about it all day, there would be nobody left. *[Laughter.]*

**Ms Adams:** I noted from one of the questions that the Committee sent to us that you questioned the engagement that we have with, for example, the Irish Ministry and the Irish Farmers' Association. That is something that the UFU and BAB have really tried to prioritise. We have tried to work out where we have shared challenges. It is also important to note that, although there is a lot of value in those relationships, our priorities often differ a little bit. One of the huge concerns for the Irish sector about the proposal is the impact that it will have on the export of calves into Europe for the veal trade. That is an issue for some producers in Northern Ireland but perhaps not quite to the same scale as it is an issue for producers in Ireland. They have put a lot of their political negotiating capital into trying to amend the rules, whereas we are looking at some of the other priority areas, such as space allowances journey times and temperatures. To highlight what the concerns are is another reason that it is so important that we have people representing the Northern Irish industry.

**Mr Martin:** OK. I have a final question. We have already noted a few action points that we will take forward. Is there anything else that the Committee can do, given what you have outlined today? Do you feel that there are any specific things that the Committee could take on?

**Mr Kinnear:** I will make a broad point. My advice is to keep scrutinising. There is a democratic deficit when it comes to future EU law. I stress that the other Brexit issues are separate and distinct. It is very much up to the Cabinet Office to work with others on them, and, to be fair to it, it is doing so. On this issue and others, however, stuff will keep coming forward, so we have to get on top of it. We have the details, know what our organisation's positions are and are trying our best in Brussels. The Government have to do that as well. The Committee is highly valued among the business community, because it is our only lever in Northern Ireland for making the various Departments aware of the issues. We appreciate the constraints that there are. Lord Murphy's report is timely, however, in that it emphasises the point that we have been making for some time, which is that more focus on the issues is needed, as is more time to develop them.

**Ms Adams:** I have something to add. This is only one part of the revision of the EU's animal welfare legislation. We are expecting welfare legislation on time of slaughter also to be revised at some point in the future. Again, that legislation is expected to apply directly to Northern Ireland under the Windsor framework and, by then, potentially to GB as well under any future SPS agreement. Separately, the European Commission has also started its revision of the on-farm welfare legislation. We do not know where exactly that will sit in the context of Northern Ireland or the future SPS agreement, but we could end up in a situation in which we are also dynamically aligned with EU rules and regulations there. That could have far-reaching impacts on Northern Irish agriculture. The proposed regulation that we discussing today is therefore just one part of a much wider topic that we will need to discuss over the next few months and years.

**Mr Martin:** I will make a concluding remark, if that is OK, Chair. I just want to say to both of you that if there are current or future issues that will affect Northern Ireland and its trade, especially in this area,



the Committee will want to hear about them. You can let us know by emailing the Committee Clerk and copying in the Chair.

It is difficult. Some of us who are on the Committee are perhaps not across all the details of portfolios that are not ours. I therefore want to hear about those issues so that we can do something about them. I guarantee you that we will do our best to try to look at them. Thank you very much for your indulgence, Chair.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** Thank you, Peter.

Members have asked lots of questions. I have one further question. Before I ask it, I commend the Ulster Farmers' Union and the British Agriculture Bureau for their ongoing work. From your written submission and your presentation today, we are hearing loud and clear that you feel that you need to be better represented at this time. You do a lot, and we really appreciate the work that you are doing, because agriculture is an important, if not critical, sector. You have re-emphasised to the Committee that those with whom you engage need to be better resourced, and that has also been highlighted in the written submission.

We are fortunate that some work has been done on certain impact assessments, although on not all of them. That is therefore another key area of work that needs to be done. We also need to do work on the vets issue. How can that realistically happen, given that you have identified that it may have a huge impact?

What are your and the sector's thoughts on the likely transition period of two to five years for transport regulation?

**Ms Adams:** I will start, but, Alexander, please feel free to add points.

We need to push for as long a transition period as possible. A lot of the changes that the Commission has proposed will require significant amendments to be made to the way in which animals are currently transported in Northern Ireland. If, for example, the vehicles in which animals are transported must have more space, we will have to buy in new vehicles from other places. The IFIP report that I referred to earlier states that six new vehicles will be required, at a cost of £318,000 each. We will also potentially need new vehicles for transporting other species. Again, that would come at a huge cost to the sector.

In addition, if the rules come in across the 27 EU member states, Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, all those countries will be looking to secure new vehicles in order to prepare for the introduction of the legislation. Given lead-in times and ordering times, are a sufficient number of vehicles available? I do not know the answer to that question, but it is certainly one that we need to ask. We therefore need to push for a longer transition period. One of our strong positions is that the vehicles that are currently being used and in which people may have recently invested should continue to be used until the end of their life.

Alexander, do you have any points to add?

**Mr Kinneer:** Kate has summarised that well. I will re-emphasise the point that the farming community is under a lot of pressure as a result of various policy issues, and the bureaucratic burden that has been placed at its feet cannot continue for much longer. We are here to provide safe, nutritious food. We understand the principle behind reforming the legislation. We are not against that. Reform has to be practical and feasible, however. We are here to represent grassroots members' interests, and we will do so at every opportunity.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** If there are any other areas that you wish to discuss, now is your opportunity to do so. Have we covered everything in your written submission?

**Ms Adams:** Yes. I will say again that I could probably talk about this all day. We could be stuck here until 7.00 pm talking about all the different elements. I reiterate that we are in Brussels representing businesses from Northern Ireland. If there is any further information that you need from us or if you have any more questions, we are always available through the UFU office to answer them.

**The Chairperson (Ms Ferguson):** On behalf of the Committee, we really appreciate your taking the time out to come to the Committee. It was an excellent evidence session. A lot of elements are

involved, and it was good to hear your fears about the legislation. You are very keen. Through the UFU, BAB has fully engaged with those in the farming community. The UFU is lucky to have BAB in the North to advocate on its behalf. We fully appreciate the work of all farmers across the North, across the island and in GB. Thank you very much for today.

**Mr Kinnear:** Thank you.

**Ms Adams:** Thank you for having us. It has been a pleasure.