

## **Communiqué**

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

**07 December 2020**

The Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs met on Monday 07 December by video conference. The meeting was chaired by George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The attending ministers were:

From the UK Government: George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Defra, David TC Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales; David Duguid MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland; and Robin Walker MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

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

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

From the Northern Ireland Executive: Mr Norman Fulton, Head of Food and Farming Group, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The chair welcomed Ministers to the meeting.

The group reviewed the progress of provisional common frameworks in areas of returning EU law that intersect with the devolution settlements. Ministers agreed in principle the majority of the provisional common frameworks and to consider the remaining frameworks at pace. The final clearance of provisional common frameworks will take place by correspondence in advance of submission to the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) (JMC (EN)) for agreement.

The group once again discussed the UK Government's proposals for CAP replacement EU funding and devolved government ministers reiterated their ongoing and strong disappointment with the proposals, which fall significantly short of expectations based on previous UK Government commitments. The Devolved Administrations also expressed concerns in respect of the methodology used, with the Welsh and Scottish Government ministers pressing for more detail in relation to EMFF replacement funding. The process for escalating the concerns of Devolved government ministers was discussed.

The group considered an update on the EU negotiations and emphasised the importance of achieving a trade deal. Scottish ministers again called for a grace period to allow businesses time to adjust to the new trading arrangements.

The group discussed preparations for the end of the transition period with a focus on business support, communications and engagement and concerns relating to prohibited and restricted trade that could have a significant impact on agri-food trade between GB and Northern Ireland. Discussion also took place on the capacity that existed in GB to issue Export Health Certificates, and funding for Brexit related expenditure.

Finally, the Scottish Government raised concerns regarding the issues of seasonal workforce in agriculture and food production, and the difficulty to meet health requirements for trade in sheep between GB-NI. The Welsh Government asked for a Ministerial Food Security forum to be established.