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Windsor Framework Taskforce
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

E [redacted]

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Marie Austin
Committee Clerk, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee
Room 382, Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast, BT4 3XX

17 August 2026

Regulation (EU) 2026/1739 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 July 2026 amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) 2021/2116 as regards the strengthening of the position of farmers in the food supply chain

Dear Marie,

Thank you for the letter from the chair of the Democratic Scrutiny Committee to the Minister for EU Relations, dated 6 August 2026 requesting the UK Government's assessment of the impact on Northern Ireland of Regulation (EU) 2026/1739. I am responding on behalf of the Minister.

Impact of the Regulation's Application in Northern Ireland

The Government's assessment of this regulation is set out in the Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 5 August 2026 which I am attaching for completeness. This has been supplied by the Government in line with its scrutiny commitments.

The provisions of the Regulation that apply in Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework are limited to amendments to Regulation (EU) 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products (the "CMO Regulation") that introduce the following new marketing standards rules:

Restrictions on the use of "meat" and meat related terms in product descriptions

The Regulation provides a new definition of "meat" and "meat products" and restricts the use of the term "meat" and 31 meat-related terms such as "Beef", "Chicken", "Bacon", and "Steak" to products derived from the edible parts of an animal. The UK Government's assessment is these rules are most likely to affect vegetarian or vegan meat-replacement products. However, there remains uncertainty around products such as meat-flavoured snacks which the UK Government is seeking to clarify with the EU Commission. The UK Government is working closely with Daera officials and will provide them with an update on the outcome of the engagement with the EU when available. We are aware that other stakeholders are asking similar questions to the Commission on the scope of the amendments.

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Transitional arrangements provide for a three-year period before the new rules apply (from 19 August 2029) to give businesses time to adapt, plus an additional three-year period for stocks already lawfully produced and placed on the market before the new rules apply (up to 19 August 2032).

The UK Government's assessment is that the application of these rules is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on consumers or businesses in Northern Ireland due to the following:

- The rules would not apply to goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland via the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS) (as it exists under current arrangements), provided that they comply with the conditions of NIRMS, including not-for-EU labelling to ensure goods do not proceed to enter the EU market. Goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain would also be unaffected as they will continue to benefit from the market access principles set out in the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 and retain their privileged unfettered access.

- The rules would apply to goods moving from GB to NI outside of NIRMS, and to goods that are produced in Northern Ireland either for sale in Northern Ireland or for export to the EU market. Meat-free products could still be sold, but manufacturers might be required to change the packaging or marketing terminology to comply with this amendment. While that may incur costs to businesses, the UK Government assessment is that the three-year transitional period before the new rules apply, plus the additional three-year period for stocks lawfully produced and placed on the market before 19 August 2029 to be sold through, should mitigate direct costs and minimise waste as most relabelling costs could be absorbed through business-as-usual packaging and labelling update cycles.

- These rules are considered unlikely to result in long-term divergence between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Key agri-food marketing standards (except insofar as they relate to wine and spirits) are expected to be in scope of the UK-EU SPS Agreement. While the final scope and date of entry into force of the SPS Agreement are subject to ongoing negotiations, the UK Government expects that GB will be dynamically aligned with EU marketing standards regulations by the time these new rules enter into force in 2029. It is therefore considered likely that Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland), Northern Ireland, and EU Member States will share the same marketing standards rules by the time this amendment enters into force. On this basis, the UK Government considers that not applying these rules in Northern Ireland would be likely to result in greater divergence between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the longer term, than applying them.

As set out above, until the conclusion of the SPS Agreement, NI goods will continue to have unfettered access to GB markets and GB goods that do not currently comply with the new rules could continue to move to NI under NIRMS.

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Rules on the use of voluntary marketing terms "fair", "equitable", and "short supply chain"

The Regulation introduces new rules for the use of optional terms "fair", "equitable" and "short supply chain" with the aim of increasing the transparency and reliability of the use of these terms, preventing their misuse and ensuring that consumers have reliable information that is not misleading. Entry into force is deferred for two years (until 19 August 2028).

The UK Government's assessment is that the application of these rules is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on consumers or businesses in Northern Ireland. Use of these terms is optional, and goods that use the terms would continue to move from Great Britain to Northern Ireland via NIRMS. Goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain would retain their unfettered access. Over the longer term, it is expected that the UK will dynamically align with EU marketing standards pending the Agreement of a UK-EU SPS Agreement with the result that Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and EU Member States will share the same marketing standards rules (except for wine and spirits marketing standards) in future.

Origin labelling

The Regulation provides powers for the EU Commission to introduce new rules to require "the place of farming and/or origin" for poultry, meat or spreadable fats but does not itself introduce an immediate new labelling obligation. Given this amendment does not alter the regulatory position of these goods, the UK Government considers it would have no negative impact on consumers or businesses in Northern Ireland.

I trust that this information will support your inquiry. Let me reassure you again that the UK Government will update the committee on our engagement with the European Commission on the scope of the meat marketing rules as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

PAUL FLYNN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WINDSOR FRAMEWORK TASKFORCE

Northern Ireland Assembly

Mrs Ciara Ferguson MLA, Chairperson
Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

REF: DSC 88/26
6 August 2026

Rt Hon Hamish Falconer MP
Minister of State (Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and European Relations)
Issued via email to: [redacted]
CC: [redacted]

Hamish, a chara,

At its meeting on 6 August 2026, the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (DSC) considered **Regulation (EU) 2026/1739 amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) 2021/2116 as regards the strengthening of the position of farmers in the food supply chain**. This act was notified to the DSC on 30 July 2026.

The DSC decided to hold an inquiry into the replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Under paragraph 9(2)(a), the DSC must seek substantive discussion and engagement with the British Government. Therefore, further to the information provided in the Explanatory Memorandum dated 5 August 2026, the Committee is requesting your assessment of:

- Whether it appears likely that the application of the replacement EU act would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities here in a way that is liable to persist; and
- Whether it appears likely that not applying the replacement EU act would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities here in a way that is liable to persist.

In considering the potential for divergence, the Committee also requests details of the position in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Committee also agreed to request information about the scope of the amendment regarding meat-related terms, following your discussions with the European Commission.

I would appreciate a response **by Monday 17 August 2026 at 11.00am.**

Le meas,

[redacted]

Ciara Ferguson, MLA
Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Room 371, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX

E-mail: [redacted]