

**Beef Taskforce
Minutes
Thursday 3rd June 2021
Virtual
2.30pm – 6pm**

Attendees:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Michael Dowling	Chair	Tim Cullinan	IFA
Sinead McPhillips	DAFM	Tomas Bourke	IFA
Maria Dunne	DAFM	Eddie Punch	ICSA
Pat McCormack	ICMSA	Edmund Graham	ICSA
Des Morrison	ICMSA	Colm O'Donnell	INHFA
Philip Carroll	MII	Joe Condon	INHFA
Cormac Healy	MII	Dermot O'Brien	IBLA (formerly BPM)
Joe Ryan	MII	Enda Fingleton	IBLA (formerly BPM)
John Keane	MACRA	Ray Doyle	ICOS
Derrie Dillon	MACRA	Padraig Brennan	Bord Bia
Aidan Murray	Teagasc		
	Valerie Woods	DAFM Secretariat	
	Greg Murray	DAFM Secretariat	

Attendance for specific items:

Joe Burke - Bord Bia

Louise Byrne - DAFM

Frank Stephenson- ABP

Christopher Meaney- Dunleavy Meats

Simon Walker - Kepak

Peter McMahon - Asbourne Meats

John Horgan - Kepak

Neil McMahon - Asbourne Meats

Philip Tallon - Dawn Meats

Joe Bourke- Kildare Chilling

Review of previous meeting minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were updated with the addition of two additional points at the request of some Taskforce members and agreed.

Market updates (June)

Bord Bia delivered a presentation on the current market situation, including key challenges identified for the sector, which is available on - Gov.ie [here:](#)

An update in relation to ongoing trade deal negotiations was presented by Louise Byrne, Head of Brexit and International Trade Division in DAFM. This is available on - Gov.ie [here:](#)

Representatives of individual companies in the Meat Processing Industry attended for this section of the meeting and all members had the opportunity to address questions directly to them in the tour de table.

Tour de Table

Main points raised:

Animal welfare: it was noted by processors that there is currently a rise in welfare assurance scheme in places such as Netherlands, Italy, Spain and France; however, there is no consistency in the criteria in different countries making things difficult for importers. They are often driven by welfare NGOs and sometimes individuals with an anti-meat agenda.

There was widespread agreement from the processors present that there should be a single EU standard applied in respect to animal welfare

UK-Australia trade deal: Australia, like Ireland, are export dependent with 70% of production exported which leaves them open to global market volatility. Australia's production down by 25% last year due to drought.

UK Production Forecasts for 2022/2023: it was noted that there is no indication that UK production levels will increase in the short term.

2021 Q1 Exports to UK: There was a decline in exports to UK of 22% for January – March 2021 compared to previous year and a decline in exports to other markets of 13%. Overall exports were down 30%, while exports to the EU 27 were up by 2%.

Grass Fed: A number of the processors stated they are very engaged and active on grass fed branding development and some indicated that they are working with Bord Bia in trying to develop further opportunities.

Age of slaughter /Young Bulls: It was noted by several processors that younger cattle are likely to become an increasingly important feature of future production given changing consumer preferences and herd profile. However, currently the market for young bulls is limited, specialised and very competitive.

February 2021 price drop. Farming organisations queried why the price of cattle had dropped in February 2021 and processors provided the following points in explanation:

- Lager volume of beef exported to UK in final quarter of 2020 (stockpiled) as importers prepared for Brexit and potential for no-deal scenario.
- Impact of the lockdown in January in UK.
- Typical lack of buoyancy in the market in February annually was exacerbated by COVID this year.

It was noted that there has been a significant increase in cattle price since then.

Weighing animals at factory: raised by farming organisations in the context of Action 28 of the beef sector agreement. Processors noted as follows:

- If there was demand from their suppliers, they will facilitate the service.
- There has not however been evidence of demand for it on the ground.
- Installing weighing scales on the factory line would also add an extra cost to the process.

Producer Organisations: processors were queried on their level of engagement with producer organisations; the points were made by processors:

- Processors expressed a willingness to work with POs but there is a need for them to be structured appropriately in order for full engagement to be possible.
- The offering of producer organisations needs to be specific to fulfil customer requirements.

Market Access

An update was given by Maria Dunne, Head of Meat and Milk Policy Division, DAFM on the current position in relation to market access focusing on priority markets on China, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

Producer Organisations

In response to a question on the difference between **producer organisations and producer groups** Valerie Woods from DAFM explained that there are two types of formally recognised structures, co-operatives (Marts) and recognised Producer Organisations. Recognised Producer Organisations are established in line with the requirements of the relevant articles under the CMO regulation 1308/2013 and have a specific remit, governance structure, and reporting requirements. These groups may collectively negotiate on behalf of their members on price. Producer groups are informal groups.

Labelling

An update was given by Sinéad McPhillips, Assistant Secretary, DAFM, who noted that the EU commission farm to fork strategy has a very ambitious agenda for labelling in relation to animal welfare and nutrition, origin and other factors. Striking a balance between getting an agreed EU

standard with consideration for the context of other criteria including Bord Bia's Origin Green labelling will be important in this respect.

Update on Taskforce progress report

An update was given by Maria Dunne, Head of Meat and Milk Policy Division, DAFM on the current position in relation to outstanding actions from the Agreement, as follows:

Action 9: Grant Thornton Report 3 on Price Composition along the Supply chain.

Beef Taskforce member observations on the draft of Report 3 have been taken into account and the *report will now be published*

Action 12: EU experts will be invited to brief the Task Force on the expanded EU meat market observatory methodology.

The Scheduled seminar in Ireland by DG Agri for March 2020 was postponed and will be rescheduled for July 2021.

Point 14: Examine transparency models in other jurisdictions

It was noted that this work is expected to be part of the remit of the new Food Ombudsman office

Irish Grass Fed Beef PGI Application Update

It was noted that:

- The EU Commission have provided technical feedback on the application submitted in November 2020
- DAFM and Bord Bia have reverted on these points and are awaiting a reply
- The EU Commission have indicated that they are open to participating in further discussions with Northern Ireland authorities in relation to the PGI application.

National Food Ombudsman

- The Unfair Trading Practices Directive has been transposed and the Enforcement Authority established within DAFM on an interim basis
- Primary legislation will be required for the establishment of the new Office
- Public consultation closed on 26th May
- 27 submissions were received and are currently being reviewed
- A webinar will be held in the coming weeks to explain this process further

The 30 month limit (for in-spec bonus)

- Some farm organisations expressed dissatisfaction with the 30-month bonus limit and felt there is no clear rationale for it and that the bonus should be on all cattle up to 36 months.
- MII provided a figure of 27.6 month for the average age of prime cattle killed last year
- The Chair noted that while Grant Thornton established that not all markets specified under 30 months, a number of them did.

- Their findings in relation to the 30-month rule from the Grant Thornton report on the Market and Customer Requirements for Irish Beef (and the in-spec bonuses in particular) were cited:

“In relation to in-spec the bonus requirement for animals under 30 month, there is evidence of market demand across foodservice, retail and third country markets for animals under thirty months. Although the genesis of this requirement relates to BSE, customers also cited other reasons for demanding animals under 30 months. For example:

Under 30 months was a key requirement to access some third country markets.”

Chair Concluding remarks:

- Webinars will be scheduled in July for:
 - The role of the CCPC
 - Market Transparency - *DG Agri will present detail on the expanded EU meat market observatory methodology*

The Chair informed the Taskforce that he has been asked by the Minister to submit a report on the work of the Taskforce to date, a draft of this report will be shared with the Taskforce members for information in advance of its submission.

The next meeting will be scheduled after the webinars.