

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2013
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA

Apologies: Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Dagmar Walgraeve Clerical Officer
Mr Mark Allen, Research Officer (for item 5 and 6)

1.34 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session

1. Apologies

Apologies are noted above.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September and 1 October 2013

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 September and 1 October 2013.

4. Matters arising

Agreed The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department dated 27 September 2013 regarding issues raised at the committee meeting on 10 September 2013. The Committee agreed to write to the Department in advance of its briefing on 15 October 2013, to ask what the implications are if the number of required participants in the Badger Sett Survey is not achieved.

1.39 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department dated 3 October 2013 regarding issues raised at the committee meeting on 17 September 2013.

Noted: The Committee noted the update from the Department on Ash Die-back.

5. Cost of Production Payment: Oral Briefing RalSe

The Assembly Research Officer joined the meeting at 1.40 p.m. and briefed the Committee on the Cost of Production Payment. This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to submit the research paper on Cost of Production Payment to Farmers for Action, UFU and NIAPA for comment.

2.05 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

6. Farm Safety: Oral Briefing RalSe

The Assembly Research Officer joined the meeting at 2.06 p.m. and briefed the Committee on Farm Safety. This was followed by a question and answer session.

2.30 p.m. Mr Buchanan joined the meeting.

2.31 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.

2.31 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

2.34 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

7. Farm Safety: Oral Briefing Farm Safety Partnership

The following members of the Farm Safety Partnership joined the meeting at 2.35 p.m.

Mr George Lucas, Chairman HSENI
Ian Marshall, Deputy President, UFU
David Small, Deputy Secretary DARD
Martin Malone, Regional Director, NFU Mutual
Bryan Monson, Deputy Chief Executive, HSENI

The witnesses briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

3.00 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

3.09 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

3.13 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Farm Safety Partnership to request the figures for claims made by farmers to NFU Mutual following farm accidents.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Hansard of the meeting and research paper to the ETI Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the ETI Committee that a farm safety visit has been organised for 7 November 2013.

8. Single Farm Payment, LPIS and Agri-Environment Schemes: Oral Briefing DARD

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.20 p.m.

Andrew Elliott, Director of Rural Payments
Dr Richard Crowe, Agricultural Inspector Grade 1
Herbie Jones, Agricultural Inspector Grade 1
Valerie Bell, Principal Officer
Jason Foy, Head of Single Farm Payment

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

3.26 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.

Mr Irwin declared an interest as a farmer.

Mrs Dobson declared an interest as a member of a farming family.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the various stages of appeal within the Single Farm Payment Inspection process and a breakdown of figures.

9. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on The Childcare Bright Start Strategy. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask how it plans to implement the measures outlined in the strategy relevant to them.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Equine Council for Northern Ireland on the rates for equine premises and agreed to formally meet with the Equine Council to discuss their concerns. The Committee also agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and DFP for comment and to ask the Department why a case has yet to be forwarded to DFP.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from Potato Partners dated 27 September 2013 on the reference to the Potato Breeding Programme in a recent Audit report on AFBI. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Public Accounts Committee for information.

Noted: The Committee noted the invitation from the NI Food and Drink Association to a conference on 15 October 2013.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Environment Committee dated 27 September 2013 on Renewable Generation Installations.

Noted: The Committee noted the DARD Investment Strategy Report for September 2013.

10. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme including the date for the farm safety visit on 7th November 2013.

11.AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the recent reporting of Larch Tree Disease. The Committee also noted the reporting of Ash Dieback in the Republic of Ireland and agreed to write to the Department to ask what measures they are taking in light of this.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further details on the proposed Drainage scheme including delivery mechanism.

12.Date, time and place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 15 October 2013 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

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The meeting adjourned at 4.21 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date