



# An Rialálaí Agraibhia Agri-Food Regulator

(Ref: ARA/N19/4)

**Note of the seventeenth meeting of the Board of the Agri-Food Regulator which took place on 9 December 2025 at 11am - Boardroom, Agri-Food Regulator's Office, Backweston Campus, Celbridge, Co Kildare, Ireland, W23 X3P**

## **In attendance**

## **Board of the Agri-Food Regulator:**

- Joe Healy, Chair
- Karen Brosnan (online - attendance until 12.30)
- John Comer (until 13.30)
- Margaret Dineen (online)
- Elaine Donohue (online)
- Grace McCullen (online)
- Angus Woods

## **Agri-Food Regulator:**

- Niamh Lenehan, CEO
- Melanie Hall (Items 6, 7, 9 & 10)
- Robert Levins (Items 6, 7, & 8)
- Aiden Kelly (Items 6 & 7)
- Robert Lanigan (minute-taker)

## **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine:**

- Sean Connolly (Item 1)
- Ger Fox (Item 1)

## **Item 1: Opening by Chair**

Sean Connolly and Ger Fox attended for this item.

The Chair noted that Board member Paul Brophy sent his apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair introduced Mr Connolly and Mr Fox of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.



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The guests spoke briefly to the Board about the following:

- Work ongoing with respect to the Board's request to the Minister in September 2024 for the power to compel relevant information from businesses
- The Agri-Food Regulator's budget for 2026
- The upcoming Irish presidency of the EU
- Possible changes to the Unfair Trading Regulations (Commission's report on the first evaluation of the UTP Directive has been published)

The Chair thanked them for taking the time to meet and address the Board.

## **Item 2: Conflict(s) of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest noted.

## **Item 3: Approval of Minutes of last Board Meeting**

Minutes of the meeting on 20 October 2025 were approved.

## **Item 4: Approval of Board meeting notes for publishing**

The Board approved the notes of the Board meeting on 5 September 2025 for publication.

## **Item 5: Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)**

The notes from the online meeting of the ARC on 24 November were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting and were summarised by the Chair of the ARC, Ms. Margaret Dineen.

In addition, the following points were noted:

- the self-assessment questionnaire was circulated to the ARC members and needs to be completed by 29 December for the result to feature in the ARC Chair's annual report.
- the C&AG audit report referred to a small number of minor items which will be considered going forward. Ms Dineen noted that the executive team of the Regulator were to be congratulated on the successful outcome to the organisation's first audit.
- the revised Risk Register was considered by the ARC with no matters deemed necessary to raise at this Board meeting.

The Chair proposed that Joanna McBride, external member of the ARC, be invited to the first Board meeting of 2026 which was agreed.



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## **Item 6: Work Programme & Budget Allocation 2026**

Melanie Hall, Aiden Kelly and Robert Levins attended for this item.  
Karen Brosnan was not in attendance for this item.

Four documents were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting:

- Draft Work Programme
- Significant Activities for 2026 & Budget
- Development of Strategy Statement 2027-2029 (proposal)
- Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement

## **Item 7: Section 17(4) Submission**

Melanie Hall, Aiden Kelly and Robert Levins attended for this item.  
Karen Brosnan was not in attendance for this item.

Ongoing work and interactions with respect to the Regulator's 17(4) submission to the Minister were discussed.

## **Item 8: Price & Market Data Reports**

Robert Levins attended for this item.  
John Comer and Karen Brosnan were not in attendance for this item.

Mr. Levins presented to the Board two dashboard reports: (1) sheep sector report, and (2) horticulture additional report (fruit).

The Board discussed the elements of the reports and approved the publishing of both reports.

## **Item 9: Surveys**

Melanie Hall attended for this item.  
Karen Brosnan was not in attendance for this item.

Ms. Hall presented to the Board the findings of the Primary Producer survey that was undertaken by the Regulator in September 2025 as well as the plans for the 2026 Supplier Survey.



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## **Primary Producer Survey**

The Board discussed the survey findings as well as the number of responses received. There was much disappointment expressed at the low number of responses despite the extensive efforts and costs undertaken to promote the survey. While the importance of undertaking this survey was emphasised, it was accepted that a different approach to promoting the survey needs to be considered for next year. The Board approved the publishing of the survey findings.

## **Supplier Survey**

Information was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting on plans for the 2026 Supplier Survey to retail and wholesale sectors.

## **Item 10: Case Update**

The Board was provided with an update on legal proceedings in train relating to the Unfair Trading Regulations.

## **Item 11: CEO Update**

The CEO provided a summary of the written update provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

In addition, the following points were noted:

- The CEO has been invited to speak on the role of the Regulator and work to date at the ICMSA National Council on 18 December in the Radisson Hotel, Limerick.

## **Item 12: For Noting**

Karen Brosnan and John Comer were not in attendance for this item.

The Agri-Food Regulator website analytics report for November and the Institute of Directors Ireland Position Paper (Oct. 2025) – Supporting High Standards of Governance in State Bodies in Ireland were noted.

## **Item 13: AOB**

Karen Brosnan and John Comer were not in attendance for this item.

Five of the six dates for Board meetings in 2026 were agreed.



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The Chair thanked Board members and the Executive team for their work during the year and wished everyone the best for the Christmas period.

This concluded the meeting.

**The date for the next Board meeting in February 2026 is to be finalised.**