Dear Stakeholder

Northern Ireland Future Agricultural Policy Framework: Stakeholder Engagement

I am writing to bring your attention the above Stakeholder Engagement by DAERA. Following any agreed transition period, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will no longer apply to NI once the UK leaves the European Union, and therefore the views of stakeholders are being sought on a ‘Future Agricultural Policy Framework’ document to help shape the debate on future support arrangements for NI.

Following an initial engagement with a number of stakeholders representing farming, food and environmental interests, DAERA is now seeking views from across a much broader range of stakeholders on possible future agricultural support arrangements in NI as we prepare to leave the EU.

CAP payments have been important in sustaining the industry, underpinning its competitive trading position and developing its environmental performance, so it is essential that the industry in NI is provided with some certainty in relation to future support arrangements in the shorter term. There is also a need to develop a longer term agricultural policy framework and deliver a managed transition over a number of years.

DAERA welcomes responses and comments from stakeholders on the questions outlined in the document to help develop proposals for future support arrangements. Written responses and any other views should be sent to the above address no later than 10 October 2018.

At the end of the engagement, the Department intends to publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of views. Your response, and all other responses to this publication, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this stakeholder engagement exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a stakeholder engagement exercise. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a stakeholder engagement exercise. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this stakeholder engagement exercise, including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public, please include an explanation in your response. This means that information provided by you in response to the stakeholder engagement is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department’s functions and it would not otherwise be provided;

- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties “in confidence” which is not confidential in nature; and
• Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner’s Office (or see web site at: http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/)

The Department is looking forward to receiving your views on the Northern Ireland Future Agricultural Policy Framework.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

NORMAN FULTON
Deputy Secretary
Food and Farming Group