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Officials who may be contacted regarding the following questions:-



SUPPLEMENTARY TOPICS

1. What is your assessment of the referendum result?

- The people of the UK have had their say and we must respect the democratic view.
- Although the democratic view has been to remain, a significant proportion of the public have expressed their dis-satisfaction with the EU by voting to leave.
- The size of the leave vote represents a warning to political leaders that significant change is needed within the EU. Within my portfolio and at the top of my agenda is the need to seek further simplification of the CAP in order to reduce red tape. My aim going forward is to work with the farming industry to build a strong and resilient sector, and if this requires changes to EU systems or regulation then I will push for the necessary change.

2. What does the referendum result mean for rural communities and the agri-food sector ?

- I appreciate that for many agri-food businesses it has been difficult to plan ahead when there was uncertainty about the outcome of the referendum. That uncertainty has now been removed.
- Nevertheless, the size of the leave vote indicates that there is much dis-satisfaction with the EU. I will work to ensure that we achieve positive change within the EU so that the system and structures are fit for purpose and red tape is reduced.

3. Does the result weaken our position within the EU?

- Our day to day working relationships with the EU are strong and effective, and the referendum has not changed that situation. I expect our strong effective working relationships will continue going forward. The large vote for leave sends a message that there is dis-satisfaction from many about the EU and I think that is something that can't be ignored.

4. How does the result of the referendum affect TTIP and other trade negotiations?

- The EU Commission leads on behalf of all Member States on all trade negotiations between the EU and other parts of the world. Any deal that is reached must be ratified by the UK Government and the EU Parliament. I am aware that a TTIP deal offers both threats and opportunities for our agri-food industry, therefore I will continue to closely monitor these and other ongoing negotiations and I will seek appropriate safeguards to protect our farmers where this is necessary.

5. How much of our agri food produce is traded with the EU?

- Our agri food and drink sector depends heavily on its export markets. In 2013, for example, 73% of our agri-food and drinks processing sector sales were to destinations outside Northern Ireland. The latest figures indicate that 60% of exports of all goods and 90% of all food and drinks exports from Northern Ireland go to EU countries.

6. CAP funding to Northern Ireland farmers

- The total level of EU direct payments going to NI farmers in 2015 was estimated to be £287 million. This comprised of £236m towards the Basic, Greening and Young Farmers Payment, £5.1m for the EU Dairy Support Package and £46m towards the ANC Scheme, Countryside Management Scheme and Environmental Sensitive Area Scheme.

7. European support to Northern Ireland fishermen

- The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (2014-2020) is worth approximately £14.4m to the Northern Ireland fisheries industry and will be funded with a European contribution of approximately £10.7 million.
- Over the last European Fisheries Fund Programme which closed in December 2015 the Department paid some £18m to support the fishing industry and communities in which they are based.

8. Rural Development Programme budget and EU engagement?

- The Rural Development Programme is worth approximately £623m and will be funded with a European contribution of approximately £186.5 million.
- This also includes additional funding of up to £250m to fund the proposed 'Farm Business Improvement Scheme' as requested by the Agri-Food Strategy Board. This additional funding will help me to deliver on the aims and objectives in the Board's Going for Growth.

- There has been significant engagement with my officials in the development and approval of the Rural Development Programme over the past two years.
- DAERA, as the Programme Managing Authority, also has good working relations and communications with the European Commission geographical unit and EU Desk Officer on a wide range of issues affecting the programme.

9. How much EU competitive research funding comes into NI?

- Horizon 2020, the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation with total funding of €77 billion, is an important source of potential funding for Northern Ireland.
- In agri-food, over the first two years (2014-2015) of Horizon 2020, 11 organisations participated in 69 applications to the programme. Twelve of these applications were awarded funding totalling €3,162,223.

10. Veterinary and Animal Health

- The EU provides us with a wide range of legislation on animal health and welfare and the framework to ensure that the rules are complied with through official controls legislation. Whilst Defra and Food Standards Agency officials lead on any negotiations on this legislation on behalf of the UK, DAERA officials are much involved in advocating the position in NI and engaging with Commission officials through our Brussels office and incoming FVO visits.

- International trade is a reserved matter and Defra officials lead on EU negotiations with non-EU countries under the auspices of the EU Potsdam Group. DAERA successfully feeds into this group via our regular engagement with Defra.
- The EU provides DAERA veterinary and technical officials with many high quality, cost effective training opportunities through the auspices of the “Better training for Safe Food Initiative”. These courses deliver up to date technical information as well as helping to develop valuable networks across the EU.
- DAERA’s Bovine TB Eradication Programme has been approved by the European Commission annually since 2010 as part of the UK Bovine TB Eradication Plan. This has secured EU co-funding of approximately £4.5 million per annum which offsets the cost of the TB Eradication Programme.

11. Do EU rules on trade threaten plant health (animal health)?

- The EU is revising its legislation on safer food, including plant health. DAERA officials, including Forest Service, are working with DAERA (and DAFM) to ensure that the new regulations are trade friendly consistent with protecting agriculture, forestry and the wider environment from new diseases.

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The Brexit Referendum took place on 23 June 2016 with the majority of voters choosing to remain in the EU. [to be amended if required]
2. The body of EU law covers and shapes a very wide range of economic, social and environmental governance which impinges directly and indirectly on all policy areas within the remit of DAERA.
3. Northern Ireland receives 9% of the total direct payments that come from the EU to the UK. It would not be feasible for the NI Executive to fund these payments at current levels from the Block Grant without additional money from the Treasury. NI receives about 3% of UK public expenditure.