



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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**April 14, 2017**

## Warning over risk of agri-food jobs drain after Brexit

Recruitment firm Cpl has said key sectors in the Northern Ireland economy could lose jobs to the Republic unless reassurance is given on the status of EU workers.

The firm, led in Northern Ireland by Aine Brolly, said agri-food in particular could lose out if it can no longer rely on EU workers. And she said firms were already losing out as they couldn't recruit enough people.

Around 70,000 people work in the agri-food sector, which contributes around £1bn to the economy every year.

In the run-up to the EU Referendum, poultry giant Moy Park, which employs large numbers of EU workers in its NI plants, said future access to labour was one of the "compelling reasons" why it was in favour of staying in the EU.

And export growth in agri-food is outperforming the rest of the UK, Cpl said, with 6% growth to £7.4bn last year.

Chief executive Ms Brolly said continued access to a EU labour pool should be a priority to avoid Northern Ireland losing out.

"EU workers form a vital part of our economy and with the uncertainty and changing social dynamic following Brexit, as well as the fall in sterling, businesses are struggling to recruit the number of EU nationals needed to support development," she said.

"The agri-food industry is reliant on EU workers who make up 90% of its employee base, often on temporary contracts due to the seasonal nature of work and this flow of workers has to be maintained to ensure the continued growth of the sector."

Ms Brolly said temporary workers across the UK - from fruit pickers to IT consultants - had grown to around 865,000.

"Should future policy restrict access to this non-UK labour pool, then the agri-food industry will face a significant challenge," she said. "The industry would become less competitive and could decline as a result and more labour intensive jobs here may end up relocating to the south of Ireland, where there would still be access to a wider EU labour pool.

"Northern Ireland is the most exposed region of the UK regarding this issue, given the nature of the all-island economy and all-island businesses operating here."

Meanwhile, UK employment group Reed has said half of employers now believed that leaving the EU will hit work, compared with 70% in the weeks following the referendum last June.

A survey of more than 440 businesses found that a third predicted that the outcome of the UK's departure from the EU will be positive, with more jobs and lower unemployment.

Chairman James Reed said the number of jobs being advertised by the group backed up the optimism, with almost 700,000 new positions on offer this year, up by 10% on a year ago.

Concerns remained among employers, including the possibility of an economic downturn and work being moved abroad.

A majority of employers said they have not made changes to their recruitment since the vote to leave, indicating British businesses have held firm and continued with recruiting plans.

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

**April 17, 2017**

## Dublin-Belfast one-hour rail link to cushion Brexit blow

IRELAND will seek money for a 'rapid rail link' between Dublin and Belfast as part of the Brexit negotiations, the Irish Independent can reveal.

Foreign Affairs Minister Charlie Flanagan believes a special fund may also be needed to help improve our ports as the country looks to diversify trading partners.

He said the Government was "encouraged" by the draft negotiation paper drawn up by the EU as it acknowledged our "unique circumstances" in relation to Brexit.

But Mr Flanagan said the Government would need support in "revisiting" our priorities for infrastructure investment.

"I'd like to be able to see rail users travel from Dublin to Belfast in an hour. That will take capital expenditure and these are issues upon which I feel consideration should be given in the context of the negotiations," he said.

Currently a direct train from Connolly Station to Belfast Central takes around two hours and 10 minutes.

Mr Flanagan said keeping strong connections between the North and South would be a key outcome, as would Ireland's ability to increase trade with EU countries outside of Britain.

"I see a need to diversify.

That will mean our airports and ports will be hugely important to us in that endeavour. I'm thinking in particular our access points to the continent and the French ports," he said.

Asked who would pay for infrastructure improvements to help Ireland fend off the worst impacts of Brexit, Mr Flanagan replied: "That's a matter down the road, but Europe has always looked favourably to states that do suffer peripherality and the need to get goods to market."

Trading He noted that 40pc of food exports from Ireland currently go the UK, while over 50pc of goods coming through Warrenpoint Port in Co Down are destined for the Republic.

"The maintenance of the open Border is essential to all of this. That's where the Good Friday Agreement and the honouring of the agreement in terms of movement of people and trading of services is important."

However, the minister warned the delay in establishing a power-sharing administration in Northern Ireland was hampering the Government's negotiation position in Europe.

Talks between parties in the North have been ongoing since the snap election on March 2, but there is growing concern that another election may be called or there will be a return to direct rule.

"There is an urgency and I'm calling on the DUP and Sinn Féin to engage in the necessary level of compromise that will allow them surmount these challenges," he said. Mr Flanagan said people "want their decision-makers working".

"The clock is ticking on Brexit. There needs to be a Northern Ireland voice and that voice can only be from the elected representatives," he said.

He wants to call a meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council to discuss strategy ahead of the formal beginning of Brexit talks in Europe, but this is not possible without a new Stormont Executive taking office.

"The delay in forming a power-sharing Executive under the Good Friday Agreement is adding to the uncertainty in Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland as to our preparations for Brexit," said Mr Flanagan.

However, at an event in Tyrone last night, Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams said if the current DUP approach to talks continues "that will only guarantee that there will be no DUP first minister and no return to the status quo at Stormont".

In a sign of deep division between the parties, he said: "So DUP and UUP it's over to you."

**Source:** The Irish Independent

April 19 2017

## City watchdog determined to promote cross-border trade

The financial watchdog has made a case for cross-border market access and keeping the City open to talent in a post-Brexit world.

As part of its new business plan, which was unveiled yesterday, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) laid out its priorities for the coming year, with minimising disruption from Britain's EU exit among the issues at the top of its list.

FCA chief Andrew Bailey said: "The UK's decision to leave the European Union creates uncertainty for both the financial industry and the FCA.

"Both we and the Government are keen to ensure that the financial services industry remains resilient and well placed to meet users' needs and thus make the most of opportunities in a post-Brexit world.

"Leaving the EU inevitably creates a higher risk of disruption to our business plan priorities.

"So it is particularly important that we retain the flexibility to respond swiftly should we need to review them further."

Five principles will guide the FCA's advice to Government relating to Brexit.

These include cross-border market access, the opportunity to recruit and maintain a skilled workforce, cooperation between regulatory authorities and influence over standards.

The FCA also plans to put "consumer vulnerability and access to financial services" at the heart of its mission.

It pointed to a 2019 deadline for compensation payouts linked to the PPI scandal, which has so far resulted in over £24.5bn being paid to customers.

The body said it would launch a campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the PPI complaints deadline.

Just last month Citigroup which employs around 1,500 people here, sent an internal memo to staff following the triggering of Article 50, trying to address concerns over Brexit contingency plans.

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph