

Minutes of the Meeting of the Beef Taskforce

03 December 2019 - 9.00am - Agriculture House

Attendees:

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|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Michael Dowling | Chair | Thomas Duffy | MACRA |
| Sinead McPhillips | DAFM | Derrie Dillon | MACRA |
| Maria Dunne | DAFM | Dermot O'Brien | BPM |
| Aidan Murray | Teagasc | Enda Fingleton | BPM |
| Padraig Brennan | Bord Bia | Brendan Joyce | INHFA |
| Pat McCormack | ICMSA | Colm O'Donnell | INHFA |
| Des Morrison | ICMSA | Philip Carroll | MII |
| Edmond Phelan | ICSA | Cormac Healy | MII |
| Edmund Graham | ICSA | Joe Ryan | MII |
| Joe Healy | IFA | Sean Coughlan | ICBF |
| Kevin Kinsella | IFA | TJ Flanagan | ICOS |
| Valerie Woods | DAFM - Secretariat | | |
| Greg Murray | DAFM - Secretariat | | |

Tabled discussion:

1. Taskforce Terms of Reference

TOR were discussed and adopted with the inclusion of two changes proposed by stakeholders:

- Inclusion of standing agenda item on market situation update
- Rewording of frequency of meetings to allow for more regular meetings initially.

2. 15th September Agreement: Progress update

The Taskforce chair raised each item on the progress report. Updates where provided by the stakeholders with responsibility for each action. (see Annex 1)

Key Points raised:

- The Chair requested and received a reaffirmation from stakeholders of adherence to the peace clause in the 15th September Agreement and that all relevant issues would be brought in the first instance to the Taskforce for resolution.
- Market price and the necessity for an immediate price increase was raised by farmer representative organisations. MII advised that although the market tracker suggested that prices had improved in some export markets, this had not yet passed through for Irish exporters but MII undertook to take concerns raised to their members.
- There was discussion on the divergence between prices in Ireland and prevailing market trends. DAFM undertook to carry out a review of price data to identify why the expected increase in the composite price hadn't occurred following the application of the bonuses emanating from the 15 September Agreement. DAFM to co-ordinate analysis with relevant agencies.
- Clarity was sought on the position of MII members in relation to current weight restrictions. It was suggested that existing weight restrictions which had been applied in a flexible manner prior to the 15 September agreement were now being enforced. Note some members stated that there should not be weight restrictions as this was not part of the QPS.
- Bord Bia confirmed that there is no non-Irish beef being labelled as Irish under the Quality Assurance Scheme.
- The Taskforce Members requested that restrictions on live trade be kept to a minimum and specifically that a request be made for the current proposal to increase the floor area per calf for transportation of live calves to be reconsidered.
- Bord Bia presented an update on the price reporting index which recently went live on their website.
- Teagasc updated on the first stage of the Grid review, which was a scientific desk-based exercise. It was agreed to request that Teagasc will present the findings in detail to the next meeting of the BTF.
- The independent studies on market and customer requirements, specifically in relation to the four in-spec bonus criteria and the price composition of the total value of the animal along the supply chain are expected to be commissioned by the end of 2019.
- It was agreed that retailers will be invited to the next meeting of the BTF.
- In response to discussion on the appeals system for carcass classification, the expert review report and general grading machine issues, including the request for an appeals system in respect of machine grading, it was agreed that DAFM experts in this area be requested to

attend the next meeting for more detailed discussion. A request was made for full transparency on the study including raw data and methodology.

- It was requested that greater attention needed to be drawn publicly to the specifics of farmers entitlements under the agreement.
- Farm Organisations outlined difficulties with farmer and processor engagement with Producer Organisations. There was discussion on the need for review of the rules and conditions as well as increased funding.
- The Chair outlined that it is the Taskforce’s view that there should be no discrimination against farmers based on participation in recent protests.
- MII rejected claims of discrimination against protesting farmers but undertook to bring this claim to the attention of its members.
- DAFM requested written submissions from stakeholders on the allocation of the additional €40 million of the €85million beef sector exchequer allocation for 2020.
- The Chair concluded: The BTF had noted the gap between IE and EU prices and consensus amongst farm organisations that according to market trends price should now start to go up. He noted MII view that some price improvement should arise in the short-term and they agreed to bring the views of the other stakeholders to their members.

Agreed Actions:

| Number | Action | Lead |
|--------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Inclusion of market update report as a standing agenda item | DAFM & Bord Bia |
| 2 | A review of price data and application of the bonuses from the 15 September Agreement. | DAFM & Bord Bia |
| 3 | Report on current specs and weight limits | MII |
| 4 | Data on number of live cattle to UK | DAFM |
| 5 | Data on increase in live trade as compared to increase in numbers. | DAFM |
| 6 | Presentation on grid review at next BFT meeting | Teagasc |
| 7 | Circulate request for tender documents | DAFM |
| 8 | Retailers to be invited to next meeting | DAFM |
| 9 | DAFM Carcase classification experts to be invited to next meeting. | DAFM |
| 10 | More detailed discussion on POs at next BFT meeting | DAFM |
| 11 | Written update to be circulated in relation to live exports. | DAFM |

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| 12 | Publicise Agreement measures which have been implemented. | DAFM |
| 13 | MII to bring concerns expressed in relation to price and claims of discrimination to the attention of their members. | MII |

Date for next meeting – 9th January 2020