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**For Written Answer on : 11/06/2019**  
**Question Number(s): 743 Question Reference(s): 24090/19**  
**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 when details of the scheme to assist the beef sector will be announced; if the total funding will be €100 million; when farmers are likely to receive this financial aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

### **REPLY**

I have had ongoing discussions with Commissioner Hogan regarding the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit. I have stressed the need for the Commission to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on the agri-food and fisheries sector. Avoiding a no-deal Brexit continues to be the Government's overriding policy priority.

I am also keenly aware that the past few months have been very difficult for beef farmers in particular, following a difficult year for farm incomes in 2018 due to weather conditions. There has been a prolonged and exceptional period of depressed prices since last autumn, with the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Brexit, among other factors, contributing to this market disturbance.

The recent announcement by Commissioner Hogan of EU exceptional aid for the Irish beef sector is very welcome in this context. I have been making the case for some time for an exceptional aid package from the EU Commission for Irish beef farmers, at EU Council of Agriculture Minister meetings, and in direct consultation with the Commission. The announcement by the Commissioner is another example of the importance of EU solidarity when it comes to facing significant economic challenges.

This exceptional aid provision will be given effect through a Commission Implementing Regulation. While Member States will be invited to give an opinion on the draft Regulation through the Commission's Common Market Organisation Management Committee, the draft Regulation is within the Commission's own legal competence, and is not for negotiation with Ireland or indeed other Member States, in terms of its content.

Further details on the aid package will be announced in due course following the appropriate stakeholder consultation.