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For Oral Answer on : 12/07/2018  
Question Number(s): 20 Question Reference(s): 31485/18  
Department: Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
Asked by: Brendan Smith T.D.

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### QUESTION

To ask the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine the proposals he has put forward at the EU Agriculture Council regarding the need to increase the CAP budget post-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

### REPLY

By way of introduction I would point out that in discussing the funding of the Common Agricultural Policy, we should bear in mind that this funding forms part of a broader EU budget which is negotiated by Finance Ministers and then agreed by the European Council and European Parliament.

The European Commission has proposed, as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, that funding for the Common Agricultural Policy should be set at €365 billion. This would indicate a cut of around 5% for the next MFF period of 2021 - 2027.

The Multiannual Financial Framework sets the budgetary ceilings for the next seven years across a range of headings. Member State priorities are not identical, and not all member states favour maintaining CAP funding. Furthermore, in the light of the departure of the UK from the European Union, net contributions to the EU budget will be reduced by approximately €12 billion. Therefore agreeing an MFF which maintains current levels of CAP funding will be challenging.

Nonetheless it should be noted that the proposal published by the European Commission is an initial MFF position. The final outcome will be determined by negotiations at EU level over the coming year. Achieving Ireland's priorities in these negotiations will be a key issue for the Government.

This MFF proposal will now have to be negotiated by Finance Ministers and agreed by the European Council and Parliament. The intention of the Commission is to reach overall agreement on the MFF before the European Parliamentary Elections in 2019. Of course the MFF is a critical matter for all Member States and agreement on the MFF requires unanimity amongst all EU Member States.

I believe that European agriculture policies have delivered for Irish farmers and consumers and it is important that support continues to be provided to these programmes. Over the next few years farm families will be required to play a vital role in the protection and enhancement of the environment and the production of food to the highest standards in the world. These high standards, and the family farm model, are part of the fabric of European values. EU citizens have shown that they support this model.

We need farmers to take active steps to mitigate climate change, protect water quality and biodiversity, and improve their competitiveness. A strong CAP is a prerequisite if these objectives, which are in the best interests of all citizens, are to be achieved.

So while these matters will not ultimately be decided in the Agriculture Council, I have been working to build consensus among my agriculture colleagues across the European Union to support a reversal of the cuts proposed to the CAP budget.

Recently in Madrid, I agreed a Memorandum with five of my European colleagues, seeking to maintain CAP funding for the period 2021-2027 at current EU 27 levels. Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Finland all signed the Memorandum. Support has grown for this position and I understand that up to twenty Member States have expressed support for this position.

This work has continued as part of ongoing bilateral meetings. Since May 2018, I have, together with my colleague Minister Doyle, met with EU Agri Ministers from Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Hungary to discuss MFF issues.

I would like to reassure the deputy that I will continue to fight for a strong CAP budget in the upcoming negotiations.

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For Oral Answer on : 12/07/2018  
Question Number(s): 32 Question Reference(s): 31486/18  
Department: Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
Asked by: Brendan Smith T.D.

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### QUESTION

To ask the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine the outcome of the most recent discussions at the EU Agriculture Council in relation to the funding of CAP post-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

### REPLY

By way of introduction I would point out that in discussing the funding of the Common Agricultural Policy, we should bear in mind that this funding forms part of a broader EU budget which is negotiated by Finance Ministers and then agreed by the European Council and European Parliament.

The most recent EU Agriculture Council of Ministers where CAP Post 2020 was discussed was held on 18th June 2018. This was the first opportunity for the EU Agriculture Ministers to discuss a more in-depth response to the future CAP legislative proposals. All Member States bar the UK intervened in this debate. Proposed cuts to the CAP budget dominated this debate

Recently in Madrid, I agreed a Memorandum, with five of my European colleagues, seeking that CAP funding for 2021 - 27 would not be subject to cuts and would remain at the current level for the 27 EU member states. Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Finland all signed the Memorandum. The declaration against a reduction in expenditure penned by like-minded Member States on May 31 gathering momentum at the June Council meeting. Support has grown for this position and I understand that up to twenty Member States have expressed support for this position.

I believe that European agriculture policies have delivered for Irish farmers and consumers and it is important that support continues to be provided to these programmes. Over the next few years farm families will be required to play a vital role in the protection and enhancement of the environment and the production of food to the highest standards in the world. These high standards, and the family farm model, are part of the fabric of European values. EU citizens have shown that they support this model.

We need farmers to take active steps to mitigate climate change, protect water quality and biodiversity, and improve their competitiveness. A strong CAP is a prerequisite if these objectives, which are in the best interests of all citizens, are to be achieved.

Member States are facing into a difficult negotiation, however, and a number have already indicated that they are not willing to provide additional funding for the MFF. To date Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden have stated that they do not wish to increase the MFF

and that a smaller budget should be agreed. From Ireland's perspective, the Taoiseach has already indicated that we are prepared to contribute additional funding, but only if critical policies are supported.

It should be noted that the proposal published by the European Commission is the initial MFF proposal. The final outcome will be determined by negotiations at EU level over the coming year. Achieving Ireland's priorities in these negotiations will be a key issue for the Government. As I mentioned earlier, ultimately budget decisions are a matter for Finance Ministers, the European Council and the European Parliament.

In that context, I have discussed with my counterparts at the EU Agriculture Council the importance of a strong CAP Post 2020 budget. I will continue to work with my colleagues across Europe on these matters as do my officials. Since May 2018, Minister Doyle and I have met with the EU Agri Ministers from Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Hungary where the CAP Post 2020 Budget was discussed.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July I hosted a Conference on the new CAP legislative proposals for interested stakeholders, including farm bodies, state agencies and the environmental pillar. This was a timely opportunity to bring all interested stakeholders together for a constructive discussion on the future CAP. The range of speakers came from the political sphere, from the European Commission, and from my Department.

I would like to reassure the deputy that I will continue to fight for a strong CAP budget in the upcoming negotiations.