

Written evidence submitted by Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), relating to the operation of The Windsor Framework

[OWF0013]

Areas where legislative divergence between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is likely to occur and the mechanisms in place to monitor or manage this-

Divergence has always been one of Ulster Farmers' Unions (UFU) major concerns. Areas of concern include-

- Expiry of the derogation to allow 95% organic feed for all poultry in Northern Ireland.
- Plant protection product approval for use and maximum residue levels (MRL) changes.
- Deforestation regulations.
- EID cattle identification
- CBAM.
- Glyphosate renewal.
- Precision Breeding Bill.
- Food labelling.
- Animal welfare during transport regulations.

Measures put in place to monitor, manage or mitigate divergence have not come to attention of the UFU which causes some concern. Whilst divergence has always played some role in UK governance due to the nature of devolved government, NI now finds itself in no mans land under EU laws/regulations but governed by UK bodies. The list mentioned above includes a range of current areas of concern where in some cases GB opts for a different regime compared to the EU leaving NI farmers in a difficult position to trade freely NI-GB or GB-NI. The UFU are happy to provide further information on the list provided.

The above list discusses many of the current divergence issues however in the future UFU expect more issues to be raised by farmers if an SPS/Veterinary agreement for between the UK (as a whole) and the EU is not reached. It is also important to mention the severe pressure divergence continues to impact upon the NI civil service in terms of staff resources and the wider impact this is and will continue to have on policy roll out in NI.

The potential of Northern Ireland's dual market access-

North-South movement of agri-food products have remained free of restrictions. Businesses have continued to trade into the EU Single Market as they had done before Brexit. This has been hugely positive for the NI economy and the ROI economy who benefit through processing NI produce and using NI processing facilities in the pig sector. This trade route acts as a lifeline for many sectors but in particular the sheep and dairy sectors. Whilst North-South movement is positive UFU however continue to raise the concerns of those whose main trade routes are

East-West. As an organisation representing all sectors within Northern Irish agriculture political/trade deals must work for all.

The implementation of commitments contained within the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper.

Within the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper commitments were made around establishing a Veterinary Medicines Working Group (VMWG) and a Horticulture Working Group, the UFU have positions on both groups.

The VMWG has now met on several occasions and is making steady progress in advance of the ending of the current grace period by 31st of December 2025. The UFU continues to state that solutions must not jeopardize our access to the EU Single Market and must resolve the issue for both companion and farmed animals. Whilst significant progress has been made regulatory issues still persist, worries around discontinuation of product (all indications are that this aspect has reduced), disruption to supply chains, increase costs to farmers and pet owners due to costs being passed down to end users and access to botulism vaccines which is essential for Northern Ireland farmers.

The Horticulture Working Group has also met on several occasions with progress being slower in resolving some issues. However, we very much welcome the UK Governments commitment to resolving the issues. UFU hope that this body can help resolve issues around importation of Used Agriculture Machinery (UAM) from GB. We also hope that this body can allow for further investigation around the issue of access to plant protections products (PPPs).

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