

Date: 6th August 2015

NI BEEF INDUSTRY YET TO BE CONVINCED ON LIFETIME ASSURANCE PROPOSAL

Following the outcome of Red Tractor Assurance's (RTA) consultation on Lifetime Assurance, the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) who manages the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) on behalf of the NI industry is yet to be convinced that the proposals will add value to assurance of beef in Northern Ireland.

LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson, said, "A large proportion of beef produced in Northern Ireland is marketed under the Red Tractor logo in GB. Any changes to existing standards that may impact on our ability to supply this market must be carefully considered. LMC continues to communicate the very serious concerns that are held by supply chain partners in Northern Ireland about the introduction of Lifetime Assurance in the beef sector and met RTA to discuss this as recently as last week. There is very little in the summary report resulting from the consultation process that alters the fact that Lifetime Assurance has the potential to add a significant burden to a supply chain that is already under pressure. Our existing Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) is extremely robust and has delivered assurances for consumers about food safety, animal welfare and care for the environment for almost 25 years.

There is limited detail in the consultation summary report about how this proposal will be implemented and the associated practicalities with this move. A move to lifetime assurance, whilst aspirational could ultimately cost the NI beef industry approximately £1 million to maintain current assurance levels with no guarantee that this will be returned from the market."

The FQAS Industry Board, chaired by LMC, discussed the issue of Lifetime Assurance at a meeting last week and there was unanimous opposition to the

proposals on the basis that the proposals could add significant cost to the supply chain without adding significant value.

Mr Stevenson continued, “LMC have invited representatives from RTA to meet with industry representatives in Northern Ireland as soon as possible to explain their proposals in more depth.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Red Tractor press release and link to the consultation summary report can be found on the RTA website (<http://assurance.redtractor.org.uk/rtassurance/schemes/Standardshome/Standards2014/consultation .eb>)
2. For more information contact Colin Smith, LMC Industry Development Manager Tel: 028 9263 3000 or email: csmith@lmcni.com