

**From: Rosemary Agnew**  
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4 July 2019

Dear Stakeholder

### **Options for Basic Payment Scheme Entitlement Unit Values Post 2019: Stakeholder Engagement**

I am writing to bring your attention to the above stakeholder engagement exercise which the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has issued to seek views on potential Options for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) Entitlement Unit Values Post 2019.

This follows a stakeholder engagement exercise last year on a possible high-level framework for agricultural policy in Northern Ireland following the UK's exit from the EU. A summary of responses to that stakeholder engagement exercise can be found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/stakeholder-responses-northern-ireland-future-agricultural-policy-framework-stakeholder-engagement>.

The BPS provides direct support to farmers under Pillar 1 of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It is assumed that post 2019, direct support will operate under EU retained legislation/domestic legislation (UK Agriculture Bill, Statutory Instruments and Statutory Regulations). This will provide DAERA with the legal authority to maintain the *status quo* (i.e. implement direct support payments as if they are still operating under EU rules) post 2019 until such times as a future Minister decides to make changes or introduces a new agricultural policy framework for Northern Ireland.

The unit value of entitlements under the current BPS has been progressing in equal annual steps since 2015 towards achieving a flat rate per hectare by 2021. Guidance issued to farmers in 2015 made clear that arrangements after the 2019 Scheme Year would depend on future EU CAP Reform decisions. The engagement exercise last year gave a commitment at the time to engaging on potential options for BPS entitlement unit values post 2019.

This current stakeholder engagement document outlines the background to how unit values were calculated; why they are paid at different rates; the progression to date towards payment at a flat rate; and seeks views on two potential options:

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- Continue the transition towards a flat rate payment by 2021; or
- Freeze the unit value of the entitlements at the end of 2019.

During this exercise, DAERA will not in any way prejudice or constrain the ability of an incoming Minister, NI Executive and NI Assembly to decide what is appropriate for Northern Ireland's agriculture industry.

A complete set of engagement documents is available on the DAERA website at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/options-basic-payment-scheme-entitlement-unit-values-post-2019> or from:

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs  
Room 414  
Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Ballymiscaw  
Belfast  
BT4 3SB

By E-mail: [NIFutureAgriPolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:NIFutureAgriPolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk)  
Telephone: (028) 9052 4960

The document can be made available in alternative formats including:

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Easy Read
- Audio CD/MP3
- Braille
- Computer Disk
- Other languages.

Should you wish to respond to this stakeholder engagement exercise, please send your response to the address or email above to arrive no later than **30 September 2019**.

DAERA will publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of views. Your response, and all other responses to this stakeholder engagement exercise, may be disclosed on request. DAERA can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of responses, which will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this stakeholder engagement exercise. 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

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subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.

For more information and to view the DAERA Privacy Statement, please go to: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-privacy-statement-document>.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely DAERA in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a stakeholder engagement exercise. DAERA 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, including any harm you believe such a disclosure might cause.

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:

- DAERA 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 DAERA's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- DAERA should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- Acceptance by DAERA 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 its web site at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>.

The Department looks forward to receiving your response to the stakeholder engagement exercise.

Yours faithfully



ROSEMARY AGNEW  
Food and Farming Group

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