

**'No-deal' Brexit disastrous for NI red meat industry LMC reiterates**

With the Prime Minister Theresa May completing her visit to Northern Ireland today, the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) is re-emphasising the importance of a Brexit withdrawal deal being reached with the EU.

LMC's Economist, Seamus McMenamin said: "Since 2017 LMC has clearly stated that a 'no-deal' Brexit and the UK reverting to World Trade Organisation (WTO) trading conditions could be devastating to the Northern Ireland red meat industry.

"LMC commissioned a report by the Andersons Centre in 2017 which examined the impact of two different WTO trading scenarios and the affect these could have on the Northern Ireland beef and sheep meat industry. The findings of the report display the vulnerabilities of the red meat sector in Northern Ireland to any changes to the current trading conditions. Farmers in Northern Ireland need access to important markets within the EU as well as wider global markets to ensure the future sustainability and viability of our industry.

"The Northern Ireland red meat industry would be particularly exposed under a WTO trade liberalisation model, whereby the UK unilaterally abolishes tariff barriers, also known as an 'Open-Door' trade policy. Outputs from the Northern Ireland red meat sector would fall by over 20 per cent and exports to the EU would decline by over 90 per cent. There would then be a significant increase in red meat imports to the UK from the rest of the world under this trading model."

Mr McMenamin continued: "The economic impact of an 'Open-Door' trade policy would seriously threaten the viability of beef and sheep farming across Northern Ireland with grave consequences for the wider rural economy. With this arrangement, the beef and sheep industry stand to lose an estimated £230m per annum which would be disastrous.

"The potential implications for the Northern Ireland sheep sector are particularly stark under any no-deal trading situation. Access to EU markets is critical given that half of lambs produced in Northern Ireland are exported to the Republic of Ireland for direct slaughter. In addition to this, approximately half of the lamb that we process in Northern Ireland meat plants is destined for the EU.

"The uncertainty surrounding the Brexit process is the most challenging aspect for all businesses involved in red meat production. Clarity is urgently required on the future UK/EU

relationship which will allow businesses to make informed decisions about their future investment and development plans.”

**ENDS**