



Media Release

Wednesday, 10 May 2023

Carbon Steering Group formed to support agri-food industry

The Northern Ireland (NI) Carbon Steering Group is a pioneering alliance set up to represent farmers and the agri-food industry, and progress with the carbon element of the sustainability agenda. The collaboration has been built on the recognition that an industry wide co-ordinated approach is the most effective way to ensure the industry is heard and that the best solutions are achieved for everyone in NI.

Agriculture has a key part to play in NI reaching net zero carbon emissions and the group has been working together, moulding an approach that will be farmer friendly and provide the basis for measuring and managing carbon emissions. Legal obligations and targets have been set and the group aims to deliver opportunities that will advance local agriculture sustainably.

Commenting, George Mullan, member of the Carbon Steering Group and Chair of NIFDA, said, "Under the NI Climate Change Act 2022, targets have been set which we are required to meet. To align with this, DAERA will publish its first Climate Action Plan in December 2023 requiring significant reduction in carbon emissions. Therefore, we have come together to act on behalf of our farmers and agri-food industry to ensure we achieve consistency in the direction of travel.

"Working across farmers, processors, industry bodies, government departments and research organisations, we want to ensure that appropriate solutions are provided to measure carbon emissions and identify innovative ways to reduce emissions. As a group, we've been able to lead from the front to develop a market strategy and support farmers to intercept potential livestock reductions.

“Reducing carbon emissions is becoming a requirement for our customers, not only in the UK, but also in export markets. It has presented us with an opportunity to find a workable system that can deliver the information required and enable the NI agri-food sector to remain competitive.”

The NI Carbon Steering Group is working in partnership with DAERA to create a programme which will help all farm businesses understand where they are on this carbon journey. As part of this and to inform the work programme with DAERA, we intend to test the concept of whole farm data collection with 100 farms in the next few weeks. Information required to test this concept will be collected following a NI Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) inspection and during the same farm visit.

David Brown, Chair of the NI Carbon Steering Group, said “We need to ensure that we develop a programme with the farmer in mind at all times. It needs to be workable for them, ensuring an accurate and efficient process that causes minimal disruption to the farm business. The delivery of information is a key element to ensure its suitable for all parties and supports appropriate carbon reduction strategies while protecting farmers’ data.”

The Carbon Steering group added, “Tackling climate change and reducing emissions is now a key part of doing business with retailers and banks that are taking carbon emissions and environmental factors into consideration. All parts of the food chain are required to act including retailers, processors and farmers. Farmers have already done great work to reduce emissions on farm, and this data collection exercise will enable them to build upon that. We’re all on this journey towards net zero and farmers are committed to reducing carbon emissions while feeding a growing population with quality food produced to the highest standards.”

The NI Carbon Steering Group includes representatives from the Livestock and Meat Commission, Ulster Farmers’ Union, Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, NI Meat Exporters Association, NI Food and Drink Association, NI Agricultural Producers’ Association, NI Grain Trade Association, NI Pork and Bacon Forum, NI Poultry Federation, and Moy Park.

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Notes to Editor

Photo caption: (Back row left to right), NIMEA chief executive Daryl McLaughlin, Moy Park agri business and live production services director Justin Coleman, NIAPA chair James Lowe, NIMEA vice-chair Terry Acheson, UFU president David Brown, LMC chief executive Ian Stevenson, DCNI chief executive Mike Johnston and NIFDA vice president Michael Bell. (Front row left to right) UFU chief executive Wesley Aston, NIGTA chief executive Gill Gallagher, NIFDA chair George Mullan and DCNI David Stewart.

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UFU media contact: Tracey Donaghey

Telephone: 02890 370 222 / 07917872328

Email: tdonaghey@ufuhq.com

NIFAD media contact: Ben McCabe

Telephone: 028 90393837 / 07557872029

Email: b.mccabe@morrowcommunications.com

The UFU is the voice of Northern Ireland farming and provides professional representation and services to its farmer and grower members.