

## Beef Taskforce

### Minutes

Third Meeting, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Virtual

2.00pm

#### Attendees:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Michael Dowling	Chair	Aidan Murray	Teagasc
Sinead McPhillips	DAFM	Tim Cullinane	IFA
Maria Dunne	DAFM	Kevin Kinsella	IFA
Pat McCormack	ICMSA	Edmond Phelan	ICSA
Des Morrison	ICMSA	Edmund Graham	ICSA
Thomas Duffy	MACRA	Joe Condon	INHFA
Derrie Dillon	MACRA	Colm O'Donnell	INHFA
Philip Carroll	MII	TJ Flannagan	ICOS
Cormac Healy	MII	Dermot O'Brien	BPM
Joe Ryan	MII	Sean Coughlin	ICBF
Padraig Brennan	Bord Bia		
	Valerie Woods	DAFM Secretariat	
	Greg Murray	DAFM Secretariat	
	Lydia Bagge	DAFM Secretariat	

Apologies: Enda Fingleton – Beef Plan Movement

Attendance for specific items: Brendan Fraser, Padraig Ryan, Aisling O'Sullivan, Gillian Smith – Grant Thornton

Joe Burke - Bord Bia

## **Chair opening remarks**

The Chair welcomed all taskforce members, particularly new members Tim Cullinane (IFA President) and Joe Condon (INHFA)

## **ITEM 1: Grant Thornton market transparency studies update**

Grant Thornton were invited to give an update on the three studies that they were commissioned to conduct. Attendees were reminded at the outset that the studies (3) have been done in line with the Terms of Reference, drawn up in consultation with and signed off on by the Taskforce.

Progress was outlined, stating that progress has been made notwithstanding delays in scheduling stakeholder consultations due to COVID-19.

*Report 1: Competition Law Report – a literature review – At final draft stage*

Report 2: In spec bonus criteria – at data gathering stage

Report 3: Price Composition along the supply chain – at data collection stage

## **Key points from discussion:**

- Stakeholder engagement to date has been positive and it is important that this level of engagement is maintained. To this end detailed discussions on confidentiality and handling of commercially sensitive data have been ongoing with stakeholders.
- The report on competition law is expected to be ready for publication soon.
- In the price composition report, the position in respect of each of the categories (e.g. steers, heifers, bulls etc) will be shown separately.
- In response to a query from the Beef Plan Movement Grant Thornton confirmed that Transfer pricing has not been examined as it was not included in the Terms of Reference, drawn up in consultation with and signed off on by the Taskforce. It is not possible to change the scope of the report at this point.
- Farm Organisation representatives' observations included a lack of confidence in the CPCC, a request that the Minister intervene with processors and retailers if all the relevant information was not otherwise forthcoming and disappointment at the delay in finalising the reports.
- Representatives from the Meat industry reiterated their commitment to supporting the work on the market transparency reports as they have done from the beginning of the process.

## **ITEM 2: Bord Bia Market Update**

Bord Bia delivered a presentation on the current market situation with focus on the impact of COVID-19 on food service, international markets and consumer behaviour nationally and across the EU, all of which have contributed to a reduced demand in the market for beef. Bord Bia also outlined their new promotional activities including the promotion of steak cuts at retail level and the expanded use of networks of attaches and social media influencers in the food space.

### **MII market update:**

MII outlined the difficulties in terms of forecasting markets in the current situation but noted that prices and throughput have not declined to the extent initially forecast. The prevalence of “nationalisation” of beef markets, particularly in the UK, our main export market, was noted. MII noted the importance of continuing to work towards the best outcomes possible in terms of China market access and Brexit.

## **ITEM 3: PGI/Grass Fed Update (Bord Bia)**

### **Grass Fed Standard:**

Bord Bia provided an update on the development of the ‘Grass Fed Standard’, including information on consumer attitudes to grass fed and animal welfare. They also outlined the current status of the standard, that it has been submitted to INAB for approval. The standard currently focuses on heifers, steers and cows, the potential inclusion of bulls was discussed. Bord Bia stressed that the standard needs to be inclusive, but also robust so that it can stand up to scrutiny.

### **On the draft PGI application, the following key points were discussed:**

Bord Bia provided an update on the draft application for a PGI for ‘Irish Grass Fed Beef’ and reiterated the rationale for its development, including the decision to target grass fed as a unique selling point. Noted that there is a delicate balance which must be struck for a strong application which has the best chance of success and includes the most animals possible.

DAFM outlined the process for recognition of Protected Geographical Indicators and noted that a PGI is a useful marketing tool which will raise the profile of all Irish beef and widen the net of access at trade shows internationally, this is particularly important with the continuing possibility of a no deal Brexit.

The Farming organisations broadly welcomed the idea of PGI but commented that compromise may be necessary (to facilitate best PGI application), insisted that farmers would need to get a premium and questioned who would have ownership of the PGI/Grass Fed. The INHFA’s stated that their position on PGI is that they would support an application if focused exclusively on Irish dairy beef.

MII expressed support for PGI as a valuable marketing tool in an increasingly volatile market and highlighted the importance of stressing the environmental value of Irish production systems.

There was a lengthy discussion in relation to the proportion of the herd proposed to be included, with a concern that there should be more emphasis on beef from the sucklers herd. There was discussion on whether this PGI would make it more difficult for future applications for more specific PGI designations (e.g. breed or region related).

Beef Plan Movement raised the issue IBR (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis) and suggested the development of a national vaccination programme. They also raised the issue of the development of a DNA register to improve traceability.

#### **ITEM 4: Beef Taskforce Progress Report**

##### ***(Item 28): Lairage Weighing service to be provided on request***

Beef Plan Movement requested that farmers should be made aware of their rights in this regard and that MII remind their members of their obligations in relation to this.

##### ***Producer Organisations:***

Engagement between processors and producer organisations was discussed as were potential enhanced supports for operational programmes in the next CAP. DAFM clarified its role in terms of facilitating engagement between processors and producer organisations and undertook to provide a review of engagement since the establishment of the first producer organisation in September 2019 to date. This will be reported on at the next Taskforce meeting.

The Chair thanked participants for attending and concluded the meeting.

**Agreed Actions:**

Number	Action	Lead
1	Legal opinion on the potential for current PGI application to create barriers for subsequent applications for PGI beef in Ireland, and on 'ownership' of PGI label.	DAFM
2	Farmers to be made aware of their lairage weighing and other rights under the agreement.	Farmer representative organisations and MII
3	Report on progress of the market transparency studies to be delivered at the next BTF meeting. Competition law review to be published in the interim.	DAFM
4	Review of PO engagement with processors at next meeting	DAFM