



An Rialálaí Agraibhia Agri-Food Regulator

(Ref: ARA/N5/4C)

Note of the Third Meeting of the Board of the Agri-Food Regulator which took place on 12 February 2024 at 11 a.m. in the Boardroom, Agri-Food Regulator's Office, Backweston Campus, Celbridge, Co Kildare, Ireland, W23 X3PH

Present

Board of the Agri-Food Regulator:

Joe Healy, Chair
Paul Brophy
Karen Brosnan
John Comer
Margaret Dineen
Elaine Donohoe
Grace McCullen
Angus Woods

In attendance

Agri-Food Regulator:

Niamh Lenehan CEO
Beckie Reynolds (note-taker)
Aiden Kelly (Items 4, 5 & 6)
Robert Levins (Items 4, 5 & 6)

Drury:

Danielle Martin, Managing Director of Public Affairs and Regulatory (Item 6)



An Rialálaí Agraibhia Agri-Food Regulator

Item 1: Opening

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting. The Board agreed that the agenda for the meeting was acceptable and adopted same. The minutes of the Board Meeting of 12 January 2024 were agreed.

Item 2: Conflict(s) of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest noted.

Item 4: Development of Strategy Statement

A draft strategy statement for the period 2024-2026 (3 years) was presented to the Board for their review. The draft document was well received as was the supplementary document presented - a draft work programme for 2024. Work will continue on refining these documents.

Item 5: Discussion: Approach to Price & Market Data Analysis

Robert Levins, Head of Market Data and Analysis delivered a presentation to the Board, the purpose of which was to gain feedback and guidance from Board members as to the proposed practical approach with respect to the information and engagement function of the Regulator. The proposed approach was well received by the Board. It was acknowledged that the work is complex and that proposed data requests will be consulted on with stakeholders.

Item 6: Overview of Communications Strategy

Danielle Martin delivered an overview of the communications strategy for the Agri-Food Regulator. Key objectives include raising awareness and understanding of the role of the Regulator, positioning the Regulator in an authoritative way and building the profile of the organisation. The strategy uses opportunities to participate in events with social media being actively used to amplify messages.

The importance of outlining what the Regulator can do and indeed cannot do was generally discussed. It was also noted that as an independent organisation, the audience includes businesses at all stages of the agri-food supply chain. There is a focus on breaking down messages for different audiences.



An Rialálaí Agraibhia Agri-Food Regulator

Item 7: Items for Discussion

7.1 Board Work Programme

The Executive prepared and circulated a draft high-level work programme for 2024 to help facilitate the Board in managing its statutory obligations.

7.2 Annual Report 2023 (Agri-Food Regulator)

It was noted that as per section 41 of the Agricultural and Food Supply Chain Act 2023, an annual report is required to be submitted as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year to which it relates, and in any event, no later than 6 months after the end of that year. An annual report from the Agri-Food Regulator for the period from establishment to end December 2023 will be drafted and presented to the Board in due course.

7.3 Annual Compliance Report (Compliance Reporting Buyers)

It was noted that the first annual report from a compliance reporting buyer under the 2023 Unfair Trading Regulations is due by 31st March 2025 for the year 2024. Under the Regulations, compliance reporting buyers must designate a suitably qualified staff member to act as a liaison officer with the Regulator – as soon as practicable but not later than 6 months from the commencement of the Regulations (mid-June 2024). Consideration is being given to a communications campaign.

7.3 Policy Development

A programme of policy development is underway at the Agri-Food Regulator and policies / procedures will be presented for approval by the Board as work progresses.

7.4 Awareness & Engagement Surveys

It was noted that two series of surveys (2022 and 2023) aimed at gauging awareness and understanding of Unfair Trading Practices were conducted by the interim Unfair Trading Practices Enforcement Authority. It was generally agreed that it would be useful for the Agri-Food Regulator to continue insofar as possible similar surveys in order to inform itself of progress being made on awareness and understanding of the work of the Regulator vis-a-vis investments made and the impact and value for money of procured services.



An Rialálaí Agraibhia Agri-Food Regulator

Item 8: CEO Update

The CEO outlined the main aspects of operational activity since the last Board meeting. She also provided an update on recruitment activity and the procuring of legal services.

Item 9: For Noting

A report providing analytics on visitors to the Regulator's website was noted. It was briefly discussed that increasing the numbers of visitors to the website and the length of their stay may be useful indicators to monitor in the context of helping measure progress on increasing awareness of the presence and role of the Agri-Food Regulator.

Item 10: AOB

A question was raised regarding payments to third party service providers within thirty days. The CEO explained that as the Regulator does not yet have a bank account, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are facilitating payments on its behalf on an interim basis.

Item 11. Next Board Meeting

The Board noted the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 27th March 2024.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their participation and contributions.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING