

# **Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) – Written evidence (FUI0019)**

## **Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) Submission on Impact of the NI Protocol**

### **House of Lords Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland - June 2022**

#### Background

Following the withdrawal agreement – Northern Ireland is part of the UK customs territory but is the only part of the UK that remains in the EU's regulatory zone.

The UFU is endeavouring to make the Protocol work. We recognise that significant challenges but also opportunities exist.

In the first instance the UFU accepts that progress has been made on resolving certain specific issues as a consequence of dialogue and joint working through the Protocol's mechanisms. For the farming industry however, many outstanding issues still remain on livestock, plant, and related product movements from GB to NI despite in certain instances solutions having already supposedly being found. We are being given very mixed messages by both the EU Commission and the UK Government and we do not accept that the EU have gone far enough on these issues nor that the UK Government is taking the pragmatic approach necessary.

The UFU are members of the NI Business Brexit Working Group and we remain fully supportive of this Group's five key non-exhaustive asks below.

In addition, while we are frustrated with the ongoing failure to resolve the outstanding issues, it is our shared view that anything other than a negotiated outcome is sub-optimal.

Against the background of a cost of living and cost of doing business crisis, it is

incumbent on the EU and UK to recommence discussions without delay. It will require movement and compromise on both sides to secure the workable and lasting solutions we all need to see. It is also incumbent on the UK and Irish governments, as co-guarantors of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, to give space and to work hard in the weeks post-election to get the new Executive parties to agree a position that could be collectively presented to the EU that it simply cannot ignore.

In March we submitted 5 key non-exhaustive asks to each of the parties to consider as the basis of a potential resolution. We would encourage the government to support us in our asks:

1. ***An SPS landing zone*** that brings together workable trusted trader arrangements with a bespoke veterinary agreement to protect access, choice and affordability for the NI consumer in particular.
2. ***A radical reduction in customs bureaucracy*** for goods not at risk of entering the EU single market, regardless of sector.
3. ***Meaningful representation*** that ensures Northern Ireland has a voice at the table in relation to laws or policy impacting on NI trade.
4. ***Formal review mechanisms***, including periodic monitoring of the operation of the "at risk" test, economic impact assessments on regulatory challenges, and any mitigations and/or compensations needed to support and protect NI trade.
5. ***An unlocked competitive advantage*** that truly delivers on the unique dual market access to both the GB and EU.

We firmly believe that progress has been made and more is possible. Confrontational approaches will not build the necessary stability nor certainty which business and investors need. Consensually agreed practical flexibilities have already been delivered through the Protocol's structures and more is achievable. This remains our preferred route.

**6 June 2022**