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Dear Dean

INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS (IMG EFRA) MEETING

This letter updates the Committee on the key points from the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs meeting held on 16 May 2022.

The meeting was hosted by the Northern Ireland Executive via video conference with Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, acting as chair. Mairi McAllan MSP, Minister for Environment and Land Reform and Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity represented the Scottish Government.

The main items of discussion were issues stemming from the war in Ukraine, the UK Government's announcement relating to the proposed next phase of border controls, and the UK Government's future legislative programme outlined in the Queen's Speech, including the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill and the Brexit Freedoms Bill. The group also received an update on the Scottish Government's future agriculture policy proposals for sustainable and regenerative farming.

The group noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place in July at the Royal Welsh Show. A read out of the meeting and summary of attendance is included in the attached communiqué and has been published on the Scottish Government website.

We hope this summary is helpful.

Yours sincerely

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Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) Communique: 21 March 2022

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) met on Monday 16 May by video conference.

The meeting was chaired by Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, NI.

The attending ministers were:

- from the UK Government: George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Victoria Prentis MP, Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food.
- from the Scottish Government: Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy, and Biodiversity and Mairi McAllan MSP, Minister for Environment and Land Reform.
- from the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd.
- from the Northern Ireland Executive: Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The meeting opened with a discussion on key issues arising within the EFRA sectors as a result of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The unprecedented rise in input costs, particularly feed, fuel and fertilisers and the resulting impact on all sectors within the agri-food industry was highlighted with a range of industry support options considered. Concern was raised relating to developing countries that have a reliance on Ukrainian grain with Ministers seeking further information on what is being done by the UK at an international level to ensure food security. All Ministers noted the importance of international markets remaining open to enable grain supplies to move freely around the world.

Ministers then discussed the ongoing serious biosecurity risk, and current control measures, that have been implemented in relation to pets arriving with Ukrainian citizens who are coming to the UK for refuge. Devolved administrations sought reassurance around additional support available linked to isolation of pets.

The group then discussed the recent UK Government announcement relating to the next phase of border controls with devolved administrations once again expressing frustration at the lack of prior consultation and engagement in a devolved area. Defra confirmed further import controls would not be introduced on 1 July 2022 as planned, due to fears that to do so would disrupt food supply chains at a time of rising costs caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and cost of living pressures. Devolved administrations sought clarity regarding when the new arrangements would come into force and further reassurances around the UK Government's approach to biosecurity. It was agreed that further and improved collaboration was important moving forward.

The next item discussed was the UK Government's Future Legislative Programme. Defra provided updates on Bills that had been highlighted within the Queen's Speech, including the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill and the Brexit Freedoms Bill. The Secretary of State for EFRA stated that enactment of these bills would provide opportunities to drive economic growth within the UK, enhance animal welfare and maintain standards following the UK's exit from the EU. Devolved Ministers raised concerns around the proposals contained within a number of these bills, calling for early

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engagement which all ministers agreed is important in the development of key legislation which cuts across areas of responsibility.

The group discussed the Scottish Government's Future Agriculture Policy proposals for sustainable and regenerative farming. This outlined how the Scottish Government proposes to ensure Scotland remains a global leader in sustainable and regenerative farming.

Finally, Ministers agreed to hold the next meeting at the Royal Welsh Show and Minister Slater noted the ongoing discussions linked to Deposit Return Scheme VAT issues and Single Use Plastics.