



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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Brexit will be biggest ever challenge for Irish farming

Macra na Feirme raised our concerns on the subject at a meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, which was convened to discuss Brexit's potential implications.

The consequences and fallout from Brexit are, in my view, the biggest challenge our industry will face in our generation. In the past we have had BSE, Foot and Mouth and others crises but this is bigger than all of those together.

Young farmers have expressed their concerns about Brexit at numerous events hosted by Macra in the months after the referendum in Britain. Carrigaline Macra hosted a seminar Irish Agriculture at a Crossroads along with AIB in November. I attended an All-Island dialogue on Brexit in City North Hotel, Co Meath, which brought together all stakeholders from industry, agencies and farm organisations from the North and South.

Huge concerns were expressed by all parties from both sides of the border on the implications for agriculture on both sides of the border.

There is a need for the EU and the UK to jointly state as soon as possible that a transitional arrangement will be possible should a deal not be completed within two years of triggering article 50. This will ease uncertainty in the short term and would help to reduce sterling fluctuations.

Border costs

Borders result in additional costs which have the potential to drive up retail prices in the UK and in turn make foreign food imports into the UK more appealing. Borders have the potential to also encourage illegal activity and illegal trade.

That the spreading of risk across the whole food supply chain is required and contract arrangements between primary producers and processors have the potential to spread some of the risk-taking away from farmers.

Fluctuations in the value of the sterling and disruptions to trade, as well as the prospect of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, are all contributing to the frustration young farmers are feeling about Brexit.

Young farmers have the most to lose from Brexit. We are establishing our careers in the sector and are more vulnerable to short term uncertainty and volatility as we don't have the financial means to cushion us from such volatility.

Young farmers in the border region do not want to see the introduction of a hard border as some of the businesses they work with operate in the North and South.

To ease into life without the UK as a member of the EU, Macra called for the minimisation of any barriers to trade, such as tariffs, and a continuation of the free movement of agri produce between Ireland and the UK.

The potential introduction of additional labelling regulations for trade between the UK and Europe is causing much anxiety amongst young farmers.

Should new labelling rules be introduced, then Macra na Feirme is calling for the appropriate resources to be put in place to ensure a smooth transition and to prevent farmers from bearing the brunt of additional costs associated with differing labelling criteria.

Diversification into new markets is essential to soften blows caused by Brexit that result in lower agri trade.

Inevitably the more markets Irish produce has access to, the less reliant we will become on Britain as a major agri trading partner.

However, Macra stresses that exploring entry to new markets takes time and resources and bodies such as Bord Bia will need the appropriate support to ensure entry is granted.

Expansion of access to new markets is important trade missions should be accelerated further, and it is important to relay the message that Ireland is not part of Brexit and that it is open for business. Macra is calling for additional resources to be provided to bodies, such as Bord Bia, to sustain access to new global markets.

The implications of Brexit are all unknown and to conclude in sporting terms this match has just kicked off.

There is a long way to go and the result is far from certain for all of us both here and in the UK.

Source: The Irish Examiner

December 21, 2016

Anger as Republic gives go-ahead for huge pylon power line from Meath to Northern Ireland

Campaigners in Northern Ireland have reacted angrily to the decision by An Bord Pleanála granting permission for a massive power line planned to run between Meath and Tyrone.

Today's decision by An Bord Pleanála relates to the southern part of the proposed North-South Interconnector which involves construction of hundreds of pylons in Meath, Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh and Tyrone - some up to 51 metres high.

A spokesperson for Safe Electricity Armagh and Tyrone (SEAT) said: "We are disappointed at this ruling by An Bord Pleanála who have given the green light to EirGrid's plans to build a new North-South electricity interconnector in the south, citing that it is the 'most cost effective solution to satisfy current requirements'."

"The public inquiry for the northern element has still to be heard early in the New Year, and we hope that this decision does not distract from the need to underground the interconnector."

"We are not opposing the interconnector itself. We, along with all the landowners and affected residents on the proposed route, are however vehemently opposed to the use of a dangerous very high voltage overhead Interconnector.

"SEAT instead proposes undergrounding the cable to reduce health and numerous other risks - it's the responsible and efficient alternative. We must not forget that nearly 6,500 people have signed a petition opposing the high voltage Over Head Line."

"We are calling on the decision makers to scrutinise the need for the overhead interconnector and start to raise more questions about why we are not having an open debate about the new technologies that are being rapidly developed in other parts of the world."

The high-voltage power line allows electricity to flow between north and south, and was part of the (EURO)3.2bn Grid25 project launched in October 2008. Permission was sought in December 2009, but withdrawn the following June.

A new application was lodged with the board in June 2015, and was subject to a public hearing which lasted for almost three months. It was approved this morning.

In its decision, the board said it had regard to the benefits of integrating both electricity grids, Government policy and the potential impact on the environment.

The board agreed with its inspector which recommended that permission be granted.

National grid operator EirGrid, which is also responsible for the Northern Ireland network, has said there was just one interconnector between both jurisdictions, and if a problem occurred it would result in widespread power failures.

The line links a substation in Woodland, Co Meath with a new substation in Turleenan, Co Tyrone. It will more than double the power transfer capacity between north and south, improving efficiency and allowing more renewables onto the system.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

December 22, 2016

Kenny plays down fears for Irish living in UK post-Brexit

TAOISEACH Enda Kenny has played down fears about the status of Irish citizens in a post-Brexit UK, saying the matter is "separate" from any talks on the future of other EU citizens.

It comes as he announced that Theresa May's first visit to Dublin as British prime minister will take place next month. Ms May failed to rule out a change in status for Irish people living in the UK when she answered questions on Brexit earlier this week.

She appeared to link their future with that of UK citizens living in other European Union countries.

Responding to Ms May's remarks, Mr Kenny pointed out the rights of Irish citizens in Britain have been acquired over "a very long period".

"The common travel area is not just for social reasons and travel reasons, but it is also for work opportunities," he said.

He said Ms May has spoken of how she wanted the question of the rights of British citizens in living in the EU to be dealt with early in Brexit negotiations.

"That is separate from the traditional rights and relationship that Ireland has with the UK and they with us," he said.

Government sources last night said Ms May's remarks may have been conflated in response to two different questions - one on the status of Irish citizens in Britain, and another on people from other EU countries.

It is understood Ms May's government has no intention of making the status of Irish citizens conditional on the outcome of talks on those from other EU countries.

Mr Kenny outlined what he has already agreed in principle with Ms May that there won't be a return to a hard border with the North, and "no derogation from the benefits of the Common Travel Area".

"These are very important principles that have been built up between Britain and Ireland for a very, very long time indeed," he said.

Mr Kenny did reiterate that the EU has told Britain it will not be able to "cherry-pick" policies and that access to the single market will require agreement on freedom of movement.

"Until such time as the prime minister moves Article 50, we will not be clear about the nature of the proposition," Mr Kenny said.

"In the meantime our officials will talk to their counterparts in Brussels and London and Belfast. I have spoken to most of the EU leaders at this stage and will continue to do so."

Mr Kenny also said there will be further meetings of the all-island civic dialogue on Brexit, including a plenary session in Dublin Castle in February.

That's the month before Ms May intends to trigger the mechanism for leaving the EU.

Mr Kenny said he hopes her visit here in January will provide "greater clarity ... as to the position that Britain is moving towards in terms of the kind of relationship they want to have with the European Union".

Mr Kenny was also asked about the prospects of a united Ireland post-Brexit.

He said the Good Friday Agreement leaves open an option for the future reunification of the island but that a referendum can only be considered if there is sufficient support on both sides of the Border.

He added that it's "the peoples north and south who will decide to join Ireland in a new Republic".

He said he will be on the European side of the Brexit negotiations but that he intends to see that an understanding of that principle from the Good Friday Agreement "is enshrined in the language of negotiations to be concluded".

Meanwhile, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida is also set to come to Ireland next month, the first such visit in 25 years.

Foreign Affairs Minister Charlie Flanagan said it will be "a great honour" to welcome Mr Kishida on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Japan. Mr Flanagan said trade

between the two countries totalled €9.8bn last year, and that he will discuss ways to "further strengthen and deepen" ties during Mr Kishida's visit.

Source: The Irish Independent

December 22, 2016

May to visit Dublin for Brexit talks; January visit will be her first to the Republic since becoming Prime Minister

British Prime Minister Theresa May is to visit Dublin next month to discuss Britain's exit from the European Union with Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

The Taoiseach confirmed Ms May will come to Dublin towards the end of January to discuss the issues surrounding Brexit, particularly its implications for relationships between the UK and Ireland. It will be Ms May's first visit to the State since she succeeded David Cameron as prime minister in July.

The meeting will come ahead of the British government triggering the formal article 50 exit mechanism at the end of March.

In a round-table interview with journalists, Mr Kenny said the visit would form part of ongoing discussions over the future status of both states and their relationship following Britain's exit.

He said much would depend on the UK's position on its level of participation in the single market and in the EU's customs union.

"Before the end of March the strategy will become very clear so we know what we are negotiating on, and the future relationship the UK wants with the EU."

All-island dialogue

Parallel with the negotiations - both bilateral with the UK, and with the EU - he said the all-island civil dialogue would continue. A full plenary session would be held in Dublin Castle in the middle of February, he said, which would take into account all the issues that have emerged at sectoral meetings, which have looked at issues such as agriculture, trade, tourism and freedom of movement.

He said the Government would also continue its engagement with former French Minister Michel Barnier, who heads the EU's negotiating team on Brexit.

Earlier this week, Ms May seemed to tie the rights of Irish citizens residing in the UK with the outcome of discussions on the future status of UK citizens living in EU countries. She said that she wanted to ensure that UK citizens living elsewhere were being treated on a reciprocal basis to EU citizens living in Britain.

However, sources in Government said that Ms May's response may have conflated two different questions - the status of other EU citizens in Britain and the status of Irish citizens living in the UK.

Responding to Ms May's comments, Mr Kenny said: "Ireland has acquired along with Britain particular rights between our countries for a long period. The common travel area is not just for social reasons but it is also for work opportunities.

"As the prime minister has made a point of people from the UK living [elsewhere] in Europe that was a decision she made early on," he said. "That will all depend on the nature of the proposition that the British governmental actually makes. Do they want access to the single market or to stay with the Customs Union or to withdraw from both?"

"From an EU point of view, people have said to Britain you will not be able to cherry-pick in relation to the EU single market. You will have to give freedom of movement.

"Until such time as the prime minister moves article 50 we will not be clear about the nature of the proposition."

Source: The Irish Times