

Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA) – Written evidence (NIP0007)

Firstly a word thanks to Lord Chairman Teverson and His Committee for allowing Niapa to raise its concerns in relation to the Protocol and its implementation here in the North of Ireland.

Just to reiterate Political sustainability is key for the region and with two hundred lorries daily travelling from mainland GB supplying the retail sector here and with almost 60% of our food produce exported to mainland GB. We can not avoid to have trade friction as NI agricultural commodities are produced to the highest standards protecting consumers, livestock and the environment.

These standards apply equally whether the product is for home consumption or export. A major market for our world-class food production is GB where consumers avail of our produce safe in the knowledge of its provenance. Why then should government expose its citizens to what many regard as sub-standard inferior produce regarding health and environment etc, which would not have been acceptable previously. This is a health, welfare and environmental issue.

For NI and indeed GB farmers there is also an economic issue. A forceful point made during Brexit discussions was that the GB market being our main importer of NI produced food was a mainstay of our future agricultural production. The opening of that market to imports of an inferior product will cause displacement for our produce and have a severe negative impact on our industry. How, when and where could we replace these markets and at what cost to the industry. This has the potential to decimate the farming industry which plays a major part in the NI economy.

We believe that if the government position is that checks should be carried out on goods in transit GB – Ni then the place for this is land-based in GB provided there is a necessity for this in the first place. Onboard checks could prove hazardous in the various prevailing weather situations and potentially contravening maritime regulations. Apart from anything else, the time factor involved in these checks could prove a problem in terms of food or agricultural produce.

In relation to government engagement, we find that in N Ireland we are presented with a fait accompli in relation to Brexit and trade negotiations. Given that there is a distinct difference between agricultural production in N Ireland and England there should be proper recognition of our unique position viz a viz the future relationship with the EU. The main stakeholders are the producers from which the remainder of the industry is supplied yet there is limited dialogue with this sector. This is the past, present and future and must be recognised as such. It is also the base which is going to suffer most impact with the knock-on effect on the total food chain.

With regard to “at risk” goods we would expect guidelines. While the imposition of tariffs may evolve and change as negotiations progress there are different implications for the remainder of UK and for NI due to our continuing

relationship with EU and the fact, we have a land border with ROI being a member of EU 27.

Does the government give equal consideration to the unique position of NI particularly in relation to the economic contribution of agriculture? If so, why does it seem to wish to relegate our industry to history and damage our economy.