



**BRITISH-IRISH
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY**

**COMHLACHT IDIR-PHARLAIMINTEACH
NA BREATAINE AGUS NA hÉIREANN**

RESPONSES OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS

to

**THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

on

**MATTERS RELATING TO
COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY REFORM**

RESPONSE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, DUBLIN

BritishIrish Inter-Parliamentary Body Committee B: European and International Affairs: Report on Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development welcomes the Report of the Committee, is in general agreement with its Conclusions and will cooperate in progressing the various recommendations, particularly insofar as they relate to greater crossborder cooperation. In fact, considerable progress has already been made in relation to many of the specific recommendations, for example:

- the integrated nature of the pig production industry (para 47) was recognised recently by the decision of the two Agriculture Ministers to cooperate in the all-island study on pig slaughtering capacity which is being organised by Enterprise Ireland;
- this Department and DANI have coordinated their approach to the use of the 'national beef envelopes' agreed under Agenda 2000, with the result that both have decided to use the funds to top up the heifer slaughter premium (paras 48 & 51);
- An Bord Bia has been in discussions for some time with the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board (IDB) and Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU) to develop a pilot programme for the joint promotion of food products (para 54.4). The focus of the planned activities will be on non-competing products. However, while there is considerable potential for co-operation in these activities, it must be pointed out that the recommendation to promote Irish products on the basis of 'their superior quality', as set out in the conclusions, may not be compatible with EU rules on promotion and advertising.

Paragraph 49 of the Report refers to the Irish Government as having "expressed relief that a much worse outcome had been averted". In fact the Minister's response was more favourable and positive and held that the Agenda 2000 agreement represented a successful outcome for Irish agriculture.

There has been a long history of cooperation between the two Agriculture Departments, North and South, particularly in animal and plant health and, in more recent times, wider rural development. Arising from the Good Friday Agreement, six *NorthSouth Implementation Bodies* have been established. Those of relevance in the context of agriculture, food and rural development are.

The Food Safety Promotion Board, which will operate on an allisland basis in regard to food safety, including promotion and research, communication of food alerts and surveillance of foodborne diseases;

The **Trade and Business Development Body**, which should provide new possibilities to promote North/South trade and to devise new approaches to the development of our two agrifood sectors and

The Special EU Programmes Body, with which the two Agriculture Departments will work closely on the new Community Initiatives such as INTERREG III and LEADER+.

In addition, agriculture is one of the six areas identified for *cooperation by* existing bodies under the aegis of the North/South Ministerial (NSMC). Issues already agreed for discussion are the CAP, animal and plant health and rural development. In the latter case, one of the aims will be to continue to develop common approaches to crossborder areabased strategies. The first meeting of the Agriculture NSMC is expected in March 2000.

The Department will continue to cooperate with DANI and will participate fully, where appropriate, in the structures described.

Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Dublin 2

28 January 2000

RESPONSE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BritishIrish InterParliamentary Body: Inquiry Into the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

Thank you for sending me a copy of the report of your inquiry into Reform of the CAP. The Government has noted your conclusions.

There are two specific comments I wish to make. Paragraph 50, rightly, points to the similarities between the agricultural industries in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland and notes, particularly, the emphasis on "dairy and pig production". However, the main similarity is probably the importance to both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland of the grassbased beef production sector.

Secondly, in relation to food safety, to which the Report refers in paragraphs 53 and 54(2), 1 would wish to draw attention to the considerable cooperation with the Republic of Ireland which already exists on animal health matters. This offers a foundation on which increased coordination of food safety systems could be built.

LORD DUBS

Minister for Agriculture and the Environment

30 November 1999