

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA
- In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Lynda Conlon, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Dagmar Walgraeve, Clerical Officer
Mr Mark Allen, Research Officer (Agenda Item 14)

1.32 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session.

1.32 p.m. Mr McMullen joined the meeting.

1. Apologies

There are no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

Noted: The Committee noted that the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson met with the Minister on Tuesday 15 September to discuss the timescales for the Rural Proofing Bill and the Fisheries Bill.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 08 September 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 08 September 2015.

4. Oral Briefing DARD Minister: Update on the Dairy Industry Crisis

The Minister and the following Department officials joined the meeting at 1.36 p.m.

Noel Lavery, Permanent Secretary
Louise Warde Hunter, Deputy Secretary
Colette McMaster, Food, Farm and Rural Policy
Pauline Rooney, Head of EU Area-based Schemes Division

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

1.39 p.m. Mrs Dobson joined the meeting.

1.42 p.m. Mr Swann joined the meeting.

1.53 p.m. Mr Poots joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department should clarify whether de minus rules apply to the Targeted Aid element of the funding provided by the EU Commission.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department should provide details on its procurement of local food produce.

2.19 p.m. The Minister and her officials left the meeting.

5. Written Briefing DARD: SR 2015/318: The Common Agricultural Policy (Review of Decisions) Regulations (NI) 2015

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2015/318 The Common Agricultural Policy (Review of Decisions) Regulations (NI) 2015 and, subject to comment from the Examiner of Statutory Rules, has no objections to the rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting details of:- (i) the number of Review of Decisions appeals that have

received a positive recommendation from the independent external panel; and (ii) the number of cases where a positive recommendation from the independent panel was not subsequently upheld by the Head of the Paying Agency.

6. Written Briefing DARD: SR 2015/322: The Tuberculosis (Examination & Testing) Scheme (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2015/322 The Tuberculosis (Examination and Testing) Scheme (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015 and has no objections to the rule.

7. Oral Briefing LMC: Roles and Functions

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.29 p.m.

Ian Stevenson, Chief Executive, LMC
Pat O'Rourke, Chairperson, LMC
Colin Smith, Industry Development Manager, MC
Seamus McMEnamin, Economist, LMC

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

2.28 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.

2.29 p.m. Mr McMullen left the meeting.

2.41 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.

2.43 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

Mrs Dobson declared an interest that her husband is a beef farmer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further details from the LMC on their work to quantify, in financial terms, how much the meat industry (farmers and processors) in Northern Ireland benefits from the work of the LMC.

2.58 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

3.13 p.m. Mr McMullen rejoined the meeting.

3.31 p.m. Mr McCarthy joined the meeting.

3.31 p.m. Mr Anderson left the meeting.

3.33 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

3.39 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.

3.41p.m. *The LMC representatives left the meeting.*

8. Written Briefing DARD: NIFAIS Update

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a written update on the awarding of the NIFAIS contract from the Veterinary Service in November, with a follow-up oral briefing from DARD officials once the competition has concluded.

3.43 p.m. *The meeting moved into Closed Session*

9. Inquiry into Better Regulation: Clerk Briefing Paper

3.45 p.m. *Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the NIFDA oral briefing, currently scheduled for the 13 October 2015 meeting, be cancelled.

4.08 p.m. *The meeting moved into Open Session*

10. Oral Briefing DARD: Better Regulation

The following Department officials joined the meeting at 4.09 p.m.

Gerry Lavery, Deputy Secretary
Paul McGurnaghan, Director of Digital Services
Philip Gilmore, Deputy Principal

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

4.18 p.m. *Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*

4.29 p.m. *Mr McMullen left the meeting.*

4.31 p.m. *The officials left the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information from the Department on the outcome of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Better Regulation and Simplification Review, specifically:- (i) the reasons provided for each of the 15 recommendations initially

rejected by DARD; and (ii) a progress update on all other recommendations.

11. Correspondence

- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for OFMDFM dated 03 September 2015 forwarding a copy of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels Director's Report for the period January to June 2015.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for OFMDFM to the ARD Minister dated 09 September 2015 confirming that the Committee is content for the Rural Development Council to be removed from Schedule 3 of the NIPSO Bill, and that the Drafter has been asked to prepare the necessary amendment.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Environment dated 08 September 2015 inviting Members to the inaugural launch of Northern Ireland Environment Week.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the synopsis of responses to the Department for the Environment's consultation on proposals to increase the maximum construction speed and weights of agricultural tractors and trailers to UFU and to NIAPA seeking their comment before finalising its own position.

12. AOB

There was no other business.

13. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 22 September 2015 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

4.35 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.

14. Forward Work Programme

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the briefings from Tesco and Asda should take place as scheduled on 20 October, with Sainsbury's to be rescheduled as per its request.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that briefings from the supermarkets should focus on the following issues:- (i) purchasing policies and credit terms; (ii) the purchase of agricultural products; (iii) how fairness could be ensured in the food supply chain; (iv) the role and effectiveness of the Grocery Code Adjudicator; and (v)labelling issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the visit to London to meet with the Grocery Code Adjudicator, the BIS Minister and the Chair of the EFRA Committee should be rescheduled for a date in November.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that RaISe should undertake comparative research to examine the BPS regulations, the Paying Agencies regulations and the integrated administration and control system with a view to identifying how these regulations have been interpreted or transposed in England, Wales, Scotland and Rol.

16.46 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date