

AIC Policy Report

April 2025



Working in support of
a modern, sustainable
commercial, agriculture

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Summary

- On 2 April, the US administration announced tariffs to numerous exporting countries to the US including a 10% tariff on exports from the UK. [Following this, the UK announced a four-week consultation](#) window on the possibility of applying countermeasures on US goods, ending on 1 May. An indicative list of goods that are imported from the US that may be considered in a future UK response, has also been published, and products in scope cover all five AIC sectors. AIC remains in regular contact with the UK Government about the possible impacts to supply chains, as well as with our European associations to ensure consistency in messaging. [A webinar was hosted for members on this issue on 10 April and full details can be found here.](#)
- It is clear that UK Government policy is now trying to address a clear shortfall in available funding to Government departments whilst seeking to grow the economy. This has led to uncertainties over the future of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) in England (1.6) and how it will be funded, yet it has also brought about welcome news on Precision Breeding (1.2, 4.1, 7.3).
- The ramifications of the Budget last October are still being absorbed. The headline changes to Agricultural and Business Property Relief (APR/BPR) remain an industry-wide focus with unknown consequences (1.1). The impact of increased employer National Insurance Contributions is yet to be felt, along with other changes. In the meantime, progress on our asks of the Government has been made – namely the appointment of a commitment to negotiating a Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement with the EU (1.4) and the announcement of a draft Land Use Framework (LUF) (1.3).
- Considerable policy work continues on the day-to-day. Members will note the outcome of the UK assurance review (3.5), as well as measures to address the lack of cropping diversity (3.4, 4.2), a review of the UK Internal Market (1.5), EU-US trade issues (2.5), Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) related feed controls (2.3) and the ongoing position of EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in the absence of any UK legislation being announced (2.1).

1. Cross Sector Policy

1.1 2024 Budget

Since the publication of the [Budget in Autumn 2024](#), a number of AIC Members have expressed their concern about its measures, most notably BPR changes and what that means for family-owned businesses.

AIC has been raising these concerns at every opportunity with the Government. AIC remains concerned that the Government does not seem to be appreciating the full impacts on businesses, and by extension, economic growth. To make the case to the Government over the impacts of its Budget, AIC has joined a coalition of business groups that will work together to collect Member feedback and lobby the Government on BPR. This work is being led by [Family Business UK](#), and members of the coalition include the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the National Farmers Union (NFU), the Country Land and Business Associations (CLA) and others. A survey was launched by the Group and AIC will continue to work with the coalition and present the findings to parliamentarians and media.

1.2 Precision Breeding (Genetic Technologies) Act

In late February, it was announced by Ministers that the Secondary Legislation required to implement the [Precision Breeding Act](#) for plants would be laid in Parliament. The Secondary Legislation is needed in order to set out the detail required to realise the benefits of the [Act which became law in March 2023](#). The Secondary Legislation is expected to pass through Parliament and will allow the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to receive applications for Precision Bred Organisms (PBOs) in England. The regulations will come into force after a period of six months (likely to be late September – early October).

Confirmation was also received that AIC would be reappointed as a member of the [Government's Precision Breeding Working Group](#) with industry which helps to identify the challenges and opportunities for precision breeding and discusses how to facilitate routes to market. AIC priority will be to ensure consistency of precision breeding legislation across the UK, noting that similar legislation has now taken a step further forwards in the EU.

1.3 Land Use Framework and consultation

At the end of January, Government launched a consultation on proposals for its long-awaited Land Use Framework - something AIC has consistently called for in recent years and featured as one of our core asks of the new Government in the 2024 UK General Election. The Framework is intended to give businesses the confidence to invest by clarifying how the Government sees land in England being used for food production and other priorities such as energy, housing, and environmental improvement. To do this, the LUF outlines four categories of land use change that will be needed to meet various land-based targets set by Government. The LUF is clear that the most productive land should be used for food production, however it does outline land being taken out of production in more marginal areas. Although the LUF understands the need for incentives, AIC is concerned that it is too blasé about how easy it is to make up for the loss of productive land by simply increased agricultural productivity. In March, AIC provided a draft response and summary of the LUF, for Members to view.

1.4 UK-EU Trade

AIC has been engaged in a number of meetings with Defra over the Government's ambition to negotiate an EU-SPS veterinary agreement. The Government has now begun the work of negotiating such an agreement with the EU, a policy shift that will benefit the entire agri-food supply chain. Since the new Government took office, AIC has been working closely with ministers and civil servants as they engage in these negotiations to help foster a beneficial outcome for Members. Not only has this involved meeting Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Ministers, but it has also seen engagement with the Minister for European Union Relations, Nick Thomas Symonds MP. AIC is now engaged with regular meetings with Defra officials leading on this work and providing them with practical examples of friction to trade, and what can be done to minimise them. On 19 May, a high-level EU-UK summit will take place in London, and this will form part of the discussions.

1.5 UK Internal Market Act

AIC has responded to a consultation on the operation and functioning of the UK Internal Market Act (UKIMA). The UKIMA was established to ensure that businesses can trade seamlessly among all four nations of the UK (noting the unique position of Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework) and are able to place goods on the market in each of the four nations. The Consultation was established by the Department for Business

and Trade, asking affected trade bodies as to how the UKIMA has functioned and any challenges to the UKIMA so far. In AIC's response, it was noted that whilst no direct challenges had arisen from the UKIMA directly, there were distinct future challenges arising from the Genetic Technologies (Precision Breeding) Act, in which businesses in the supply chain were unclear as to what precision breeding (PB) goods they could place on the market in Scotland and Wales, especially if PB materials are used to manufacture processed goods such as PB flour in baked goods or PB cereals in feed compounds. AIC also flagged that the UKIMA makes specific exemptions for fertilisers and crop protection products, and whilst these had not yet been tested, there could be challenges arising from UK internal market divergence. AIC also stressed the need for consistency over regulated product approvals among regulatory bodies within the UK (such as FSA and Food Standards Scotland (FSS)), noting the importance of joined-up approaches and approvals that are made at the same time UK wide.

1.6 Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)

On 11 March, the Government announced that Defra would no longer accept new SFI applications. No consultation or warning had been given to the industry prior to this decision being made. All existing SFI agreement holders (approx. 37,000), will continue to be paid under the terms of their agreement and for their duration.

Applications that were submitted before the closure date will still be processed, provided they meet the eligibility criteria. Farmers that were in the SFI pilot will be able to apply when their pilot agreement ends. Similarly, access to the application system may be continued for those that have requested digital support or been affected by technical/system issues.

The other Environmental Land Management schemes (Landscape Recovery and the upcoming Higher Tier offer) will remain in place and there will be a new and improved SFI on offer in the future. Defra has stated that it will work closely with farmers and industry stakeholders to design a future SFI offer that will build on what has made SFI effective so far.

Defra is expecting to provide information about the future SFI scheme in 2025 following the completion of the Government's spending review. It is however anticipated that a new scheme will not be open for applications until at least spring 2026.

1.7 AIC's Sustainability Action Plan

A webinar to introduce the Sustainability Action Plan to Members was attended by over 60 individuals. Further positive feedback including endorsement from Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), and a Groundswell session has been applied for. Ongoing discussions with wider industry stakeholder groups are taking place on drafting joint sustainability and health policy asks for the Government.

1.8 Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP)/Sustainability Data

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) shared their Farm Data Exchange proposal at the Eco-working Group with broad support, but funding is not secured to move to develop a proof of concept. AIC has discussed the proposal and flagged the need for close engagement if it moves forward. In parallel, positive conversations have been held with AHDB on expanding the updated Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS2) values beyond the three crops which have been completed. Work is ongoing to engage with a wider set of stakeholders.

1.9 Farming Rules for Water (FRW) Statutory Guidance Rapid Review

A decision is expected on FRW in April. AIC has also been invited to speak to researchers who are exploring, on behalf of the Office for Environmental Protection, the effectiveness of the regulation of agricultural diffuse pollution on the water environment.

2. Animal Feed

2.1 EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)

EUDR continues to take up a considerable amount of AIC feed sector resource. The anticipated delay in the implementation of the legislation was confirmed towards the end of 2024 and the new implementation date is set at 30 December 2025. Current 'live' issues are:

- European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC) legal opinion on compound feed as a 'relevant product'. The EUDR regulation lists in its annex 'relevant products' (listed by tariff code) which are within the scope of the regulation. Compound feed is not listed and is therefore not a relevant product. The FEFAC legal opinion confirms this and points to there being no legal requirement for businesses placing beef on the EU market to provide any information on the deforestation status of any compound feed given to those animals providing the beef. This is the case even if the compound feed contains relevant products such as soya beanmeal and palm oil. AIC has shared this legal opinion with UK beef and dairy supply chain partners.
- EU/Mercosur agreement. It has been reported that the Mercosur partners regard EUDR as a non-tariff barrier and may choose to impose counter-balancing measures should EUDR be imposed on their commodity suppliers
- Potential addition of EUDR to the EU Commission *Omnibus Simplification* packages. The EU is currently assessing several pieces of legislation under the *Omnibus Simplification* package. The EU feed industry is lobbying for EUDR to be included and for the removal of recital 39 requirements (relating to feed embedded in imported beef) and the removal of Palm Kernel Expeller (PKE) and Palm Fatty Acid Distillate (PFAD).

2.2 Development of AIC Sustainable Commodity Scheme (ASCS) standard aligned with EUDR requirements

AIC continues to work on delivering an auditable EUDR aligned commodity standard by or before Q3 2025. Recent engagement with UK Soya Manifesto Group, Retail Soy Group and European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (EFECA) has provided greater clarity over the chain of custody models that might meet the requirements of the EUDR aligned standard. The standard is currently being re-drafted to audit for a mass balance of EUDR aligned and 'other' material at the feed mill level, as long as EUDR aligned material arrives at UK port as segregated flow, and the volumes of that material can be traced (by an AIC EUDR aligned standard) from port to mill, and at point of departure from mill.

It should be noted that all parties on the supply side regularly cite the unprecedented geopolitical climate for commodity trade and point to uncertainties from within the USA, EU and in Brazil (see 2.5) that could pose challenges to execution of deforestation and conversion-free commitments in the UK.

2.3 Consultation on proposed changes to the TSE- related livestock feed controls

Defra is seeking views on proposals to change the current livestock feed controls to allow:

- porcine processed animal protein (PAP) to be fed to poultry
- poultry PAP to be fed to porcine animals
- insect PAP to be fed to poultry and porcine animals
- ruminant collagen and gelatine in non-ruminant feed

This consultation follows a similar exercise undertaken in Scotland towards the end of 2024. AIC established a position on these amendments in 2021 (they mirror changes made to EU regulations in 2020) and is largely supportive but stress the importance of whole supply chain acceptance.

2.4 EU antidumping measures on Chinese lysine

AIC arranged a meeting with Defra, Department for Business and Trade (DBT), Cabinet Office and Customs and Excise in February to consider the implications of EU antidumping measures on Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI) feed businesses. Implications for GB businesses are limited as long as businesses are not sourcing Chinese lysine via the EU. For businesses in NI, the measures will have to be applied and then reversed under the terms of the Windsor Framework. Defra is to provide guidance to AIC on how this process works which will be shared with Members.

2.5 EU and US trade

On 12 March, the European Commission announced retaliatory measures against the US, following the implementation of US universal tariffs on steel and aluminium imports. Many of these include cereals and feed products. These include the reimposition of the suspended 2018 and 2020 rebalancing measures, including corn and rice products, on 1 April 2025 and the imposition of a new package of additional measures with the target products being a mix of industrial and agricultural products. Products targeted under the new list include durum wheat, rye, barley, oats, additional rice products, flours, soyabeans, low erucic rapeseed, palm oil, sunflower seed and beet pulp. The full list [can be found here](#). The adoption process for the second list of products is likely to be mid-April.

3. Combinable Crops

3.1 Renewable energy directive

[AIC has published a new digital resource](#) which explains the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS2). The public guidance page includes a timeline of key events in the RED's development and information covering how it works with AIC Services' Trade Assurance Scheme for Combinable Crops (TASCC).

3.2 Digital passport

The AHDB has published a revised Business Case for a Digital Passport (Combinable Crops), with AIC hosting a webinar on 31 March for Members. The Digital Passport Leadership Group, including AIC representatives, has

been refining the Business Case based on feedback from a 2024 consultation. Members are encouraged to review and share feedback online. The AHDB has also published updated FAQs regarding the Business Case. These FAQs answer queries and comments submitted during last year's industry-wide consultation on the Business Case.

3.3 AHDB administration fees

AIC has informed Members that the AHDB Cereals and Oilseeds Sector Council has recommended a revised levy rebate rate to the AHDB Board. This follows AIC's engagement on behalf of Members to assess the true costs of levy collection, which helped determine the appropriate rebate rate at 3.28%. In the next month, AHDB will send a formal letter to merchants and buyers outlining the change, set to take effect on 1 April 2025. Discussions are continuing in relation to subsequent years.

3.4 UK oilseeds group

AIC has joined forces with industry bodies to create the UK Oilseeds Group (UKOG), aiming to support UK oilseed production. The group, which includes organisations like AHDB, BSPB, and the NFU, will address challenges such as oilseed seed imports, crop protection, and SFI interactions. In late 2024, UKOG requested an 'oilseeds summit' with Defra to discuss these issues, and the Minister has agreed to meet in April, with UKOG now preparing a paper on the potential solutions.

3.5 Assurance review

An independent review of farm assurance, commissioned by UK farming unions and AHDB, was published on 20 January after nine months of work. The 198-page report emphasises the importance of farm assurance but calls for significant changes to address farmers' frustrations. Key recommendations include simplifying audits, adopting more technology, ensuring farmer involvement in standards development, and improving collaboration across schemes. AIC is currently reviewing the full report to assess its findings and identify key areas that may require attention.

3.6 Rapid alert system for food and feed

As a benefit of AIC's membership with COCERAL, AIC members can now sign up to receive weekly updates from the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), including alerts from third-country sources. These updates are compiled by COCERAL and shared with AIC each week. To sign up for these updates, please contact Ed Barker.

4. Seed

4.1 Consultation on England-only National List for precision-bred plant varieties

Defra has launched a consultation on creating an England-only National List for precision-bred plant varieties. The move is necessary due to differing regulations in the devolved UK regions. The consultation seeks feedback on mandatory seed labelling for these varieties and the potential overlap with existing industry

information. It also clarifies that while precision-bred seed can be sold in Scotland and Wales, cultivation must follow local Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) rules.

4.2 Former pulses UK workshop

In December 2024, Pulses UK members joined AIC, strengthening the sector's representation. Following a March 2024 vote, the merger was finalised, with an induction workshop held in January to discuss priorities and AIC's policy work. Key issues include SFI impact on pulses, support for protein crops, export barriers, and sustainability. Pulses will now be represented across AIC's Animal Feed, Combinable Crops, and Seed Committees.

4.3 Defra PVS workshops

AIC joined Defra plant variety and seed (PVS) workshop to discuss key issues and solutions on seed certification, variety listing and plant variety rights. The strategy needs to evolve due to food security, food strategy, new technologies emerging, climate change, trading environment, industry engagement, and the EU Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) / Forest Reproductive Material (FRM) review. Feedback highlights concern with seed quality, availability, and the complexity of regulatory processes, including delays and high costs. Issues around seed certification, plant health inspections, and export barriers were noted. There were calls for better data access, clearer systems for testing, and greater alignment with the EU. Breeders stressed the need for more support, clearer guidance, and improved transparency in processes like Distinctness, Uniformity, and Stability (DUS) and Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR).

4.4 Defra plant health fees review

Members have been notified of a consultation on proposed changes to plant health fees under the Plant Health etc. (Fees) Regulations for England and Wales, expected to take effect in autumn 2025. The consultation addresses the five-year gap in fee adjustments, with a focus on aligning fees with increased costs due to inflation. Specific questions on the changes, including amendments to documentary checks, are detailed in the consultation. Defra invites industry feedback on the proposals, which will be included in a statutory instrument.

5. Crop Protection and Agronomy

5.1 Webinars explaining the work of sector members

AIC Crop Protection and Agronomy sector members delivered 8 webinars to policy makers and industry stakeholders from January to March 2025. The aim of the webinars was to explain the role AIC members play in helping growers produce healthy, sustainable crops. Overall, 132 individuals from Chemical Regulations Division (CRD), Defra, Science & Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) and industry stakeholders attended one or more of the webinars which included an explanation of the role of distributors agronomists and an overview of technology used in agriculture now and coming for the future. Attendees commented that they found the sessions very interesting and informative and valued being able to ask questions of the AIC members delivering the webinars. The webinars have been recorded and are accessible with a password. Please contact Hazel Doonan if you would like to access any of the recordings.

5.2 PFAS

Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) also misleadingly termed ‘forever’ chemicals have been in the media over the last year. PFAS are a large group of chemicals (over seven million listed on PubChem) with a wide range of uses and persistence. Many are used in firefighting foams, fire retardant coverings, nonstick cookware, paints and food packaging. PFAS that are used in plant protection products (PPPs) must meet legislative criteria within the PPP regulations for persistence, bioaccumulation and toxicity before they can be approved for use. AIC has contributed to a Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) study, which aims to give MPs and peers impartial information on PFAS, highlighting the need to understand the behaviour of individual PFASs in the environment and the strict regulations that already exist for PPPs. The document is due to be published at the end of April.

5.3 EU regulation on labelling PPPs

The EU is developing a regulation to harmonise the labelling of plant protection products (PPPs) across the EU. The aim is to introduce machine readable digital labels on all PPPs, which it is envisaged will better enable precision agriculture. Other label changes will include a specific pictogram where products are potentially hazardous to bees and a colour coding scale to identify low risk products and those which may be higher risk. The regulation is due to come into force on 1 January 2026 and will also apply in Northern Ireland. AIC will be meeting with CRD to understand how the changes can least impact on the supply of PPPs to NI and if GB PPP labelling will be impacted.

6. Fertiliser

6.1 Regulation

There is no further movement on a future new Fertiliser Regulation. AIC has made representations to the Senior team at Defra for clarification on moving forwards on a consultation, owing to the widespread concern surrounding non mineral fertilising products entering the market unregulated. Of particular concern are organic based products from digestates and sludges, and also biostimulants and inhibitors.

6.2 Fertiliser Market

Raw Materials Costs Gas prices remain volatile, with comparative costs for US gas at around \$2 per Million British Thermal Units (MBTU), compared to globally and about \$11 in the EU. European ammonia production looks set to continue to contract, affecting the European strategic capability.

AIC has been in contact with all the main UK farming unions regarding spring fertiliser deliveries. AIC has been made aware that some suppliers have advised farmers that deliveries may not be made until after Easter or until May. This is due to a combination of late buying patterns, an early spring, and some farmers now unable to apply for SFI and wanting to put a spring crop in. AIC has asked farming unions for their help in tempering immediate expectations and to encourage their members in future to plan in advance to have some fertiliser on farm early in the season to ensure they can begin applications when the timing is right.

6.3 Trade and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

UK remains committed to introducing a UK CBAM for energy intensive products including hydrogen, ammonia and nitrogen fertiliser. [Carbon Border Taxes - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

6.4 House of Lords Inquiry into Nitrogen

The House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee, chaired by Baroness Sheehan, has launched an inquiry into efficient nitrogen use.

The aims of this inquiry are to:

- Highlight and explore the opportunities for capture and reuse of existing reactive nitrogen within sectors to minimise waste.
- Understand barriers to sustainable nitrogen management approaches within sectors.
- Review changes to the nitrogen cycle and its balance over time and associated challenges.
- Understand the gaps in current policy and the effectiveness of regulation in addressing nitrogen pollution.
- Understand how Government departments and associated agencies coordinate efforts on nitrogen management and whether this could be done more effectively.

[AIC has provided the inquiry with a written submission](#) on nitrogen use in Agriculture and in turn was invited to an oral evidence session with the committee on 19 March. The session covered trends in fertiliser use in the UK, nitrogen emissions origins, technologies and approaches to reuse organic fertiliser and reduce pollution, green ammonia viability and broader policy approaches.

7. AIC Scotland

7.1 AIC Scotland Update

AIC Scotland has elected Graeme Logan of Glasdon Fertilisers as its new Chair. Mr Logan was elected by Members at the AIC Scotland Annual General Meeting held late in 2024 and he will serve through to 2026. He succeeds Sarah Bell of Cefetra, who stood down after completing her two-year tenure as Chair. In December 2024, AIC Scotland said farewell to outgoing Policy Manager Ian Muirhead, who took up a new role in the Scottish Government. Ian leaves with AIC Scotland members' best wishes, and an announcement on a new Policy Manager will be made in due course.

7.2 Scottish Budget

In December, the Scottish Government set out its Budget for the year ahead, with agricultural spending now entirely within its control. £660 million has been allocated to farming and crofting for 2025/26 and that funding through crucial schemes such as Basic Payment Scheme, Greening, Less Favoured Area Support and Voluntary Coupled Support. £46 million had been previously deferred from agricultural funding, and of this, a timetable has been given which would expect to return £20 million in 2025/26 for capital expenditure with the remaining £26 million a year later.

7.3 Precision Breeding

In October 2024, AIC Scotland, NFU Scotland and GB potatoes came together to urge the Scottish Government to unlock the potential of precision breeding for crops by passing legislation equivalent to that already enacted in England (1.2). In January 2025, a response was received from Minister Jim Fairlie. In his response, the Minister recognised the challenges that have emerged as a result of the divergence in approach within the four nations of the UK, and what it means for the Internal Market (1.5). Most significantly, the Minister agreed with AIC Scotland that an independent expert working group needed to come together to understand precision breeding in the Scottish perspective. To that end, a roundtable meeting to discuss precision breeding in Scotland has been established by Scottish Government, which AIC Scotland has been invited to. The meeting is set to take place in the last week of March 2025.

7.4 Scottish Red Meat Roundtable Group and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) Climate and Nature Industry Leadership Group

AIC attended the inaugural meeting of the Climate and Nature group in January which consists of a mix of government and industry stakeholders. It is one of several industry leadership groups that QMS is convening to support the delivery of their sector strategies. Three themes will be developed by the group: 1) The importance of a strong evidence base; 2) Right messaging to the right person at the right time; 3) Harmonising practices between farming and nature.

Separately, AIC also attended a roundtable meeting in February with the wider red meat roundtable group, attendees made up from Scottish stakeholder groups. The Group had the chance to meet with Minister Jim Fairlie and discuss how to grow the Scottish red meat sector, as industry and Government.

7.5 Scotland Stakeholder Engagement

Meetings were held with the sustainability leads for NFU Scotland (NFUS), Scottish Whisky Association (SWA), Scottish Government and various researchers at the James Hutton Institute (JHI) to introduce AICs Sustainability Action Plan. Both NFUS and SWA are in the process of considering or developing their own plans. The focus for the Scottish Government climate team is developing their climate change plan following the CCC's advice due in May. Meetings with JHI have created connections with their International Barley Hub and National Alternative Protein Innovation Centre.

8. AIC Cymru

8.1 Wales Future Policy

We await clarity on the progress of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Behind the scenes, meetings continue at pace to feed into the ministerial roundtable chaired by Huw Irranca-Davies. A revised economic impact assessment should be published in May/June as to the amendments to the scheme that were announced last November. This will go some way to set the acceptance of farming unions and stakeholders but not until payment methodology and amount is announced. This is likely to be in the summer. The implications of the pause in SFI in England will not be lost on the Welsh Government and the financial constraints of any scheme at a Welsh devolved government level will probably result in some sort of budgetary financial cap. This is both prudent but almost certainly limits the ambition on environmental outcomes that some stakeholders envisage or hope for.

In the meantime, the stakeholder environment is generally positive given robust livestock prices and improved milk prices. BPS payments remain fully funded in Wales at £238m with rural and capital investment grants at £108m and a recent additional +£15m announcement. Additionally, current kinder weather for lambing helps.

8.2 AIC Cymru developments

AIC Cymru has a new chair in Alister Davies, Forfarmers, and a new Vice Chair in Richard Lewis, CCF.

The committee is refreshed, proactive and highly supportive of what is generally an overtly political/policy voice that AIC Cymru represents to Welsh Government and wider stakeholders while the SFS remains in development. Our next committee meeting takes place on 8 April in Aberystwyth.

9. Northern Ireland

9.1 New Northern Ireland Grain Trade Association (NIGTA) Presidential Team

Following NIGTA's AGM in March, David O'Connor, Managing Director with Cefetra, has been elected President, supported by Aidan Fisher, Trouw Nutrition's Poultry and Aqua Director as Vice President.

9.2 EU trade

NIGTA participated in a roundtable discussion with UK Government and key business stakeholders on the UK Internal Market Act, highlighting the need for a proper mechanism through which government and industry can effectively engage on minimising and managing regulatory divergence. A separate roundtable was held with DAERA and DEFRA on an SPS Agreement, where NIGTA supported industry calls for an ambitious agreement based on dynamic alignment, simplification and reduction in bureaucracy and cost.

9.3 Avian Influenza

Mandatory housing measures for all kept birds and poultry came into force across NI on 17 February 2025. There have been four outbreaks, three of which were in commercial premises. NIGTA has been reiterating the importance of biosecurity and held a meeting with members to share best practice for both vehicles and field staff.

9.4 Ammonia

DAERA has launched a consultation on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report for the Ammonia Strategy and the Operational Protocol. Meanwhile, work is ongoing to identify a solution to the issue of betterment/replacement buildings within the current legal framework. The Nutrients Action Programme Review is due out for consultation within the next few months and will include mandatory measures to reduce ammonia - a ban on straight urea fertiliser and 100% of slurry to be spread using Low Emission Slurry Spreading Equipment (LESSE) by 2030.

9.5 Water

The NI Executive launched its new Programme for Government at the beginning of March. Included within the list of immediate priorities is protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment. To do so, DAERA is focused on reducing the phosphorus surplus. NIGTA has collected data which shows that the overall weighted P content across all livestock diets in NI has decreased in recent years to 0.43%, which is lower than the figure used by DAERA of 0.51%. AFBI were asked to verify this data, and having done so will submit it to DAERA.

9.6 Carbon Awareness Training

At the end of January, the Agriculture Minister officially launched the new 'Supporting Agri-Professionals' Programme which aims to ensure a consistent message is communicated by all industry professionals to support farm businesses. The first pilot of carbon awareness training, which NIGTA helped to develop, has now finished and was completed by 75 feed advisers. Further training dates are planned, and module 2 which will focus on carbon mitigation strategies is in development.

9.7 UK Dairy Carbon Network

This DEFRA funded a three-year project which will use dairy farms to explore and implement practical solutions for reducing Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) as well as phosphorus and ammonia. NIGTA is involved in the NI Farm Network and the recruitment of 20 dairy farms across NI is underway.

9.8 Environmental Governance

DAERA appointed an Independent Panel to review environmental governance in NI and options to improve. NIGTA has responded to the call for evidence supporting a continuation of the current Executive Agency model with recommendations for improvement.

9.9 Soil Nutrient Health Scheme

Soil sampling in zone 3 is well underway with applications set to open for the final zone 4 (County Antrim) in the summer. Farmers are reminded that they must be registered and complete the required training to be eligible for future farm support.

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