

**Food Wise 2025 High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC) Meeting**  
**4<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Attendance:**

DAFM: Minister Creed, Secretary General Aidan O'Driscoll, Bill Callanan and Cecil Beamish

State Bodies: Tara McCarthy (Bord Bia), Jim O'Toole (BIM), Julie Sinnamon (EI), Orla Battersby, (EI) Tom Kelly (Teagasc) and Matthew Crowe (EPA)

Other Government Depts: Clare Dunne (DJEI) and Terry Walsh (DPER)

Secretariat (DAFM): Sinéad McPhillips and Siobhán Dowling

Apologies: Kevin Smyth, Brendan Gleeson, Gerry Boyle, (Teagasc), Brian Carroll (DCCCNr) and Ken Spratt (DTTAS)

**Introduction:**

Minister Creed welcomed the Committee to the tenth meeting of the HLIC.

Minister Creed welcomed Jim O'Toole to his first HLIC meeting as CEO of BIM.

He referred to the following developments since the previous meeting of the 9 March:

- Significant advances were made in restoring market access for live crab exports to China.
- A formal protocol was signed on beef exports to China that paves the way to access for Irish beef to China.
- Hosted a Vietnamese Ministerial delegation.
- DAFM and DJEI launched the 2017 Report of Future Skills Needs in the Food and Drinks Sector
- DAFM held a Workshop on Skills Needs at farm level
- The Meat Technology Centre (one of the actions outlined in Food Wise 2025) which is located in Teagasc Food Research Centre, Ashtown was officially opened
- Bord Bia launched the Brexit Barometer
- Enterprise Ireland launched the Brexit Scorecard
- BIM hosted a high level Fisheries Economics Conference the end of April to discuss the economic impact of the Common Fisheries Policy.

**Agenda Item 1: Minutes of 9 March meeting**

Minutes agreed.

**Agenda Item 2: Q1 2017 Food Wise 2025 Updates**

A detailed report was circulated outlining an update on the 368 recommendations that are either, 2015, 2016, 2017 or on-going in Quarter 1 2017. There has been good progress to date with only 13 actions not yet commenced. Colleagues in Economics and Planning Division will be in contact with the owners of these actions so that progress will have commenced for Quarter 2 returns.

### **Item 3: Brexit**

Minister Creed stressed that Brexit is foremost on Government's agenda. He referred in particular to the Stakeholder Consultative Committee on 11 April; the All-Island Civic Dialogues of 3 May for the agri-food and fisheries sectors for the Irish Alcohol, Brewing and Distilling sector; bilateral meetings with his counterparts in Estonia and Poland the end of March and with counterparts in Luxembourg, Austria and France at the beginning of April. He referred to the Taoiseach's recent meeting of the end of April with the primary agri sector. He also referred to Bord Bia's Brexit barometer and Enterprise Ireland's Brexit scorecard.

N Barwise gave a presentation on meat market access. This covered markets opened in the past two years; beef access to China and the USA, Trade Missions; the seven point plan for market access and 2017 priorities.

S McPhillips provided an update on the €150 million Agri Cashflow Loan scheme which has been fully allocated in terms of loan approvals. To date, €60.2m has been drawn down by farmers. The average loan size is €32,000, with more than half the loans being advanced for terms of four years or more. By sector, 42% of loan value has been to dairy enterprises, 41% to beef and 8% to tillage, with other sectors such as sheep, pigs and horticulture also applying.

Minister Creed referred to recent meetings he has held with the Chief Executives of the participating banks to discuss this and other access to finance issues relating to the agri-food sector.

T McCarthy stated that 130 companies have completed the Brexit barometer, and referred to recent and upcoming meetings with UK retailers.

J Sinnamon referred to Enterprise Ireland's Brexit scorecard and analysis they have carried out for vulnerable companies. She also stated that large investments are needed for some of the bigger companies and that it will take time for companies and products to diversify.

C Dunne gave an overview in terms of access to finance in coordination with the Dept of Finance, DAFM, EI and SCBI.

The Secretary General referred to the success of the Agri Cashflow Loan scheme and said that DAFM will work closely with DJEI on financing options for food SMEs and larger companies. He referred to the need for a specific response from the Government for the agri-food sector.

Minister Creed concluded that access to affordable finance is a key response to currency volatility, uncertainty and the investment which will be required on several fronts to adapt to new market realities post-Brexit. He hoped that progress could be made quickly on these issues.

Minister Creed asked Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland to present in detail the outcomes of their Brexit analysis at the next meeting of the HLIC.

#### **Item 4: Human Capital**

Minister Creed stated that Human Capital is one of the five themes highlighted in Food Wise 2025. It highlights the need for the attraction, retention and development of skills and talent right along the supply chain. Investment in people is crucial for the success of Food Wise 2025 and the success of the sector as a whole. In November last year, DAFM hosted a Food and Drinks Skills Workshop. This proved a very useful format for enhancing with stakeholders from the food and beverage industry, trade unions and academics of the skills gaps facing the industry from factory workers to top executives and gathering practical ideas of how to address these issues. A list of recommendations were agreed at the workshop and these were presented to the Expert Group on Skills in December. Ministers Creed and Mitchell O'Connor launched the 2017 Report of Future Skills Needs in the Food and Drinks Sector in April.

S Dowling gave a short presentation on the 2017 Report of Future Skills Needs in the Food and Drinks Sector in April and in particular the 12 recommendations in the Report.

S McPhillips give an overview on the workshop looking at future skills needs and gaps at farm level which was split into three themes; farm operatives; farmers and farm managers and next generation. The draft recommendations have to be examined further by DAFM.

There was a general discussion on:

- (i) Placements from Teagasc and exchange students
- (ii) Matching the right student with the right host farmer is not easy.

Minister concluded that the two workshops held by DAFM were successful in bringing all the relevant stakeholders together and getting detailed recommendations with ownership to drive these forward.

#### **5. Dairy Sector**

##### **(i) Update on the dairy sector**

K Galligan gave an overview of the dairy sector in terms of milk supplies, production costs and trends, exports, opportunities and challenges.

T McCarthy referred to Origin Green and the need to get 100% of the dairy sector in the scheme plus the need of building the sustainability message with this sector.

**(ii) Infant Formula (Jim Shorten - Global Head of Production (Wyeth Nutrition), Claire Mac Evilly - Head External & Governmental Affairs (Danone Ireland), Michael Barry - Director of Regulatory Policy & Intelligence (Abbott Nutrition), Sarah Burke - Regulatory Affairs Manager (Kerry Ingredients), Conor Mulvihill- Director (IDIA) and Miriam Ryan – Specialised Nutrition & Regulatory Affairs (IDIA)**

Miriam Ryan gave a presentation on infant formula and referred to the following: Food Wise 2025 dairy actions; success story of infant formula exports; request for continued input from all

stakeholders and a request for a dedicated specialised nutrition/infant formula resource within the expanded Market Access Unit.

There was general discussion on the following:

- (i) Chinese market – new food laws creating a new level of complexity
- (ii) Companies would work closely with the dedicated specialised nutrition/infant formula resource within the expanded Market Access Unit &
- (iii) All companies are operating within WHO Code of Marketing of breast milk substitutes

Secretary General referred to the decision by DAFM to hire a Chinese lawyer to work in the embassy to aid Irish companies getting their products into the market. He also referred to food safety.

Minister concluded by thanking the representatives, that market access was constantly under review and stressed the need to continue to produce safe nutritious food in a sustainable manner to appeal to all consumers.

## **6. AOB**

(i) Date of the next meeting is 28 June and this meeting will cover the topics of Brexit and Competitiveness.

### ***(ii) BurrenLife Programme***

B Callanan informed the HLIC that Ireland's BurrenLIFE Programme has been nominated as one of the top 5 projects in the Nature and Biodiversity category. The BurrenLIFE Programme has been tremendously successful in pioneering alternative approaches to sustainable management of high nature value farmland in the Burren region. It focuses not only on positive landscape management but also on cultural heritage and has also led to a changing mindset in how we can value, protect and manage our landscapes using partnership-led bottom-up approaches.

Siobhán Dowling  
Economics & Planning Division  
8 May 2017