

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

# **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

## **AGRICULTURE MEETING**

### **NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH**

**29 MAY 2024**

## **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty-eighth North South Ministerial Council Agriculture meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, on 29 May 2024. The meeting was attended by Charlie McConalogue TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development, Andrew Muir MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Aisling Reilly MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office, and Pam Cameron MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office. Minister McConalogue chaired the meeting.

### **REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME**

2. The NSMC noted that officials from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), and the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) had conducted a review of the work programme for the NSMC Agriculture Sector and agreed a revised work programme for the Sector.

## **COOPERATION ON ANIMAL HEALTH**

3. The Council noted the continuing work and the progress achieved on the delivery of the 'All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Action Plan' since the last NSMC Agriculture meeting in November 2020. Ministers welcomed the establishment in 2023 of the All Island Surveillance Forum.
4. The NSMC acknowledged the ongoing efforts by officials from both jurisdictions to seek ways to maximise existing cooperation on animal health and welfare, including the Joint DAERA/DAFM exercise on contingency planning for African Swine Fever planned for June 2024.
5. Ministers looked forward to the continuation of practical and effective cooperation on animal health and welfare, and disease control in both jurisdictions in order that the health and welfare of livestock is maintained at the highest level.

## **COOPERATION ON PLANT HEALTH AND PESTICIDES**

6. Ministers welcomed the ongoing commitment of DAFM and DAERA to the shared objective of achieving and maintaining good plant health status on the island. The Council noted the ongoing collaboration and sharing of expertise in areas of training, scientific research, diagnostic capability, risk anticipation, risk management including contingency planning and risk communication in plant health.
7. The Council welcomed the intention to conduct a joint DAFM/DAERA simulation exercise in 2024 to test plant health contingency plans.
8. Ministers welcomed the continued sharing of expertise and training between DAFM and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) as a result of DAFM acting as National Reference Laboratory for DAERA/AFBI. Ministers noted the continuing cooperation in the regulation of the placing on the market and use of pesticides.

## **COOPERATION ON FARM SAFETY**

9. The NSMC welcomed the continuing cooperation between both Administrations and the ongoing work to improve farm safety. The Council also welcomed the first joint meeting of the Farm Safety Partnerships from both jurisdictions, which took place in February 2024.

## **COOPERATION ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

10. The Council welcomed the establishment of the North-South Rural Policy Forum, which provides a mechanism to share information and best practice and to identify opportunities for joint working on issues that impact on rural areas and rural communities.

11. Ministers noted the cooperation between the two jurisdictions on rural development, as well as the strong commitment of both Administrations to share information and best practice on rural development and to enhance cooperation on this issue.

## **COOPERATION ON RESEARCH AND FUNDING**

12. Ministers acknowledged the good collaboration between DAERA and DAFM in maximising the drawdown of EU funding under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe.
13. The Council welcomed the €106.6 million secured in funding by successful applications from both Administrations for projects in the Agriculture, Forestry, Food, Marine and Bioeconomy sectors under Horizon 2020, as well as €4.5 million secured to date under Horizon Europe.
14. Ministers noted the progress made in funding joint projects, in both jurisdictions, under the DAFM National Competitive Calls, including €10.8 million by DAFM and £3.8 million by DAERA for 12 projects since 2021.
15. The Council noted that seven projects involving total funding of €7.6 million have been funded over the eight years of the US-Ireland R&D Partnership in Agriculture.
16. Ministers welcomed the announcement of a €9 million funding initiative to support the development of the all-island bioeconomy in the agriculture and marine sectors, with co-funding from the Government of Ireland's Shared Island Initiative, DAFM and DAERA.
17. The NSMC welcomed ongoing consideration by DAFM and DAERA of further possibilities for research collaboration under existing or new measures.

## **PRESENTATION ON WATER QUALITY FROM AN AGRICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

18. Ministers noted the presentation on water quality, and the way science and innovation is being harnessed to improve water quality from an agricultural perspective.

## **ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY WITHIN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR**

19. The Council welcomed the ongoing cooperation between both Administrations on addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity within the agriculture sector.
20. Ministers agreed that officials from DAFM and DAERA will explore the potential for increasing North/South cooperation on these issues.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Council agreed to hold its next Agriculture meeting in autumn 2024.

**Joint Secretariat**

**29 May 2024**

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