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Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA)
Communiqué
9 September 2019

The Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs met on Monday 9 September at the Defra offices in 2 Marsham Street, London. The meeting was chaired for the first time by, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Theresa Villiers MP.

The attending Ministers were:

From the UK Government: Theresa Villiers Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice MP, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Colin Clark MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland and Kevin Foster, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales.

From the Scottish Government: Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; and Mairi Gougeon MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment;

From the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Energy, Environment and Rural Affairs;

In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive, Denis McMahon Permanent Secretary for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs attended the meeting.

The Chair opened the meeting and provided an update on the recent political developments and the UK's exit negotiations with the EU. Discussions included the risks of leaving the EU without a deal including the ongoing uncertainty this close to exit day.

They discussed the effects on businesses and citizens in all parts of the UK and Ministers from the Scottish and Welsh Governments expressed very serious concerns at the fact that the UK was heading for a no deal exit from the EU, a position with which they profoundly disagreed. They also voiced deep frustration at the UK's lack of preparedness for such an outcome and are seeking further engagement between administrations to address these issues. They also expressed frustration that a Minister from HM Treasury was not present at the Inter-Ministerial Group to discuss issues of crucial importance regarding the resourcing of actions to mitigate a no deal exit.

Ministers agreed that it was vitally important for the Inter-Ministerial Group to maintain focused and meaningful discussions and agree any further activities required to manage a no deal exit. To this end, they proposed that the next meeting of the group be brought forward from its scheduled date of 28 October and it was agreed by the group that an earlier date should be found for the next meeting.

The group then discussed the important work taking place jointly to prepare for a potential no deal exit and noted work to co-ordinate support for the food, fisheries,

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and agricultural sectors; operational and policy measures that could be taken to maintain trade flows; and engagement with businesses and citizens to ensure they were taking necessary actions to prepare.

Discussions then focused on the implications of prorogation of the UK Parliament on the timing of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment bills and on the joint programme of work on EU Exit secondary legislation. The recommendations from the recently published independent review of intra-UK allocation of domestic farm support funding were also discussed.