

Food Wise 2025 High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC) Meeting
28th June 2017

Attendance:

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

State Bodies: Tara McCarthy (Bord Bia), Jim O'Toole (BIM), Orla Battersby (EI), Gerry Boyle (Teagasc), Matthew Crowe (EPA), Michael Keatinge (BIM) and Mary Morrissey (Bord Bia)

Other Government Depts: Brian Carroll (DCCCNr) and Terry Walsh (DPER)

Secretariat (DAFM): Sinéad McPhillips & Siobhán Dowling

Apologies: Clare Dunne (DJEI) and Ken Spratt (DTTAS)

Introduction:

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

He referred to the following developments since the previous meeting of the 4 May:

- The successful trade mission to the USA and Mexico which resulted in agreed dates for September for an inspection visit by USDA Food Safety Inspection Services (FSIS) for sheepmeat access to the US and the announcement that Irish beef sold in the US from Bord Bia approved plants can carry the USDA quality mark, which guarantees that it has been raised on more than an 80% grass diet; out to pasture for six-eight months a year, on a sustainable, fully traceable family quality-assured farm; and has been raised without the use of growth hormones; and that the use of antibiotics have been treated responsibly.
- DAFM announced the selection of 22 projects in the second round of the European Innovation Partnerships Initiative (EIP) which forms part of the Rural Development Programme.
- BurrenLife Programme was a winner of the EU LIFE Nature award following a public vote to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the LIFE Programme which has been supporting Environment and Climate actions in the EU since its inception in May 1992. The BurrenLIFE Programme has been tremendously successful in pioneering alternative approaches to sustainable management of high nature value farmland in the Burren region. This project has now been successfully transferred and adapted as a flagship locally-led Scheme under Ireland's Rural Development Programme funded by DAFM. There are now over 200 participants in the Programme with a further intake planned for later in 2017.
- Bord Bia hosted Origin Green Irish Public Awareness Campaign briefing the beginning of June.
- Teagasc hosted a conference entitled 'Employing people on farms' the middle June and launched 'Employing People: getting the basics right' manual; and a 'People in Dairy' Report.
- BIM hosted a high level Fisheries Economics Conference the end of April to discuss the economic impact of the Common Fisheries Policy.
- Enterprise Ireland has held numerous 'prepare for Brexit road shows' around the country.

Agenda Item 1: Minutes of 4 May meeting

Minutes agreed.

Agenda Item 2: Q2 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, 46% of actions have either been achieved or substantial action has been undertaken with only 8 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 3 returns.

(i) Competitiveness Actions:

Minister Creed stated that Ireland is a small, open economy and, one that is particularly reliant on exports to drive growth and job creation. At over 10% of merchandise exports and some €12 billion in value, agri-food exports are vitally important, especially when you consider the sector's reach into every area of the country and its leading role in driving economic recovery and growth nationally. Minister referred to financial management courses for the dairy and tillage sectors, the need to manage volatility and access to finance.

Competitiveness is one of the key themes identified by Food Wise 2025 and it identifies a number of actions, 32 in total, in areas such as: sectoral development and competitiveness; national competitiveness; responses to volatility; access to finance; state aid; and specific assistance that is being provided by Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and other state bodies. He referred to the Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme.

O Battersby referred to the changes that have been made to the lean agenda, plus the need for companies to reinvest.

G Boyle suggested that an extension of the lean programme for pig producers be considered for all primary producers.

T McCarthy referred to a pilot programme undertaken by six mushroom companies to assist them with dealing with competitiveness which was successful and has been extended to a large number of companies. She also highlighted currency volatility and amendments to the Fellowship Programme to include a trade placement.

B Gleeson referred to the smart farming initiative under auspices of the EPA and IFA.

Secretary referred to state aid, assistance the Department gives to the sector in terms of payments to farmers and the Cashflow Support Loan Scheme.

Agenda Item 3: Update on Steps to Success 2017

Minister Creed gave an outline of the second progress report of Food Wise 2025, Steps to Success 2017. The report will be concise and will focus on six main features:

1. Brexit
2. Sustainability
3. Creation of a 'one stop shop' that would attract and inform individuals of the benefits of working and having a career in the food and beverages sector.
4. High Level Innovation Team
5. Market Prioritisation
6. Growth and Innovation: Irish craft gin, Irish Whiskey GI and PCF innovation

The Report will also highlight what the Department and the agencies have done over the last 12 months and outline a number of key actions looking forward. There will be a detailed update on the three priorities of 2016: Centre of Consumer Insights, the Meat Technology Centre and 2017: Year of Sustainable Grassland.

Minister Creed stated that the Report will be launched on the on the 5 July. A Food Wise 2025 Year Two summary report will be available on the Department's website on the 5 July also.

Item 4: Brexit

Minister Creed started off by stating that it was almost a year to the day since he convened an emergency HLIC meeting on the 29 June last year to discuss our collective response to Brexit. He stressed that Brexit is foremost on Government's agenda and referred to last week's successful trade mission to the USA and Mexico. He stressed the importance of trade missions and the plan for further ones later this year including Egypt.

The Secretary General referred to political negotiations, and discussions with other EU MS and the European Institutions and also the need for joined up State support for companies dealing with Brexit uncertainty.

The four agencies gave detailed presentations on what they are each doing in response to Brexit.

These presentations were followed by an open discussion that covered:

- (i) Sustainability drives competitiveness
- (ii) Huge collaboration taking place – continue this
- (iii) Communicating the Origin Green message to the general public
- (iv) Communicating sustainability messaging to all (farmers, producers and the public)
- (v) Access to fish quotas
- (vi) Impact on employment in rural and coastal areas
- (vii) 2030 targets on GHG emissions
- (viii) Importance of innovation

The Minister thanked the agencies for their presentations and highlighted that we as a sector have done a lot so far. There needs to be a coherent approach to communicating our message on Brexit response.

Agenda Item 5: AOB

(i) Next meeting will take place on 28 September where market development and the meat sector will be covered.

Siobhán Dowling
Economics & Planning Division
29 June 2017