

Agri-Brexit Coalition Meeting

The Farmers Club
Committee Room
3 Whitehall Court
London
SW1A 2EL

22 February 2019

Attendees

David Caffall (Chair)	(AIC)
Robert Sheasby	(AIC)
Paul Rooke	(AIC)
Ruth Bailey	(AEA)
Penny Maplestone	(BSPB)
Jeremy Moody	(CAAV)
Sarah Nightingale	(Gafta – for Jaine Chisholm Caunt)
Geoff Dodgson	(for AIC)
Alison Glennon	(NOAH – for Dawn Howard)

Guests

Robin Manning	(DEFRA)
Chris Kearney	(DEFRA)

Apologies

Sarah Mukherjee\Adam Speed	(CPA)
Jill Hewitt	(NAAC)

1. Introductions and Apologies

David welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He apologised for his absence from the last meeting due to ill health

Matters arising from the last minutes:

- David is yet to meet with IMTA **Action: DC**
- RB \ GD to issue photos taken from the Teagle visit in December **Action: RB\GD**
- APWG added to the agenda for discussion

2. Brexit – where are we?

Robin commented that we are all still waiting for the Prime Minister but believes it likely the vote will be delayed. Much activity in Brussels around the back-stop but still highly uncertain. General feeling is that there will be a deal – hope for a managed transition.

Defra busy looking across all areas at what needs to be done should there be 'no deal' - particularly in the sheep sector. Wide difference in farming stats – either making a lot of money in grazing livestock – or not as much in arable.

The question of tariff arrangements was raised. If there is no deal need to ensure:

- There are no food price spikes
- Having something in the bank against future FTAs
- No production problems

If there is a deal all will carry on as they stand but changes will eventually be made. Tariffs have to be laid in good course to allow for government discussion but if they are not needed they can be pulled. Teams are being built in Whitehall for FEP but also for 'no deal'.

Sarah N asked Robin what would happen with a boat arriving in port immediately after the rules change – will new criteria exist? Could it dock or would it be sent back? RM felt that rules should still stand as is – as long as the documentation showed that the ship had left port before the deadline. RM to look into it and come back to Sarah. RM to respond generally to everyone regarding the helpline due to be set up on 'goods in the market'. **Action: RM**

David asked RM about priority helpline contact numbers that we can use to avoid the wave of questions – he suggested David contacted Andrew Kyke who should be able to help.

Robin also suggested that the Coalition become involved in the Food Chain Emergency Liaison Group. Everyone was very keen that we take part – Robin will therefore put David's name forward as the Coalition's representative

David asked the Group if they feel their members are prepared for a no deal Brexit. Overall all responded that they felt they were – as much as they could be. All were agreed that we need a healthy agriculture policy in the UK now and in the future.

The main concern overall is that of tariffs – irrespective of sector – all need to know a decision.

Small companies do need help, courses, information – anything we can do to point them in the right direction would go down very well. Robin suggested looking at the www.gov.uk website to signpost people

David asked whether there could be the possibility of a direct line into Defra – cited fertiliser explosions as an example of when a crisis happens there is a need to get expertise quickly. Plugging into Defra would be key. Robin agreed.

Over the course of the Q&A session Robin set out the Defra position as best he could but there were answers to many questions that he was unable to answer.

David thanked Robin for attending the meeting and for his valuable input. Robin and Chris then left the meeting

3. Future Workshops

David asked everyone what they thought to be a particular priority. Ruth asked whether block chain is being used yet. Some people apparently are starting to - there is an awareness, particularly with regard to tracking. This would be a good topic – and would be good to be ahead of the curve. Would need to find the right experts to bring in as well as those from the supply chain / retailers etc. in order to see a full 'loop' (and what happens when incorrect information goes in?). Penny has a useful IBM Food Trust presentation which she will arrange to circulate to the group. **Action: PM (Done)**

Phyto Sanitary – contacts in arable and seed sectors are concerned about certification if process is taking too long to turn around. Ideal situation would be that accredited seed suppliers can certify their own seed. A database of requirements \ certifications is currently being undertaken by APHA. Some concerns expressed around new registrants and the possibility of disease coming in from elsewhere. Robert commented that other countries (i.e. Australia) have

extremely stringent rules about food stuffs and plants etc entering into the country, although New Zealand feels that it all comes down to trust. This could all be covered by block chain.

Currently the Coalition members are too busy to plan seminars at the present moment. Paul would also like a discussion around 'healthmark'; needs now to say UK on it rather than GB.

4. APWG

David discussed key inputs to the Food & Drink Sector Council sub group, the Agricultural Productivity Working Group (APWG) – with a workstream due to finish by spring 2019.

Peter Kendall has put the group together but composition covers whole industry. AIC is speaking for Agri-Brexit Coalition, however APWG hasn't contacted any of the Coalition for any input, despite DCs request to do so.

Current initiative 'What Works' is underway and David doesn't feel it should be opposed now. However, culturally are AHDB the best people to be doing it? There has been no wider consultation with the group

Jeremy commented that he is now running a working group on land access – what are going to be the game changers, what will provide step changes? Answers need to be in by 6th March and Jeremy invited Coalition members to take part should they wish.

Various groups currently looking across areas such as R&D, knowledge, skills, livestock data, robotics, insect protein, vehicle to grid, urban horticulture, horticulture, data productivity, etc. – but the recommendations will be condensed down into 3. The meeting which David will be attending this afternoon will decide. David will also use the meeting to reinforce the Coalition's members' need to input to the APWG

5. Future of the Coalition

Building upon previous discussions it was confirmed that the group wished to transition in to a new form post Brexit, which would represent an influential grouping of Trade Associations, which could speak authoritatively on our particular issues.

David said that as this was an open-ended project, he felt that it would be inappropriate for him to continue beyond the Brexit phase as Co-ordinator. He therefore felt unconstrained in making a proposal that, as AIC represent multiple sectors, it would seem logical for them to continue to provide the Secretariat, and with everyone feeling comfortable with a collegiate approach to leadership, Robert Sheasby (AIC Chief Executive) should become the Co-ordinator.

Robert confirmed that he was willing to serve in this capacity, and David confirmed that AIC was willing to continue to fund Coalition activities, unless major projects were envisaged. Coalition members commented that they value the group and that they were additionally willing to contribute to the costs of London meetings and or seminars, as some have already done. David said that there was a lot of work to do in establishing proposals for the Coalition's new name / mission / structure, and that he was willing to do this.

Action: DC

6. Any other business

Paul has a recent presentation from Government on GDPR and Brexit – will circulate around the group

Action: PR

David suggested that we put meeting dates into the diary going further ahead into the year and these will be added to in due course. Julia will issue meeting invitations to all

Action: JC (done)

Paul suggested that we invite Sarah Adcock or another from the Future Trade group in order to look forward. Paul to contact Sarah

Action: PR