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Lesley Griffiths MS

Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd

30 March 2022

Dear Minister,

Common Framework on Agricultural Support

Thank you again for attending the Committee's meeting on 17 March for general scrutiny and answering some questions from me on the common frameworks process. The Committee is also grateful for the attendance of Welsh Government officials to provide private technical briefing on certain frameworks that the Committee has prioritised for scrutiny. The briefing was very useful. Given the complex and technical nature of the frameworks, Members agreed that it would be helpful to set out the questions they asked in private again in correspondence, so that the questions and responses can be noted for the public record and to inform stakeholders. The questions are set out under headings below, including some that we did not get to during the briefing, and we look forward to your written response on all these points:

Scope of the framework

- To confirm what the scope of the framework is, and whether it would apply to sustainable land management schemes?

Decision making in the framework

- The Agriculture Policy Coordination Group (PCG) has a large number of responsibilities in relation to the framework. Can you clarify how this will be



resourced and supported within Welsh Government, and how frequently the group will meet?

- Whether the Senedd will be informed when crisis management groups are set up and what their terms of reference are?
- Whether any of the data and information gathered by the Market Monitoring Group (MMG) will be published or shared with the industry?
- Can you clarify how the MMG will decide a Market of Principal Importance is no longer such, or on what basis it might decide new areas should become Markets of Principal Importance, and how will you inform the industry about any such decisions?
- To explain who the UK Agriculture Market Policy Group (UKMAPG) are, and how they relate to the framework?

Managing divergence through the framework

- Different terms are used to describe divergence in the framework. Can you clarify on what basis the parties to the framework will decide if divergence is 'harmful' or 'unwanted', or 'necessary' or 'acceptable'?
- To explain how divergence between Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be managed through the framework, given that Northern Ireland will be required to follow EU marketing standards? What, if any, risks are there for divergence with Northern Ireland on marketing standards?
- To explain how the framework interacts with the UK Internal Market Act?
- Does the Welsh Government intend to seek an exclusion for this framework from the UK Internal Market Act?

Dispute Resolution

- To clarify if dispute resolution processes could lead to delays in Welsh Government policy making decisions?
- Can you clarify the timescales for resolving disputes?

Practical impact on law and policy

- Has the Welsh Government's Agriculture Bill gone through, or will it go through, any of the common framework processes? If so, what was the response of other governments and were any changes made as a result?

Transparency and accountability

- How stakeholders will be engaged in the decision making and review structures in the framework?
- Can you explain what the UK Farming Conference is and how it relates to the framework?

Monitoring, review and amendment

- To clarify the timescales for the review of the framework: when will they take place annually, and when will this transfer to every three years?
- Can you set out what processes will be put in place for stakeholder engagement in decision-making, amendment and review of the framework?

Other questions

- The framework consists of a number of errors, unexplained and inconsistent terms. Can you explain why these were not addressed through internal sign off processes prior to publication?
- Can you clarify when the Concordat associated with the regulations on the agreement on agriculture will be published?
- Can you clarify how, if at all, the framework interacts with the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and why parts of the framework appear to have not been updated since the Agreement was ratified?
- Can you clarify the relationship between the framework and the UK Coordination Body and the Rural Payments Agency group?

We look forward to discussing common frameworks with you again in the near future, but in the meantime thank you in advance for providing the additional information requested above. A response by 29th April would be helpful to the Committee.

Kind regards,

Paul Davies

Paul Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

