

PRESS RELEASE

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New Board appointed for the Livestock and Meat Commission

THE Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) announce Joe M Stewart OBE, LLP, JP has been appointed as Chair of the LMC Board. John Hood, David Mark, Sean McKeever, David Torrens and Elaine Willis join Joe as new members on the LMC Board.

Joe said, "As Chair I am very much looking forward to working with the newly appointed Board members, as we alongside the staff team, drive forward LMC's service delivery for farmers, stakeholders and the wider agri-food industry."

He continued, "Having served for two years on the last LMC Board I have always been impressed with the enthusiasm of the LMC team in supporting beef and lamb producers across Northern Ireland (NI)."

Joe has confirmed that a review of the Commission's strategic plan will soon commence with the Board and staff team united in their determination to drive forward the interests of beef and lamb producers and processors in NI.

Taking stock of LMC's broad and varied portfolio Joe noted that sustainability will be an area of growth for LMC. He continued, "Overarching the sustainability agenda in NI is the need to comply with relevant legislation. LMC is playing a central role with industry and government partners in the development and roll-out of several important sustainability initiatives including livestock genetic improvement, measuring and managing carbon emissions and the reduction of industry losses through animal health and welfare improvements."

For decades the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) has been a central area of work for the Commission. Joe reiterated the Commission's commitment to NIBL FQAS going forward. He said, "We will continue to build on the strong foundation laid down through the management and delivery of NIBL FQAS as we move forward. With over 11,500 members, NIBL FQAS is established as an integral aspect of the beef and lamb sector in NI. NIBL FQAS works closely with farmers, processors and retailers to provide unrivalled and independent guarantees to consumers about the provenience, traceability and quality of beef and lamb."

Reflecting on the scope of the Commission's educational and promotional work, Joe confirmed that LMC delivers in the region of 500 demonstrations per year reaching around 10,000 primary and post primary pupils. "The LMC Education Programme plays a key role in LMC's overall Strategy," Joe said. He added, "Our team of cookery demonstrators engage young people and consumers across NI on behalf of LMC. They provide factual insight to the production and quality credentials of NIFQA beef and lamb and showcase our world leading NIFQA produce in tasty recipes. The Board and I value the work each of our demonstrators do for LMC and our levy payers."

The Commission's market information services are highly valued within the industry. The service supports producers and processors with their decision making by making available accurate and timely information that creates a better understanding of the trade. LMC is committed to creating an environment where its stakeholders are well-informed whether this is through the provision of basic statistics, further analysis / examination of this data or the delivery of information through events like the Red Meat Prospects Conference. Joe remarked that the Board look forward to the continued delivery of these programmes of work.

Concluding Joe said, "What is clear is that neither LMC nor the industry within which we deliver our services can afford to stand still and let change happen around us. Looking at the future direction of policy, a key focus for farmers and industry stakeholders will be to work together with government to co-design and drive forward the environmental and sustainability agenda.

"LMC is in no doubt that the sector will plan and respond to the many challenges and opportunities that it will face in the years ahead."

ENDS

Photo caption

001 – Joe Stewart, LMC Chair pictured at Balmoral Show

Notes to Editor

1) Biography of appointees

Mr. Joe M Stewart OBE, LLB, JP, has an in depth understanding and appreciation of the issues impacting farmers and the local agricultural sector. Since the 1890s the Stewart family have farmed in Comber, Co Down. Today Mr Stewart runs two breeding flocks on the farm, namely, Suffolk and Texel. He is also an experienced horse breeder, breeding Irish Draft Horses. Mr Stewart is a trustee of the Suffolk Sheep Society and joined the LMC Board as a member in 2021. He has served as Chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and is currently a Non-Executive Director of the Public Health Agency (including Chair of its Governance and Audit Committee). Mr Stewart retired following a wide-ranging career including the Engineering Employers Federation, Harland & Wolff, Police Authority of NI, (PANI) and PSNI (non-police role). In 1994, Mr Stewart was appointed an OBE for Public Service. Mr Stewart has significant finance and governance experience in the private and public sectors, he will bring this expertise, coupled with personal experience of farming to the role of LMC Chair.

Mr John Hood has over 23 years in-depth experience in investment, marketing and economic development. For the last 10 years he was the Director of the Food and Drink Division at Invest NI where he delivered significant growth across the food and drink sector.

Mr David Mark has extensive experience across the agri-food sector. Throughout his career he has worked directly with producers and major customers on agricultural technical areas.

He previously served on the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee of the Food Standards Agency and is Chair of the Trade Exhibits Committee in the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS).

Mr Sean McKeever is a Chartered Accountant and has substantial strategy, finance and governance experience within Health and Personal Social Services and NHS organisations. He currently serves as a non-executive director, and chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, of the Business Services Organisation. He also brings on farm experience as a producer of beef.

Mr David Torrens is a recently retired vet who has an in-depth knowledge of the agriculture sector through his role as Director of DAERA's Veterinary Service Animal Health Group. He currently serves as the Northern Ireland representative on the British Veterinary Association's Policy Committee. He has extensive experience in the public sector, including in corporate governance and financial and risk management.

Mrs Elaine Willis is a Retail Operations Director and brings significant experience in the Agri-Food Processing Industry, including New Product Development, Business Development and Sales and Marketing. Elaine represents the red meat processing sector on the College of Agriculture Farming and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) Advisory Group.

- 2) The Livestock and Meat Commission may take photographs and videos at announcements and events to publicise its work. Photographs, interviews, videos or other recordings may be issued to media organisations for publicity purposes or used in promotional material, including in publications, newspapers, magazines, other print media, on television, radio and electronic media (including social media and the internet). Photographs and videos will also be stored on LMC's internal records management system. LMC will keep the photographs and recordings for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which they have been obtained. LMC's Privacy Policy is available on our website.

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