



# An Rialálaí Agraibhia Agri-Food Regulator

(Ref ARA/N10/4)

Note of the Eight Meeting of the Board of the Agri-Food Regulator which took place on 15 October 2024 at 11a.m. in the Boardroom, Agri-Food Regulator's Office, Backweston Campus, Celbridge, Co Kildare, Ireland, W23 X3PH

<b>In attendance</b>	<b>Board of the Agri-Food Regulator:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Joe Healy, Chair</li><li>- Paul Brophy</li><li>- Karen Brosnan</li><li>- Margaret Dineen</li><li>- Elaine Donohoe</li><li>- Grace McCullen</li><li>- Angus Woods</li></ul> <b>Agri-Food Regulator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Niamh Lenehan, CEO</li><li>- Robert Levins (11.50 – 13.00)</li><li>- Lisa Evers (incoming Board Secretary)</li><li>- Beckie Reynolds (minute-taker)</li></ul>
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**Item 1:           Opening by Chair**

**Apologies:**

John Comer

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

There were no conflicts of interest noted.

**Item 3:           (a) Approval of Minutes of last meeting**

Minutes of meeting on 4 September 2024 were agreed with a minor tweak to note that the crisis management policy for development should be considered in the context of the broader communications plan for the organisation.



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## **Item 3: (b) Report of decision taken on 11 September 2024 at Ad-Hoc Meeting of the Board**

It was agreed that the Chair would submit the 17(4) report to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine on behalf of the Board.

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

The Board approved the meeting note of the 4 July 2024 Board Meeting for publication.

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

It was reported that a meeting of the ARC took place on 1 October 2024.

It was noted that the annual financial accounts for 2024 are required to be signed by the CEO and submitted to the C&AG for audit no later than 3 months after the end of the financial year i.e. March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025. A copy of the accounts together with the report of the C&AG will then be presented to the Minister. The Executive has been liaising with its procured services regarding the preparation of financial accounts for 2024.

The main risks in the Risk Register were identified and it was noted that these and other risks would continue to be monitored.

The intention of the ARC to review its Terms of Reference and work on the development of a Risk Management Policy was noted. The Chair of the ARC agreed to follow up on this for the next ARC meeting.



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## **Item 6: Budget Estimate 2025**

Correspondence received from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) this morning by the CEO regarding the budget allocation for 2025 was brought to the attention of the Board.

It was agreed by the Board that the CEO will contact DAFM in the first instance to provide observations as requested.

The revised drawings have been received from the Office of Public Works (OPW) for the proposed renovations and building work on the Regulator's office space. The CEO gave an outline of the proposed work. It was agreed that having its own access door is a necessity and priority for the Regulator given that visitors etc currently need to access the Regulator's office through a DAFM space. The need to ensure that specifications for required work are comprehensive and accurate was agreed as was the necessity for close monitoring of all work where it proceeds.

## **Item 7: Price and Market Data Analysis – Data Requests Update and Board Approval**

The Executive sought the Board's approval to issue data requests to businesses in both the horticulture and beef sectors. Draft data requests had been circulated to the Board in advance. In respect of the proposed horticulture request, it was noted that there are 13 products listed. Feedback from some businesses noting that this number of products is considered extensive was received. It was discussed by the Board that, on balance, the list should not be reduced but additional time given to businesses to submit the requested data. It was agreed that one larger data request at this point in time rather than a number of smaller requests is preferable. It was noted that a larger list of products means compromising on specificity. It is hoped that an increased number of retailers will engage with the current horticulture request.



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The Board gave approval for the Executive to issue the data requests to businesses in both the horticulture and beef sectors.

## **17(4) Recommendation** (discussed at this point rather than under AOB)

It was noted that a formal response to the Regulator's submission to the Minister under section 17(4) of the 2023 Act has not yet been received from DAFM.

## **Item 8: Work Programme 2025**

The Executive presented a draft 2025 Work Programme which was approved by the Board for submission to the Minister pending clarification on the Regulator's budget allocation for 2025.

## **Item 9: Board Evaluation**

Before the meeting, Board members completed a Board Self-Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire and submitted it to the Chair. Every member expressed satisfaction with the combined results. It was noted by the Board that it is early days for conducting such an evaluation and consideration will be given to external facilitation of a further evaluation in due course.

## **Item 10: CEO Evaluation**

The Board relayed a very positive outcome to their evaluation of the CEO and thanked her for her work thus far.

## **Item 11: Unfair Trading Practices – Complaint Investigation**

The Executive provided a written update to Board members prior to the meeting regarding a specific case.



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## **Item 12: CEO Update**

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

## **Item 13: For Discussion – Dates for Board Meetings 2025**

Since some Board members are still awaiting details of their 2025 schedules in respect of EU meetings, this item was deferred until the next board meeting.

## **Item 14: For Noting - the Regulator's website analytics report was noted.**

## **Item 15: AOB**

1. 17(4) Recommendation - (see Item 7 above)

2. Ploughing Championships 2024

The CEO participated in three panel discussions. Staff members conducted a brief survey of visitors to the to the Agri-Food Regulator's Exhibition Stand. Of the 156 individuals who completed the survey, 97 identified themselves as a farmer, fisher or grower and 43% had heard of the Agri-Food Regulator.

**Next Board meeting will occur on 9 December 2024.**

**THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**