

Brexit, Agriculture and the CAP - Stuart Agnew MEP, Emily Ratledge, Tony Brown

❖ Agricultural support:

- The money received by farmers under the CAP is declining in value and getting harder to claim. We farm in a culture of bureaucracy and compliance, under constant threat of penalty.
- Future CAP reform is likely to involve more greening and a declining budget share. The size of the budget is threatened as the economies of the contributing Member States decline. This is not just about the weakening Eurozone. New accession states, particularly Turkey, threaten the overall budget further still. **A diminishing slice of a crumbling cake paid in a dodgy currency.**
- In the UK, both George Eustice and David Cameron publicly stated that support for agriculture should continue outside the EU. New Zealand-style cessation of support would result in debt for UK farmers, which means no tax paid, tax refunds due, and increased unemployment with reductions in NIC contributions.
- Our island status means that food security is a concern. Domestic production is essential.

❖ Regulation

- There are at least 3 main pieces of EU law that the UK would never have agreed itself:
 - Food labelling - this should be a matter for Member States based on the information required by consumers, including country of origin information
 - Pesticide safety - the move to 'hazard' rather than 'risk' based assessment unnecessarily threatens vital agrochemicals relied on by food producers throughout the UK. Glyphosate is now caught up in this debacle.
 - Methane - genuinely benchmarking methane output at farm or even animal level is on the horizon yet represents a pointless, expensive distraction from the real task of producing food - and could become a matter for cross-compliance.

❖ Trade

- The UK has a food and drink trade deficit with the EU of £22bn per year - that's £40bn imported each year, and £18bn exported.
- The UK exports £170m of lamb to France each year and imports £650m worth of French wine. The UK exports £40m of beef to Spain each year and imports £550m of Spanish fruit. It is a trading relationship that our EU partners cannot afford to lose; to pretend that we do not hold the whip hand is a fallacy.
- On regulatory compliance for export to the EU, New Zealand exports considerable quantities of lamb to the EU each year, yet does not have to comply with either the Sheep EID regulations or the ban on the burial of fallen stock. To think that these rules might be a requirement for cross border trade is, therefore, nonsense.

❖ Culture/money

- Between the UK and other EU member states, there is a vast gulf in attitudes to animal welfare. There is also a gulf in attitudes to agricultural progress. We put £6bn into the CAP, and get £3bn back. Some of the £3bn retained is used to support farming systems, such as bull fighting, which would never be supported in the UK.

❖ Labour

- The UK has benefited from access to willing workers. The Vienna Convention means that those in the UK legally will be able to stay. We need not fear a shortage though: it will be possible to create a new Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme to recruit labour in the future.