

Communiqué
Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA)
22 March 2021

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs met on Monday 22 March by video conference. The meeting was chaired by Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for the Natural Environment and Rural Affairs, Scottish Government.

The attending ministers were:

- From the UK Government: George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Defra, Victoria Prentis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, David TC Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales, David Duguid MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland, Robin Walker MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland
- From the Scottish Government: Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism; and Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for the Natural Environment and Rural Affairs.
- From the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.
- From the Northern Ireland Executive: Edwin Poots, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The group discussed the UK-EU Trade & Co-operation Agreement governance structures and their underlying intra-UK coordination and decision making processes. Ministers from the Devolved Administrations reiterated calls for meaningful engagement in the development and implementation of future TCA governance structures. Ministers agreed that further information was needed on how Devolved Administrations were to be represented in future governance structures. Defra ministers noted that there was a good track record of engagement between administrations on international matters, but acknowledged this could be still be improved.

The group then discussed recent border developments, which focused on the Northern Ireland Protocol and revisions to the UK Border Operating Model. UK Government advised these changes were made to provide clarity for businesses while negotiations continued with the EU. Devolved Ministers were critical of the lack of meaningful engagement in the development of these changes and called on the UK Government to respect agreed common frameworks processes. Ministers discussed the difficulties businesses were experiencing regarding exports to the EU and trade more generally within the GB Internal Market due to the NI Protocol, the need for engagement on Qualifying NI Goods and West-facing ports.

The group then went onto discuss funding. Devolved Ministers criticised the continued lack of HM Treasury representation at IMG EFRA and made the point that further clarity was needed on funding allocations, which they felt fell short of UK Government commitments to at least match EU funding. UK Ministers reiterated their long-standing position that they were delivering their manifesto commitments. Ministers agreed to continue these discussions at the next meeting.

The group then discussed and agreed papers relating to Common Framework development and a proposed future work programme for 2021-22. Defra provided a high level summary of

the UKG's approach to the G7 relating to nature and climate change. Finally, Scottish Ministers called on the UK Government to extend compensation schemes to include fish processors.

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the IMG was scheduled for May 2021.