UPDATE

12 May 2017

SAF Online Looming: The 15th May deadline to submit your SAF is only three days away. Countryside Services is offering a new service to fill in SAF. Contact 02887789770 for more information. It is open to members and non-members and there is a fee. Spaces are limited and are on a first come, first service basis. You can also get help from DAERA via their workshops, telephone support or you can book an appointment for help at a DAERA direct office. More details http://bit.ly/2ocHXqA

Successful 2017 Balmoral Show: The UFU has been at the 2017 Balmoral Show networking with industry and meeting with its members. The Show changed its format to focus on local produce and served Breakfast, Lunch and Afternoon tea to those who called in. This was a huge success and very well received by all. The UFU will be at the show on Saturday along with NFU Mutual to speak with members. You can visit us on stand No B6 for a chat and some light refreshments.

UFU Domestic Agricultural Policy post-Brexit: The UFU has launched a discussion document on Brexit and options for a new Domestic Agricultural Policy. The aim is to spark debate amongst farmers particularly about support structures post-Brexit. UFU says that while the UK government has promised support for 2019, after that things are much less certain. The Union has argued that post-Brexit support for farmers must be at least equivalent to that provided by the EU and that Northern Ireland must retain its current share of this farm support. The delivery system for this funding is likely to change and we have an ideal opportunity to design one that is better suited to UK agriculture and creates conditions for a more productive, sustainable and resilient agriculture sector. The document, produced following considerable Union policy committee discussions and our recent Annual General Meeting, outlines options for a new Domestic Agricultural Policy. It suggests baseline measures, that would be accessible to all, and modular measures, which could be applied for. The members of the UFU policy committees have been ambitious and creative in their thinking and this discussion document shows what could be done with a healthy budget. Access the UFU Domestic Agricultural Policy post-Brexit here.

Base milk price should be rising: The UFU says that it expects base milk price to rise and if not processors need to explain why market gains are not being shared with primary producers. The UFU has explained that dairy commodity prices have stabilised and that there has been two weeks of strong returns at key global dairy auctions. The UFU MPI has also increased by nearly a penny during the same period. This leads the UFU to question, when farmers will see an increase in base milk price in Northern Ireland. There has been minimal increase in base milk price over recent months and the long awaited exchange rate boost, promised by processors, is still yet to materialise. The impetus is now on dairy processors to at the very least stabilise base price for April milk, and also to increase price for peak supply volumes. If dairy processors are serious about securing their supplier base in the future, they must demonstrate a willingness to pay their suppliers a sustainable milk price that accurately reflects the market.

EU Aid Package Distribution: The UFU says that while any funding to farming is welcome, it believes DAERA missed an opportunity to deliver wider benefits when it decided to give unspent EU emergency funds to smaller dairy farmers. The UFU says it was not consulted, but accepts the decision was taken to avoid funds being lost back to Brussels. The DAERA decision was to focus around £1.5 million not yet spent from the 2016 EU Exceptional Aid (EEA) package on farmers producing less than a million litres of milk with the payment eligible on up to 500,000 litres. The amount is what remains of a £4.5 million EU package, which the UFU
pressed successfully to be allocated to deliver long term benefits for the entire industry. The under-spend is largely because one of the schemes drawn up by DAERA to utilise this funding did not get off the ground. The UFU says that DAERA's decision was to avoid funding being lost. That makes sense, but it was DAERA's choice not to consult the industry. As a result the use of the unspent funds will have a very narrow focus, and beef and sheep farmers will inevitably question the decision to direct this funding to smaller dairy farmers. The UFU says that with the decision now finalised DAERA should aim to get the detail sorted out and the money to farmers as soon as possible.

**Pig competitiveness Scheme Open:** It is encouraging that the previously agreed Pig Industry Competitiveness Scheme which utilises some of this EEA package to introduce a worm control programme to improve the quality of local pig meat is now open for Applications. (DAERA) plans to use part of the one-off funding secured under EU Exceptional Adjustment Aid to help pig producers in Northern Ireland participate in a worm control programme. The Pig Industry Competitiveness Scheme aims to improve the quality of local pig meat and will cover the cost of in-feed medication for pig herds and the blanket treatment of sows. It will also cover the cost of medication acquired from the veterinary practitioner for the individual treatment of sows prior to farrowing. **For more info on the scheme visit:** [https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/eu-exceptional-adjustment-aid](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/eu-exceptional-adjustment-aid) closing date for applications 31st May 4pm.

**UFU launch general election manifesto:** The UFU is calling on politicians to ‘back farming’ as it launches its 2017 general election manifesto. UFU president says farming matters. It is a cornerstone of our economy, instrumental in managing our countryside, and at the heart of our rural communities. Shoppers want to buy local food that is world-renowned for being safe, affordable and high quality and we want to deliver it. The manifesto covers five key policy challenges: Making Brexit a success; investing for growth; safeguarding short, fair, and secure supply chains; placing science at the heart of policy making; and caring for our countryside and rural communities. Brexit is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of UK agriculture. The UFU have a vision for a progressive, profitable, productive farming sector and the Union want to work with the new government to help them realise it. There are further opportunities for our industry and with the right support we believe we can deliver more Brexit is just one of the challenges facing farmers. There are a number of issues that farmers want to see addressed. A fairer supply chain, the eradication of Bovine TB, and rural crime are also covered in the manifesto. These issues must also be addressed in the next parliament. You can access the [UFU’s Manifesto here](https://www.ufuni.org).

**NEXT WEEK**

- CAFRE meeting – Deputy President, Beef & Lamb Policy Officer and Chairman.
- CSL Meeting – Chief Executive.
- Agri Aware – Rural Affairs Policy Officer.
- LANTRA Meeting – Membership Director.
- RDC Board – Chief Executive.
- Identigen Meeting – Policy Officer.
- Next Generation Forum – Chief Executive and Membership Director.
- UK Livestock Meetings – Livestock Chairs and Beef & Lamb Policy Officer.
- Meeting of the Seanad Special Select Committee – President and Chief Executive.
- Schools Competition Judging – President and Events Officer.

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