

Agri-Brexit Coalition Meeting

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

16 October 2019

Attendees

Robert Sheasby	(AIC)	Ruth Bailey	(AEA)
Jeremy Moody	(CAAV)	Sarah Mukherjee	(CPA)
Katrina Walsh	(IMTA)	Penny Maplestone	(BSPB)
Alison Glennon	(NOAH)		

Apologies

Jill Hewitt	(NAAC)
Jaine Chisholm Caunt	(GAFTA)

Guests

Robin Manning	(DEFRA)	Paul Rooke	(AIC)
Chris Kearney	(DEFRA)	Geoff Dodgson	(AIC)

1. Introductions

RS welcomed participants to the meeting and advised that both GAFTA and NAAC had sent their apologies for the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

RM confirmed that he this morning has provided a list on the Alternative Arrangements members which JC will circulate.

Action: JC

RS has invited George Eustice to a future meeting, the suggestion made that it is the meeting to re-launch the Coalition. RM to follow up and check Minister's availability for December meeting.

Action: RM

RS would still like everyone to put forward ideas for future meetings, as well as topics for a programme of seminars and workshops - by next meeting please. Topics should be positive and forward looking.

Action: ALL

RM to recheck the issues around the challenges of TSPs if seeking to export goods within a TRQ, and also BIPs, and come back to the group

Action: RM

3. DEFRA update

Warmer language between the UK and EU at the European Council this week indicates an important phase in the process but at this point we still don't know if there will be 'no deal' or an agreement to leave on 31st October, or yet another extension.

DEFRA must focus on no deal, as a worst case, until they know that this is off the table. Minister's focus is working with the most vulnerable sectors (i.e. livestock)

No deal tariff policy has been confirmed – protection will be given to bio ethanol sector, but otherwise remain the same as in April. These will last for 12 months and then reviewed again.

DEFRA will monitor the market during this period and will plug into any issues\difficulties members may have. In certain areas, where there are commercial sensitivities, specific issues raised are not likely to be subject to FOI.

Action: CK to check on FOI

For those dealing with labour issues, DEFRA and the DTI are providing rafts of information on Brexit and calls for evidence on agri salary thresholds to enable qualifying pay levels to be reduced to enable migrant labour.

The AEA has been busy informing customers about the changes that will come about under 'no deal' regarding 2nd hand vehicles \ equipment, in particular phytosanitary certificates which will be needed as well as how to prove conformity. Application for a phyto certificate is made via BEIS and approved by APHA, however this is causing a huge issue of increased workload, and therefore resourcing issues, across the board in order to cope

PR suggested that we ask someone from APHA to attend the meeting on 4 December and RM agreed to find someone to attend. In the meantime, everyone should consult with their members in order to get an idea of numbers involved.

Action: RM to find someone at APHA to attend 4 Dec meeting

Action: All to consult with members

IMTA commented that they have had many enquiries from freight forwarders who have been inundated with enquiries on 3rd country trade and whether there will be new legislation on duties and TRQs. RM said that there would be and that all will be made aware in due course but currently are laying Statutory Instruments and enshrining EU laws into UK. However, he felt there wouldn't be anything we weren't already aware of.

PR mentioned that feedback from Brexit readiness workshops is that people are not really getting answers and a lot of 'don't know's' are being given. RM said that DEFRA is anxious to help but it is hard to answer specifics. Suggestion that the Trade Associations would collect and raise issues from their members with DEFRA, for a more specific response.

NOAH mentioned that after receiving funding they are now able to run their own workshops as their field is so niche. However, they will share messaging once concluded.

RM commented the product maps coming from DEFRA are in simple terms – can we help in any way by adding more detail to them?

The issue of equivalence was discussed with PR noting there was an impact for exports of seed and organic produce. Whilst a request for equivalence had been submitted by the UK ahead of the March deadline it was noted that this had expired and the UK would need to apply again. It was felt this was a point which would not be considered until the point at which the UK became a 3rd country.

If there is a deal, we will enter a negotiation period on FEP (or Super FDA) until end Dec 2020. We want to be able to have frictionless trade with EU and whoever else.

4. Food Strategy

All were asked to note the deadline for consultation submissions of 25th October. SM commented that she has been invited to attend the Food Strategy Advisory Group led by Henry Dimbleby. Its aims are to ensure that our food system:

- Delivers safe, healthy, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn;

- Is robust in the face of future shocks;
- Restores and enhances the natural environment for the next generation in this country;
- Is built upon a resilient, sustainable and humane agriculture sector; and
- Is a thriving contributor to our urban and rural economies, delivering well paid jobs and supporting innovative producers and manufacturers across the country;
- Delivers all this in an efficient and cost-effective way

CPA is keen to have a seat at the table and will share information with the group

PR commented on a point being made by elements of the food processing sector that current Government focus in food and agriculture was too heavily weighted towards agriculture. The potential outcome of this could be that the food manufacturing and processing sector was irreversibly damaged. PR questioned whether the group should debate the forthcoming change to agricultural support and the likely impact that the loss of BPS would have for the wider industry. What do we as a group want to do?

PR suggested that we should focus on anything undermining the production base, which in turn undermines downstream processing, but there are great sensitivities around this. The UK would earn more value from exported food products than, for example, wheat, and this impacts the Coalition membership. SM commented that it would be cataclysmic if there were no more BPS post Brexit, and if people like James Dyson believe they will struggle, how can anyone else cope?

RS asked whether we should be discussing further, with FDF and our members, looking to build in evolution and innovation technology in order to not be tied to one specific area.

Sustainability reviews of farming underway in Wales and Ireland with training schemes being offered. There will be a significant change soon regarding farming, and the role of technology and innovation will be far greater in only a generation's time. Do any of the large food and drink companies realise what the future could look like?

The group discussed a need for an additional meeting to start thinking in more detail about the potential changes within the agriculture and food sector which are likely post-Brexit and the impact these changes may have on our members' sphere of operations.

There was some discussion around holding about workshops or seminars to help elucidate this thinking. The group agreed the first step was the need to devote some more time to working through a possible work programme, structure and logistics

Action: JC to offer doodle poll dates for a meeting early November in Peterborough

5. Coalition beyond Brexit

RS believed that the group had held a good discussion today; going forward – we need to add text and revisit the purpose.

Action: GD to write up ideas and send around the group for further thought

6. AgriSupply Coalition launch

We need to produce a basic position paper to give to the Minister – hopeful that we can invite him to our launch in December

Action: RS\PR and GD to revise and share

7. AOB

The next meeting is 4th December and will conclude with lunch

2020 meeting frequency – to continue on a 6-weekly basis. Meetings to be scheduled now to the end of July, then at Easter for the rest of the year

Action: JC to doodle poll potential dates

APWG –Tom Hind has shared an Exec Summary of the report with RS who will share this with the group. There is a meeting of the APWG this week but currently no agenda. They are going forward on the basis of July remit and are about to report their ‘findings’ – however there has still been no discussion with the sector

A new environment bill has been launched by Theresa Villiers bowing to environment groups for a cleaner greener Britain. Government will report 5 yearly. Environment is the main topic for political groups but can’t be delivered without economic growth. Pesticide and fertiliser tax causing concern

The meeting ended at 12.20