
For **Written Answer** on : 17/04/2018
Question Number(s): 1145 Question Reference(s): 16800/18
Department: **Agriculture, Food and the Marine**

QUESTION

To ask the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine if the transport subsidy will be applicable to all fodder sourced from outside our jurisdiction including Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

REPLY

In response to the problems experienced in parts of the West and North-West in the late autumn and winter I took a number of steps to address issues around the availability of fodder.

I asked Teagasc from an early stage to work locally with affected farmers in areas with fodder difficulties and support them on fodder budgeting for the winter ahead.

I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. In this regard my Department has paid out over €1.6bn to Irish farmers under Pillar I and Pillar II and will continue to make residual payments.

As a further early intervention, and to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc, and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc.

I introduced a targeted 'Fodder Transport Support measure' on 29th January 2018 to provide additional assistance to those livestock farmers in parts of the West and North West severely affected by on-going fodder shortages. The main purpose of the measure was to support the cost of transporting fodder between those areas where it was plentiful and those where it was scarce. It is operated primarily through the Co-operative structure.

The continuation of cold wet weather throughout March resulted in a serious delay to the onset of spring. Grass growth remained negligible, ground stayed wet and livestock had to remain housed in many cases. This resulted in the fodder problem extending countrywide with a consequent tightening of fodder availability nationally.

In response I extended the fodder transport measure to all counties and also introduced a Fodder Import Support Measure, to ensure that there was adequate fodder available to feed the national herd. This measure was introduced on 5th April to reduce the cost to farmers of imported forage (hay, silage, haylage etc.) from outside the island of Ireland. Northern Ireland is excluded. The measure is operated through Co-operatives and other importers approved by the Department. It covers forage imported up to 30th April 2018. Support under the measure will substantially reduce the cost to farmers of imported fodder by approximately one third. This initial allocation will support the importation of up to 20,000 tons of fodder into the country and this will be kept under on-going review until the current crisis is over.

In other supports, planning continues with a view to commencement of balancing payments under certain Pillar II schemes including the Sheep Welfare Scheme followed by the GLAS scheme.

The GLAS Traditional Hay Meadow grazing date has been extended to 1 May 2018, and this makes available an additional 27,000 ha of grazing for livestock which would not otherwise be available.

Furthermore, I am presently engaging in a series of meetings with the CEO's of the main banks to discuss any cash flow issues arising from the recent bad weather and access to finance for the sector generally. During these meetings I continue to stress that in the context of the current situation the banks should be flexible and put measures in place to support their customers.

Through my officials I am monitoring the fodder situation on a daily basis and engaging with all stakeholders in addressing the remaining challenges around fodder supply this spring. The next step will be to prevent this situation arising again, through supporting farmers to effectively plan and manage their grass and fodder supplies for the coming winters.

For Written Answer on : 17/04/2018
Question Number(s): 1073,1146 Question Reference(s): 15769/18, 16801/18
Department: Agriculture, Food and the Marine

QUESTION

* To ask the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine his plans to rollout a meal voucher scheme to enable farmers to purchase feed for their livestock; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Eugene Murphy T.D.

For WRITTEN answer on Tuesday, 17 April, 2018.

* To ask the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine his plans to introduce a meal voucher scheme in view of the ongoing fodder shortages; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Brendan Smith T.D.

For WRITTEN answer on Tuesday, 17 April, 2018.

REPLY

In response to the problems experienced in parts of the West and North-West in the late autumn and winter I took a number of steps to address issues around the availability of fodder.

I asked Teagasc from an early stage to work locally with affected farmers in areas with fodder difficulties and support them on fodder budgeting for the winter ahead.

I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. In this regard my Department has paid out over €1.6bn to Irish farmers under Pillar I and Pillar II and will continue to make residual payments.

As a further early intervention, and to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc, and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc.

I introduced a targeted '*Fodder Transport Support measure*' on 29th January 2018 to provide additional assistance to those livestock farmers in parts of the West and North West severely affected by on-going fodder shortages. The main purpose of the measure was to support the cost of transporting fodder between those areas where it was plentiful and those where it was scarce. It is operated primarily through the Co-operative structure.

The continuation of cold wet weather throughout March resulted in a serious delay to the onset of spring. Grass growth remained negligible, ground stayed wet and livestock had to remain

housed in many cases. This resulted in the fodder problem extending countrywide with a consequent tightening of fodder availability nationally.

In response I extended the fodder transport measure to all counties and also introduced a Fodder Import Support Measure, to ensure that there was adequate fodder available to feed the national herd. This measure was introduced on 5th April to reduce the cost to farmers of imported forage (hay, silage, haylage etc.) from outside the island of Ireland. Northern Ireland is excluded. The measure is operated through Co-operatives and other importers approved by the Department. It covers forage imported up to 30th April 2018. Support under the measure will substantially reduce the cost to farmers of imported fodder by approximately one third. This initial allocation will support the importation of up to 20,000 tons of fodder into the country and this will be kept under on-going review until the current crisis is over. Together these two measures address remaining issue around fodder availability and it is not planned to introduce meal vouchers. In other supports, planning continues with a view to commencement of balancing payments under certain Pillar II schemes including the Sheep Welfare Scheme followed by the GLAS scheme in the near future.

The GLAS Traditional Hay Meadow grazing date has been extended to 1 May 2018, and this makes available an additional 27,000 ha of grazing for livestock which would not otherwise be available.

Furthermore, I am presently engaging in a series of meetings with the CEO's of the main banks to discuss any cash flow issues arising from the recent bad weather and access to finance for the sector generally. During these meetings I continue to stress that in the context of the current situation the banks should be flexible and put measures in place to support their customers. Through my officials I am monitoring the fodder situation on a daily basis and engaging with all stakeholders in addressing the remaining challenges around fodder supply this spring. The next step will be to prevent this situation arising again, through supporting farmers to effectively plan and manage their grass and fodder supplies for the coming winters.