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Oxford Farming Conference attended by LMC

Ian Stevenson, Chief Executive and Gerard McGivern, Chairman of the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) travelled to Oxford last week to join over 500 delegates at the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC).

The OFC is hosted annually at Oxford University and is an international conference for farming and agri-business.

Heralding the OFC as a “great networking event with industry leaders and influencers,” Mr Stevenson emphasised the importance of attending the OFC conference with Brexit less than 100 days away.

“Brexit is just weeks away and given the many changes that are due to come for the UK farming and food industry, we thought it was essential to attend the conference.

“A wide range of topics were discussed during the conference including the politics of agriculture and food, the pre and post Brexit circumstance, scientific developments driving change and value in the industry and the importance of effective communication between the agri food industry, its customers and the general public. Future relationships between the UK and EU and how trade would operate with other countries around the world were key issues of the debate.”

Mr Stevenson claims that the speech given by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Secretary of State, Michael Gove, was notable in terms of farm policy ideas and the potential role of new technologies in advancing a sustainable agri food sector in the UK.

“Michael Gove’s speech put the latest farm policy ideas into perspective,” Mr Stevenson continued. “There was a lot of discussion around the need for supporting agriculture’s key role in feeding our society and delivering public goods. It was also highlighted during his speech that leaving the EU without an agreement in place would create considerable turbulence and would risk undermining the benefits that could be derived from a new agricultural policy in the UK.

“Many of the most important opinion formers within UK food and agriculture were present at the OFC this year. It was imperative to hear their views on the many challenges and indeed opportunities that will present themselves to Northern Ireland in the next few years post-Brexit.

“Policy makers must grasp the opportunity to create farm support policies which are specifically tailored to meet the needs of the Northern Ireland agriculture sector.”

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