

**Document 1 - EU Exit – DEFRA & DAs Final Agenda**

**INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS (IMG EFRA)**

**MONDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**AGENDA**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Subject</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and introductions</b> (5 min) REDACTED
<b>2</b>	<b>Food Strategy</b> (15 mins) REDACTED
<b>3</b>	<b>Gene Editing</b> (10 mins) REDACTED
<b>4</b>	<b>Common frameworks</b> (15 mins) REDACTED
<b>5</b>	<b>Border Operations</b> (10 mins) REDACTED
<b>6</b>	<b>EFRA Funding Issues</b> (10 mins) REDACTED
<b>7</b>	<b>UK Agricultural Partnership</b> (10 mins) REDACTED
<b>8</b>	<b>AOB</b> (15 min) <i>Purpose: To discuss any other business</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Migration <i>Discuss worker shortages across various food production and processing sectors.</i></li><li>• Bivalve Molluscs</li></ul>

- Single Use Plastics  
REDACTED
- IMG Terms of Reference  
REDACTED

## Document 2 - EU Exit – DEFRA & DAs IMG Draft Minutes

### INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS (IMG EFRA)

#### MONDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2021, VIDEO CONFERENCE MINUTES

##### Present

- **Edwin Poots MLA**, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland Executive (**Chair**)
- **George Eustice MP**, Secretary of State, Defra
- **Mairi Gougeon MSP**, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Islands
- **Lesley Griffiths MS**, Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd
- **Julie James MS**, Minister for Climate Change
- **David Duguid MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland
- **David TC Davies MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales
- **Robin Walker MP**, Minister of State for Northern Ireland
- **Anthony Harbinson**, Permanent Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

##### Item 1: Welcome and introductions

REDACTED

##### Item 2: Food Strategy

REDACTED

##### Item 3: Gene Editing

REDACTED

##### Item 4: Common Frameworks

REDACTED

##### Item 5: Border Operations

REDACTED

##### Item 6: EFRA Funding issues

REDACTED

##### Item 7: UK Agricultural Partnership

REDACTED

##### Item 8: AOB

## Migration

59. Ms Gougeon stated that there was a labour shortage crisis in the food and drink industry and that she was aware that the industry had written to the Home Secretary and Mr Eustice. She had also written to them regarding her concerns. As a way of providing an example of how the labour shortage crisis was impacting the sector, she outlined how she had heard reports of 2.5m heads of broccoli and 1.5m cauliflower being left to rot in fields. She had listed specific asks in her letter to Mr Eustice from the industry and called for urgent action to be taken. Ms Gougeon referred to previous requests for a Treasury minister to attend IMG meetings and suggested that a Home Office minister should also attend.
60. Ms Griffiths also raised similar concerns regarding critical labour shortages in Wales, specifically mentioning strawberry farming. She had visited farms and was meeting with supermarkets where the view was that it would get worse.
61. Mr Poots agreed that the crisis was developing every week and suggested that it would lead to animal welfare issues. He also asked for pressure to be put on the Home Office.
62. Mr Duguid advised that the Scottish food and drink industry letter set out a pragmatic set of asks. He said it was very important to get into the detail and stay in close contact with industry. It was tempting to blame the situation on Brexit and no freedom of movement. He was keen to work with the industry through the Seafood Industry Action Group. He had heard of a pig abattoir that, despite demand, still had some staff on furlough. He described it as a hugely complex and nuanced issue.
63. Mr Eustice acknowledged the chronic labour shortages and stated that Grant Thornton had calculated a vacancy rate of 12.5% in the food and drink industry. He said that Home Office was the policy lead and it was giving consideration to what the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme would be like and also considering whether Butchers should be on the skilled or shortage occupation list.
64. Mr Poots asked that the speed with which visa applications were being processed under the new tier 2 system for the agri-food industry would be prioritised and stressed the need for flexibility.
65. Ms Gougeon asked that a separate meeting on migration be arranged as soon as possible. **(Action 162)**. Mr Poots supported the request and asked Mr Eustice to consider it within the next 2 weeks.

## Bivalve Molluscs

REDACTED

## Single Use Plastics

REDACTED

## **Document 3 - EU Exit – DEFRA & DAs Ministerial Summary**

**IMG, Monday 13th September 2021, 09:30 – 11:00, MS Teams (NIE host)**  
IMG Ministerial Summary

### **1. Introductions and opening remarks**

REDACTED

### **2. UKG Food Strategy**

REDACTED

### **3. Gene Editing**

REDACTED

### **4. Common Frameworks**

REDACTED

### **5. Borders**

REDACTED

### **6. Funding**

REDACTED

### **7. UK Agricultural Partnership**

REDACTED

### **8. AOB**

- **MG** raised the issue of **worker shortages** across the food processing and production sectors, including a letter Scottish stakeholders had written to SoS Defra and Home Office. LG and EP supported SG comments and sought clarity on what is being done to help alleviate the crisis. MG sought a meeting with SoS on this issue
- **GE** recognised that there was a shortage (12% on average) and that the UKG is looking at amending its Seasonal Worker Scheme for next year and easing language requirements on certain skills (e.g. butchers)
- REDACTED
- REDACTED

**- Ends -**

## **Document 4 - Meeting with Minister Prentis – Labour shortages across the food production and processing sectors**

**From:** REDACTED **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands  
**Sent:** 21 September 2021 09:33  
**To:** REDACTED; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands <[CabSecRAI@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecRAI@gov.scot)>  
**Cc:** PS, Victoria Prentis <[ps.victoria.prentis@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ps.victoria.prentis@defra.gov.uk)>; [DSMRANWT@gov.wales](mailto:DSMRANWT@gov.wales); Private Office DAERA <[Private.Office@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.Office@daera-ni.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Meeting with Minister Prentis

Hi REDACTED,

Ms Gougeon is content for today's call at 17:30. Based on the discussion from the IMG last week, and the fact that similar issues are being experienced, we would hope colleagues from the other DA's would have the availability to join this afternoons call as well, who are now copied in.

Many thanks,

REDACTED

Assistant Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands

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Room 2N.08 | St. Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

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**From:** REDACTED >  
**Sent:** 20 September 2021 11:25  
**To:** Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands <[CabSecRAI@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecRAI@gov.scot)>  
**Cc:** PS, Victoria Prentis <[ps.victoria.prentis@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ps.victoria.prentis@defra.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Meeting with Minister Prentis

Hi REDACTED,

I understand that Ms Gougeon requested a follow up meeting with the Secretary of State in relation to the on-going crisis in labour shortages across the food production and processing sectors. However, Minister Prentis is the minister responsible for this area.

Minister Prentis would be happy to speak with Ms Gougeon on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September at 11:40 or 17:30?

Best wishes,  
REDACTED

REDACTED Diary Manager to Minister Victoria Prentis  
**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

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## Document 5 - Meeting with Minister Prentis – Labour shortages across the food production and processing sectors

**From:** REDACTED

**Sent:** 22 September 2021 20:05

**To:** Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands <[CabSecRAI@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecRAI@gov.scot)>; REDACTED

**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <[DFMCSCR@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSCR@gov.scot)>; Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy <[CabSecFE@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecFE@gov.scot)>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <[MinisterCEID@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterCEID@gov.scot)>; Director of Agriculture and Rural Economy <[DirectorARE@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorARE@gov.scot)>; Higgins K (Kate) <[Kate.Higgins@gov.scot](mailto:Kate.Higgins@gov.scot)>; Burgess WG (George) <[George.Burgess@gov.scot](mailto:George.Burgess@gov.scot)>; REDACTED ; REDACTED; REDACTED; REDACTED

**Subject:** RE: Meeting with Minister Prentis - labour shortages across the food production and processing sectors

Hi REDACTED

Copy to: as above

We discussed that it would be helpful to have a short read out of the meeting last night between the Cabinet Secretary, the DAs and Victoria Prentice.

This note is again sent on a joint basis with migration policy colleagues.

Read out

- On CO2 UKG had agreed to let DAs know as soon as they have an outcome.
- The Cabinet Secretary raised the issue of immediate labour shortages and the need for changes to the SoL and temporary worker visa. Ms Gougeon highlighted again the asks of industry in their letter of 27 August to:
  - Introduce a 12 month covid recovery visa for the food and drink supply chain – to deal with immediate pressures on the industry and allow employers to expand recruitment to EU and other overseas workers.
  - Commission an urgent review by the Migration Advisory Committee of the needs of the food and drink sector.
  - Waive the fees to employment visas for the food and drink supply chain until 2022.
- DEFRA will try to facilitate a meeting with the Home Office (perhaps also including Ms Prentice) to consider these issues. Considering some linkages too with DWP.
- Ms Prentice mentioned actions UKG had taken in the logistics sector.
- REDACTED
- Ms Prentice said she would let DAs know about numbers for next year's seasonal ag scheme.
- The Cabinet Secretary highlighted the need for longer-term solutions, including rural pilots which, and plans to write to the Home Office about that, if not already.
- Looking for practical solutions and asked for any evidence we have of impacts etc.
- Keen for group to consider practical/long-term solutions.

Kindest Regards

REDACTED

REDACTED

Head of EU Exit and Trade Unit: **Food and Drink Policy**  
Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Environment

5 Atlantic Quay  
150 Broomielaw  
Glasgow  
G2 8LU

Ext: REDACTED

**Document 6 – FW Food Sector Taskforce meeting 9921 - Agenda**

**From:** REDACTED

**Sent:** 09 September 2021 09:56

**To:** REDACTED

**Subject:** Food Sector Taskforce meeting 9/9/21 - Agenda

Dear all

Further to my updated diary invite a short while ago, please find enclosed the agenda for today's meeting at 12 noon. There is no briefing

If you have since replied to the invite asking to be removed from this group, please disregard this email – I will remove you from the distribution list shortly.

Kind regards

REDACTED

REDACTED

EA to Alison Ismail , Director Agri-Food Chain

DEFRA, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF

Mobile: REDACTED

Email: REDACTED

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## **Document 7 – FW Food Sector Taskforce meeting 9921 – Agenda**

### **Government Taskforce: COVID outbreaks, testing and vaccines in UK food and farm settings** **9 September 2021** **Agenda**

**1. Welcome and roll call - *Alison Ismail, Chair***

Roll call to confirm key departments are present (Defra, PHE, HSE, FSA, FSS, DHSC/JBC, BEIS).

**2. Covid related absences - REDACTED (*Defra*)**

- a. Outbreaks of interest in the agri-food sector(s)
- b. Any additional intel on associated absence rates and autumn/winter planning

**3. Update from DHSC colleagues on any upcoming Covid developments that may be relevant to agri-food/food supply eg on testing or vaccination - REDACTED (*DHSC*)**

**4. Other relevant agri-food supply impacts**

- a. Pig Sector – REDACTED
- b. Poultry Sector – REDACTED
- c. HGV drivers - *CPMT*

**5. AOB**