

## **Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA)**

**29 June 2020**

### **Communique**

The Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs met on Monday 29 June by video conference. The meeting was chaired by the Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK Government.

The attending ministers were:

From the UK Government: Rt Hon. George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Victoria Prentis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defra, David Duguid MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland; and Robin Walker MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

From the Scottish Government: Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism; Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; and Mairi Gougeon MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment.

From the Northern Ireland Executive: Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

From the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.

The chair opened the meeting by providing an update on political events including the June summit between the UK Government and the European Council.

The Group discussed the trade negotiations between the UK, the EU and other countries around the world. Devolved Ministers once again made the case for much closer involvement in the negotiations and timely exchange of material. The Chair reiterated the UK Government's commitment that it would not compromise on the UK's high environmental protection, animal welfare or food standards in any trade negotiations. The chair went on to confirm the UK Government was to establish a Trade and Agriculture Commission to reflect concerns of UK businesses. While welcoming this move, the devolved administrations emphasised the need for early and full devolved participation in the Commission's establishment and operation.

The Group welcomed the May publication of the Northern Ireland Command Paper but called for more detail in order to be able to implement the arrangements in practical terms. It also discussed the implications for EFRA businesses. The DAERA Minister advised of the need to minimise checks and processes on goods moving

from GB to NI. The Scottish and Welsh Governments took the opportunity to request again further detail on how the protocol would work in Scotland and Wales.

The Group also discussed other areas of preparation for the end of the Transition Period, noting that the deadline for extending the Transition Period had now passed.

The Group welcomed the announcement about the introduction of staged border controls on sanitary and phyto-sanitary (“SPS”) goods imported to Great Britain from the EU from January 2021 and discussed the implications for EFRA businesses. The Scottish and Welsh governments shared their disappointment on the absence of consultation given that some border responsibilities are devolved. The Group agreed on the need for rapid work to address areas where further detail and clarity is required in order to secure progress and to implement the arrangements by the end of the Transition Period.

Scottish and Welsh Ministers pushed for confirmation that the UK Government would fund any Brexit related expenditure linked to trade and Northern Ireland Protocol implementation. The Group then turned to the programme of secondary legislation and work on common frameworks required for January 2021 and the need to work closely on sequencing to secure delivery of the programme across legislatures. Scottish and Welsh Ministers put on record their respective parliaments’ expectation that they would have adequate time to consider any legislation and proposed arrangements fully. Ministers agreed that officials should take forward work on the EFRA common frameworks before returning to this issue at a subsequent meeting.

The Scottish Government called for a sheepmeat compensation scheme such that had been planned last year; the Welsh Government called for urgent clarity on continued funding for CAP and the DAERA Minister asked about travel arrangements for assistance dogs from January 2021 and called for engagement with experts in the grain trade to ensure clarity on SPS arrangements.

Finally the Group agreed to hold a meeting in July.