

Agri-Brexit Coalition Meeting

The Farmers Club
Committee Room
3\4 Whitehall Court
London SW1A 2EL

24 January 2020

Attendees

Robert Sheasby	(AIC)	Katie Docherty	(IMTA)
Ruth Bailey	(AEA)	Jill Hewitt	(NAAC)
Penny Maplestone	(BSPB)	Alison Glennon	(NOAH)
Jeremy Moody	(CAAV)		
Adam Speed	(CPA)	Robin Manning	(DEFRA)
Jaine Chisholm Caunt	(GAFTA)		

Apologies

Sarah Mukherjee	(CPA)
Dawn Howard	(NOAH)

Guests

Paul Rooke	(AIC)
Geoff Dodgson	
Daniela Merola	(IMTA)
Chris Kearney	(DEFRA)

1. Apologies

RS welcomed all to the meeting, particularly Daniela of IMTA who joined the meeting for today. Apologies have been received from Sarah Mukherjee and Dawn Howard.

2. Competition Law\GDPR

RS reminded everyone that the meeting would comply with competition law and that under GDPR we agreed to freely share info within this group.

3. Previous Actions

- The draft barometer survey\questionnaire has been issued to the Coalition and will be discussed later in the meeting
- RS contacted Terry Jones of the NFU – in the meantime budget commitment has been agreed for the life of this parliament
- PR to invite Brendan Bailey to attend a coalition meeting when he next sees him
ACTION: PR to speak to Brendan Bailey – **now done and Brendan happy to attend.**
- Doodle poll dates have been put in the diary up to July – additional dates for the rest of the year will be done after Easter
- SM suggested a group awayday when we map out what the coalition wants to achieve; all agreed it would be a good idea – find space in March agenda to discuss
ACTION: JC to add to agenda
- It had been discussed previously that the Farming Minister would be invited to the December meeting when we would rebrand; however, as there was no government at that time no-one was able to attend.

ACTION: RS to invite the Farming Minister to attend meeting on 5th March if possible, cc. Robin Manning. If not, rebranding would still go ahead on that date.

4. Defra Update

RM joined the meeting. He commented that this is a very determined government – keen to get many things implemented and underway. Implementation period commences 1st Feb until 31st Dec this year; until then it is very much business as usual. From 1st Jan 21 things will be very different and people need to be aware that they need to get things (ie customs declarations etc) in place before then. Defra will be working with industry on changes that must be made.

Negotiations on Free Trade with EU is now underway based on the Canada model. Agreement needs to be in place by end June. EU want a level playing field without any favouritism being shown. Obstacles which currently exist to block UK trading needs to be removed and recognition of equivalents given; zero for zero

The temporary tariff policy published last year is not necessarily same as the longer-term tariff – it's not there to undermine the sectors but is something to bargain with for other countries. Consultation in the coming months led by DiT (Spring 2020)

JCC asked if there would be a cabinet reshuffle in February. RM believes it to be likely but isn't sure of the scale of it. The PM is due to make a high profile trade speech in early Feb and we will know more about timings after then

KD asked RM about TRQs and whether it will be a 'cut and paste' of the existing. RM believes that the SI has mostly been completed but would check and update Katie

ACTION: RM to update KD

PR asked for an update of the last Quarterly Stakeholder meeting. The Ag Bill is now in the House. NI still needs to be discussed in the next few months; although the NI protocol is already underway and will continue after Jan 1st. It was suggested that we allow a separate discussion on NI at the next/future meeting. ELMS are re-engaging strongly now

ACTION: RM to find someone from NI Team in Defra to attend a future meeting to discuss NI

KD asked if there any organograms of the Defra departments RM could share with us. RM certainly has one for his team and there may be others. RM advised that Rose MacFarlane will be moving from his team to No. 10 – this will be a very useful contact; he will also advise of others relevant names

ACTION: RM to issue organograms

RS asked RM if we could extend an invitation to the Farming Minister and NI Defra trade team for the next meeting; RM suggested we wait for a few weeks (until after the reshuffle) and then issue invitations.

RM told the group that this would be his last meeting of the Coalition as he will be moving to Brussels to take up a position as Director at the British Agriculture Bureau; which represents the National Farmers' Union (NFU) of England and Wales, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland (NFUS) and the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU).

RS and the Coalition thanked RM for all his time and effort for us over the past year – RM and CK then left the meeting. It is understood that RM's place at Defra will be taken by Balwinder Dhoot – currently with the Food Strategy Team.

5. Update \ Matters Arising

Ag Bill

There is currently a lot to work through on the Ag Bill – including needing to understand what policies will be coming forward from the devolved authorities. Noted the new Bill had included additional content on issues such as fertilisers and farm tenancies, reflecting developments ongoing since the previous Bill had been published in 2018.

APWG

RS reported that the full report will be published mid Feb – recommendations haven't changed. It is agreed that Industrial Strategy needs more traction. There is a Working Group element around Productivity and strands going forward include : Skills, CPD, 5G etc etc. Report now moving towards implementation

Green Deal

This is multifaceted and agri is only part of it. Keen to contrast it with previous Commission's but now moving forward on climate change. Much has been done but still not enough to hit 2040 reduction target. An estimated spend of €260bn annually will need to be spent to get closer to meeting the targets but still a long way to go. All countries have similar targets (however Germany still relies very heavily on coal despite their Green parties)

ACTION: Discuss further at next meeting – monitor progress, members to bring expertise \ knowledge

Northern Ireland

Already discussed earlier in the meeting; requested RM to source a member of the NI team to attend next or future Coalition meeting

ETAG (Expert Trade Advisory Group)

If ETAG continues then going forward should be discussed more frequently at Coalition meetings. So far PR had been disappointed with the meetings but they now seem to be moving forward with more purpose but there is still a lack of clarity on some issues. Agri and Food will be the hardest sector hit under the NI trade discussions. Group needs to prioritise – what needs to be fought for, the nice to haves etc.

Defra will be publishing lists of attendees of the ETAG groups – need to engage more with some groups.

6. Barometer Survey

RS thanked those who had responded on the survey, and Katie for offering IMTA's Survey Monkey expertise.

CAAV and GAFTA both felt the survey currently is too general and needs focus. CAAV has only recently done a survey to their members so this wouldn't be appropriate for them. NOAH and AEA already undertake Brexit barometers, with varying levels of success and see value in this work

RS felt that the survey could still be undertaken whether members engage or feel it relevant, or not; it may still give us some meaningful insight that we could share with government, or that we could pick a theme for further focus. In the meantime, GD will tidy up the existing survey and work with IMTA to ready for circulation

7. AoB

PR commented that currently there is no Trade Industry Strategy Group for Food Drink and Agri – he agreed to share a paper with the group which shows the vision for a future UK trade policy which will drive growth, promote efficient and sustainable food production and stimulate innovation.

ACTION: JC to issue to group - **Done**

PM commented that BSPB are facing challenges with the EU and being told that equivalents must now be in place before any further trading can be done

PM also advised that this too would be her last meeting with the Coalition as she would be leaving BSPB at the end of February to start her own gardening business. RS thanked PM for all her work and efforts on behalf of the Coalition and the group wished her the very best for her new venture!

The next meeting on 5th March, will commence at 0930 for 1000 start