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I farm at the above address with my wife Siobhan McMahon. We keep Irish rare breed Dexter cattle. My submission is in support of increased level of support for native rare breeds under CAP 2020. As a result this submission does not fit into the suggested format but rather I will make the case for increased support while referencing the strategic objectives.

Regards

John O'Neill

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SWOT RESPONSE FORM

Details:

Full Name: JOHN O'NEILL

Organisation where applicable: _____

Please tick one of the following options that best describes you;

Farmer (full-time) Farmer (part-time) Farm family member
Member of the public Other

Are you involved in:

Agriculture Forestry Farm Organisation
Rural Development Food industry Environment
Community Sector Research Civil Society / NGO

Other: _____

Nine specific objectives of the Common Agriculture Policy post 2020

support viable farm income and resilience across the Union to enhance food security;

- (a) enhance market orientation and increase competitiveness, including greater focus on research, technology and digitalisation;
- (b) improve the farmers' position in the value chain;
- (c) contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as sustainable energy;
- (d) foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air;
- (e) contribute to the protection of biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes;
- (f) attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas;
- (g) promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry;
- (h) improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, including safe, nutritious and sustainable food, food waste, as well as animal welfare.

Those objectives shall be complemented by the cross-cutting objective of modernising the sector by fostering and sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas.

The keeping of rare breed cattle is not commercially viable without financial support.

My experience is with Dexter cattle. On average they kill out at about 160kg. Slaughter houses have to adjust their lines to handle Dexters because of their size. This makes them commercially nonviable for meat processors.

The Irish Dexter group currently have a deal with ABP to purchase Dexters at €5.25 a kilo. This deal puts a floor under the price of Dexters but is not secure and is reviewed each year. ABP tell us that in order to maintain this contract they need a year round supply and much larger numbers of animals. Based on this price the average Dexter returns €840 which is about half the price achieved by a commercial breed. In the absence of this ABP deal Dexters would be graded under the same grading system as commercial animals, would end grading as Ps and would return something in the order of €300. In truth no mainstream beef processor would even take Dexters in the absence of this deal.

For the individual who tries to process and sell their own meat the killing and processing costs for a Dexter are very similar to the costs associated with commercial breeds but the amount of meat produced is less than half. This means that the per kilo cost of processing a Dexter is approximately twice the per kilo price of processing other breeds. The per kilo costs are between €1.30 and €2.00 depending on the weight of the animal and the processor used and often great distances have to be traveled to get to a slaughter house which will process a Dexter. While a premium price can be achieved for the prime cuts it is much more difficult to get a premium for the non prime sections of the animal.

If the breed is to have a future the national herd needs to grow substantially and this will only be possible if supports both directly to the farmer and with marketing and promotion are increased substantially.

Under REPS there was no limit on the number of native rare breed cattle on which a payment could be claimed. Under GLAS a limit of 10 LU was introduced. This has prevented larger scale producers from getting involved which has made increasing the supply and providing a year round supply much more difficult. The limit on the number of animals in a new scheme needs to be removed or substantially increased.

While the derogation from the 5% rule in the BEAM scheme will help avoid a reduction in rare breed numbers and is appreciated it would be of even greater benefit if the 24th Sep restriction for the €100 payment were removed for native rare breeds and if in general when such schemes are put in place special consideration were given to support for native rare breeds.

Based on commitments given in international agreements such as Interlaken and the convention on Biological Diversity we as a country need to better support native rare breeds. To quote from these agreements

“We, the representatives of 109 states, note with alarm, the significant ongoing loss of livestock breeds and are convinced of the utmost importance of integrating Animal Genetic Resources into National Biodiversity and Agricultural Programmes for humanity, the environment and our cultural heritage.”
The declaration stresses the moral and practical imperatives for stakeholders to enhance their

Because Dexters have been selected both by farmers and nature to maximise disease and parasite resistance and for easy calving veterinary interventions are much lower than for conventional breeds. This has very positive outcomes both from an animal welfare and a drug usage points of view.

Dexter meat has won many prizes and accolades and is well marbled and of top quality. The story around Dexters can be sold. We live in a time where portion size is becoming a significant focus and being able to offer a premium product which is smaller but looks exactly as it should on a plate can be leveraged to further enhance the Dexter niche. If properly marketed and promoted Dexter beef can provide a much better per kilo price to the primary producer and help farmers move them from being commodity producers to premium product producers and creating space to add further value to their produce.

In conclusion improved supports for native rare breeds of livestock under CAP 2020 is essential if they are to move from their current position of being on life support towards a sustainable future