An Rialálaí Agraibhia
Agri-Food Regulator

(REF ARA/N13/4)

Note of the eleventh Meeting of the Board of the Agri-Food Regulator which took place on 17 February 2025 at 11 a.m. - Boardroom, Agri-Food Regulator's Office, Backweston Campus, Celbridge, Co Kildare, Ireland, W23 X3PH

In attendance	**Board of the Agri-Food Regulator:** - Joe Healy, Chair - Paul Brophy - Karen Brosnan - John Comer - Margaret Dineen - Grace McCullen - Angus Woods **Agri-Food Regulator:** - Niamh Lenehan, CEO - Aiden Kelly and Mel Hall (Item 8) - Lisa Evers (minute-taker) **Drury:** - Danielle Martin (Item 7)

Item 1: Opening by Chair

- Apologies received from Elaine Donohoe

Item 2: Conflict(s) of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest noted.

Item 3: Approval of Minutes of last Board Meeting

Minutes of meeting on 20 January 2025 were approved.

Item 4: Approval of Board Meeting Notes for Publishing

The Board approved the notes of the Board meeting on 9 December 2024 for publication.

Item 5: Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)

The draft Risk Management Policy was reviewed by the ARC and presented to the Board for approval. The policy aims to ensure that risks are identified, monitored and managed in a coordinated manner. The Policy was approved subject to a minor revision to ensure clarity on the roles of the ARC and Executive.

It was noted that the internal audit being conducted by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) has begun.

The ARC is progressing the appointment of an independent member to the ARC. It was noted that the Terms of Reference of the ARC will need to be updated to reflect any change in membership.

Item 6: 17(4) Report – Update

The Chair expressed disappointment with the lack of a formal response from DAFM with respect to the Board's submission in September 2024. The Board decided to write again to the Minister requesting an urgent meeting on the matter and to express their concern and frustration at the lack of a response.

Item 7: Communications Plan

Ms. Danielle Martin of Drury attended for this item. Ms. Martin presented an overview of the communications plan for 2025.

While the media coverage in 2024 was noted as being very positive, the Board acknowledged the need to continue raising the Regulator's profile and scale up efforts in

2025. There was a discussion about increasing the Regulator's social media presence in particular to improve the engagement with different audiences.

The Board thanked Drury for the overview of the communications plan.

Item 8: Conference - 20 May 2025

Melanie Hall and Aiden Kelly attended for this item.

Melanie Hall said the supplier survey was launched on 10th February and will run until 9th March. There has been a good uptake so far. The survey is currently being promoted on social media platforms. Ms. Hall will particate in radio interviews in the coming week to further promote the survey. The Executive intends to meet with the businesses involved at the end of April / early May to discuss the survey findings.

Aiden Kelly spoke about the Agri-Food Regulator's inaugural conference. It was stated the Executive are working with an event management company to help coordinate the event. An update was provided by Mr. Kelly on activities since the last Board meeting and interactions with potential speakers and panellists. There followed a discussion by the Board on the MC and the panels for the event.

Item 9: Data Request (Horticulture)

The Board were provided with a written update on the horticulture data request prior to the meeting. A discussion took place on the different levels of interaction by businesses with the request.

The limitations of the Regulator's powers to seek data rather than compel was highlighted by the Board. This data request issued in October with a number of businesses either not engaging or have not yet provided any data. It was agreed that the Board will need to consider a public update on the horticulture data request.

Item 10: CEO Update

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

Item 11: For Noting

The Agri-Food Regulator website analytics report was noted.

Item 12: AOB

Grace McCullen asked if the Board could consider the matter of below-cost selling. Following discussion, it was agreed by the Board that the CEO would pass on to Board members some detail on the matter including some research papers the Executive is aware of. It was noted that the Board may discuss further.

The next Board meeting will occur on 21 March 2025.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING