

Draft Communiqué

Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA)

13 September 2021

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) met on Monday 13 September by video conference. The meeting was chaired by Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The attending ministers were:

From the UK Government: George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Defra; David TC Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales; David Duguid MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland; and Robin Walker MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

From the Scottish Government: Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Islands.

From the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd; and Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change.

From the Northern Ireland Executive: Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The meeting started with the consideration of the recommendations from the independent National Food Strategy Review, led by Henry Dimbleby. Ministers agreed to endorse future collaborative working between the four Administrations in key areas that could have an impact on policy or delivery across the UK, where they should exchange information, or where they would have a shared interest to collaborate.

Next the ministers received an update on the findings from Defra's public consultation to gather views on the regulation of genetic technologies in England. They heard an update on Defra's latest thinking on the possible amendment to regulations to permit and encourage investment into research and development of gene edited plants and the potential to bring gene edited products to market.

Following an update on the Common Frameworks Programme, Ministers discussed issues linked to the proposed Border Operating Model arrangements, including phase 2 checks, unfettered market access and the Northern Ireland Protocol Command Paper.

Funding of fisheries and the timeline for future engagement on details of new schemes then followed. Devolved Administrations noted detail on the forthcoming science and innovation fund, again stressed that it should respect devolved competencies, and called for a role in the co-design of future funding pillars.

Ministers discussed the UK Agricultural Partnership which is intended to be a technical forum to engage with stakeholders, academics and businesses on technical issues affecting agriculture across the UK.

Finally, the Administrations discussed ongoing issues relating to migration, bivalve molluscs and Single Use Plastics.