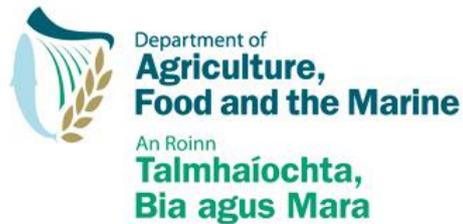


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### **COVENEY MEETS BEEF PROCESSORS**

#### ***Need to Restore Confidence in Sector Emphasised***

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, TD, met with representatives of the Irish beef processing industry yesterday to discuss the ongoing issues in the sector. The meeting followed on separate discussions recently with IFA and retailers.

The Minister used the opportunity to emphasise the mutual dependence of processors and beef farmers. While recognising the need for market orientation, Minister Coveney also urged processors to consider the need to restore confidence among producers in order to protect the long term viability of the industry, which makes a vital contribution to the rural, national and export economy.

Speaking after the meeting, Minister Coveney said *“I called on processors to show further flexibility on weight specifications and I am pleased to say that they have now indicated that they are open to that. While matters such as price and commercial specifications are ultimately issues for the operators in the marketplace, there is a clear need at this stage for some confidence building measures for beef farmers. Some additional assurance on the weight specifications issue would certainly be a useful contribution to that objective.”*

The Minister also referred to the Dowling Report, which he had commissioned following the Beef Forum in April 2014. The report had made a number of recommendations, including in relation to improved price transparency and better communications with farmers, the increased use of supply contracts to provide greater stability for producers, and the development of price comparators that would allow for a more accurate system for benchmarking Irish prices against those in other countries *“I have been advised that processors are close to finalising a comprehensive response to the Dowling Report. I have asked*

*that they complete their work as quickly as possible and that they address all of the issues raised. I await its publication and hope that it can make a meaningful contribution to improving the critically important relationship with suppliers and to the sustainable development of the sector in the future.”*

Concluding, the Minister repeated his call for positive engagement between processors and farm bodies in the interests of addressing the short term market issues affecting the sector and restoring the kind of confidence among farmers that will be necessary if supplies of beef are to be sustained into the future.

**ENDS**