

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Cùisean Dùthchail, Biadh agus an Àrainneachd
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment

Ridseard Lochhead BPA
Richard Lochhead MSP

F/T: 0300 244 4000

E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Rob Gibson MSP

Convener

Rural Affairs and Environment Committee

The Scottish Parliament

EDINBURGH

EH99 1SP

September 2015

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL: 7 SEPTEMBER 2015

I am writing to provide you with a report on the outcomes of the extraordinary EU Agriculture Council meeting which I attended in Brussels on 7 September.

As you will have seen ahead of the meeting I called for a package that would address market difficulties being faced by all farmers, for greater emphasis on country of origin labelling and more immediate action on supply chain initiatives at the EU level. Following the meeting we still need clarity over what the European Commission's proposed funding package means for Scottish farmers both in the short and long term.

I am copying this letter to the Convener of the European and External Relations Committee, for information.

RICHARD LOCHHEAD

Taigh Naomh Anndrais, Rathad Regent, Dùn Èideann EH1 3DG
St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.scotland.gov.uk

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL REPORT: 7 SEPTEMBER 2015

SUMMARY

This was an extraordinary Council called in response to pressing market difficulties being faced within the agriculture sector. The Vice President Jyrki Katainen, replacing Commissioner Phil Hogan, put forward a package of measures intended to help address cash-flow difficulties being faced by farmers, to stabilise markets and improve the functioning of the EU supply chain.

In the margins of the Council Ministers and farming unions from all parts of the UK met to discuss further what tangible steps need to be taken to deliver supply chains which secure a thriving future for primary producers.

KEY OUTCOMES

Market Developments

1. The Vice President Jyrki Katainen announced a Commission package of support for the agriculture sector. Central to this was €500 million of immediate financial aid to those farmers most affected by the current market difficulties. In addition other action was proposed such as increasing the amount for advanced payments to farmers under CAP, development of futures markets, action to boost export opportunities, improvements in the EU supply chain.
2. Ministers highlighted the importance of responding rapidly and efficiently to the difficulties currently being faced by farmers. While supportive of the financial package, delegations highlighted a lack of clarity on key aspects of the funding package such as source of the funding, the amount and methodology for calculating Member State allocation. Most ministers emphasised that flexibility in the controls was needed to help facilitate implementation. In general the strengthening of promotion measures and the planned work on the supply chain were deemed important issues.
3. The Commission advised that it would come back to Member States with further clarity on aspects of the package with opportunities for Member States to refine the approach via official channels.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

African Swine Flu outbreak in Baltic States and Poland

4. The Estonian delegation, supported by Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, briefed Ministers on the current state of play of the African swine fever (ASF) outbreak in those countries. Some Member States supported the views of the countries affected to see the development of a broad, long-term strategy to fight the disease.

Consequences of drought in PL and RO

5. The Polish and the Romanian delegations briefed the ministers of the consequences of the severe drought affecting their countries this summer. Some Member States supported their request for a specific support programme for the crops and the animal production affected by the drought.
6. The next Agriculture and Fisheries Council will be held in Luxembourg on the 22-23 October 2015.