



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

## MEDIA WATCH

---

13/05/2016 - 20/05/2016

May 13, 2016

### Minister's stark warning for farmers if we leave Europe; UK Environment Secretary sings praises of our food and drink; firms, but insists quitting EU would be disastrous for NI's economy

FARM incomes in Northern Ireland could be hard-hit in the event of Brexit, UK Environment Secretary Liz Truss has warned. Visiting the Balmoral Show yesterday, the minister sang the praises of Northern Ireland companies such as Moy Park, which are investing in value added products.

She said the province exported £1 billion of food and drink produce to Europe every year, an activity that supported a huge number of jobs.

"What I am here saying today is that if we left the single market, it would be very bad news of Northern Ireland, for businesses and farmers," she told the Belfast Telegraph.

"Companies that are currently able to freely export into Europe would face border checks and that would mean an additional level of regulation.

"They could face tariffs too - there is no country that isn't a full member of the EU that doesn't have some kind of restriction on exports.

"£1bn of food and drink is exported to Europe every year and that supports a huge amount of jobs in the Northern Irish economy.

"I think it could cause a serious impact on farm incomes.

"It would be foolish to take for granted single market access with all the benefits it brings, particularly all the **cross- border** trade into the Republic."

Her comments were in stark contrast to those of her Cabinet colleague, Secretary of State Theresa Villiers, who was also doing the rounds at the Balmoral Show.

She has insisted that border checks between Northern Ireland and the Republic would not need to be restored in the event of the UK leaving Europe, and the land border would be as "free flowing as it is today".

Ms Truss also warned that food and drink exports from Northern Ireland to the Republic worth £850m would face an uncertain future if there was a Brexit.

**Cross-border** trade with the Republic accounts for 65% of all the food and drink exports from here.

As part of the EU single market, local farmers and food producers can easily sell their goods to consumers across the border, benefiting from tariff-free access and common standards on labelling, safety and welfare, the minister pointed.

She warned that farmers could face crippling tariffs to sell their goods to Europe and a red tape "double whammy" of different rules around inspections and labelling to sell abroad and at home - two sets of regulations, rather than one. Northern Ireland sells a huge proportion of its food and drink exports to the EU - 83% compared to the UK average of 60%.

Its food and drink export trade with the EU brings in over £1bn to the economy, and meat exports account for over a quarter of this value at £280m, with dairy and eggs a close second at £240m.

"Northern Ireland particularly benefits from easy, hassle-free trade with the Republic of Ireland - a vital source of income for farmers and food producers," the minister added.

"If we were to leave the EU, Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK would not be able to negotiate a bilateral trade deal with the Republic of Ireland.

"Northern Ireland's farmers would have no certainty on cross trade arrangements. Leaving the EU is a leap in the dark and a risk not worth taking, with no guarantees that such a good deal could be struck outside the EU.

"Northern Ireland's worldclass farmers and food producers are stronger, safer and better off within a reformed European Union."

During her visit the Environment Secretary met with Craigavon-based Moy Park.

It is the UK's biggest poultry producer, and the discussions between the two concerned the benefits of tariff-free access and common standards for food and farming businesses.

This is the province's Year of Food and Drink, and its rich food and drink scene boasts three foods with protected EU status - Lough Neagh Eels, Armagh Bramley Apples and New Season Comber Potatoes.

The minister said 50,000 jobs here could be linked to trade with the rest of the European Union.

In 2014, almost £4bn of goods were traded across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, benefiting from tariff-free access.

From 1998 to 2014 exports to the Republic grew by 86% in real terms.

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

**May 16, 2016**

## Foster says Kenny wrong on Brexit and peace

NORTHERN Ireland's newly re-elected First Minister Arlene Foster has said she "can't understand" why Taoiseach Enda Kenny would claim the peace process could be damaged by a Brexit.

The DUP leader said peace was not built by the EU. She continued: "The peace process is built between the communities in Northern Ireland, the relationship between ourselves and our closest neighbours in the Republic of Ireland and with the support of our sovereign government in the United Kingdom.

"So it's not based in terms of the European Union and I can't understand why anybody would make those kinds of remarks."

Ms Foster added that the common travel area between **North and South** would remain if the UK left the EU.

**Source:** Irish Independent

**May 17, 2016**

## Lawyer warns Human Rights Act repeal would be attack on Good Friday Agreement

The repeal of the Human Rights Act would be a fundamental attack on Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement, a leading lawyer said.

Its possible replacement by a British Bill of Rights is expected to be announced in the forthcoming Queen's Speech at the state opening of Parliament on May 18, Niall Murphy from KRW Law said.

Its "dangerous" impact on dealing with the legacy of the Troubles is to be addressed in a report published on Tuesday.

Mr Murphy said: "The repeal of the Human Rights Act is a fundamental attack upon the core values of the Good Friday Agreement 1998."

The report said a move to restrict the application of human rights standards to "serious cases" would fall below the minimum standards in the convention.

It also warned:

:: The current proposals would deprive those considered to have "trivial" claims of a remedy before the domestic courts for breaches of their European Convention on Human Rights protections .

:: Proposals to reduce the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights to advisory opinions would breach the convention requirement "to abide by the final judgment of the court.

:: The Good Friday Agreement explicitly includes the ability of the courts to override Assembly legislation on the grounds of inconsistency. If this were diminished in any way,

for example by limiting the courts' ability to take into account Strasbourg jurisprudence, there may be an arguable breach of the agreement.

KRW Law is the largest human rights legal practice in Ireland, representing many of the relatives of the victims of the conflict and survivors from across the community, including former members of the British security forces.

The practice also assists the families of victims of the Birmingham Pub Bombings in 1974.

Mr Murphy added: "The Human Rights Act 1998, which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, is of core importance in the work we undertake on behalf of our clients and, more significantly, a lodestone for the out-working of the **cross-border** and internationally endorsed Belfast Good Friday Agreement 1998."

On Tuesday, solicitors from the firm will be at the House of Commons for the launch of an important co-authored report - Repeal Of The Human Rights Act: Implications For Northern Ireland.

It was commissioned by the European United Left/ Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) group of the European Parliament and co-authored with lawyers from Doughty Street Chambers.

Mr Murphy said repealing the Act was a far more complicated and dangerous proposal than the British Government was having people believe and should be addressed separately from the Brexit debate.

"This joint report with colleagues from Doughty Street Chambers is a clear analysis of the dangerous repercussions of the proposals to repeal the Human Rights Act."

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

**May 19, 2016**

## EU Referendum - Flanagan: Ireland would be looking at external border

The fate of the common travel area between Ireland and Britain after a 'Brexit' would not be decided solely by the authorities in London and Dublin, the Republic's minister for foreign affairs has warned.

Charlie Flanagan said there may be issues around the movement of goods and people that would have to be determined collectively by the European Union's 27 remaining members.

Speaking to The Irish News during his first visit north since being reappointed as the foreign affairs post, the Laois-Offaly Fine Gael TD said while next month's referendum was a "matter exclusively for the people of Northern Ireland and Britain", he was keen to stress the importance of the EU on both sides of the border.

Mr Flanagan cautioned against saying the peace process would break down if the UK left Europe, but said the EU's contribution to nurturing peace in the north could not be overestimated.

The minister said Europe had always been a "constructive arena" for helping secure peace and stability between Ireland and Britain, and Brussels had shown a "huge font" of political goodwill existed towards Ireland as a whole.

"I don't wish to exaggerate it nor do I wish to make wild claims, but I do acknowledge that history has indeed recorded the facts - there were times when there were issues in Northern Ireland, between parties and between communities, where the arena the EU provided created an opportunity for reaching a settlement on certain issues," he said. Mr Flanagan said that in the weeks running up to the June 23 referendum he would be stressing the importance of British-Irish relations and **north-south** relations.

"I believe strongly and clearly that the UK should remain an active and constructive member of the European Union and I believe it's important that a campaign of information and a vigorous debate of the issues takes place here in Northern Ireland," he said.

"I'm also anxious that Dublin's strategic interest be known in that regard."

The minister accepted that his views are at variance with those of the pro-Brexit secretary of state Theresa Villiers but insisted it would not affect their "most constructive relationship".

Mr Flanagan's remarks on the continued existence of the common travel area in the event of a 'Leave' victory contradict those of Ms Villiers, who has insisted that movement across the Irish border need not be restricted.

He said "contingency plans" are in place and that the Dublin government has considered "the likely (post-Brexit) scenario" but nobody could say "with any certainty" that the common travel area would prevail.

"Should there be a change in status and should the United Kingdom leave the European Union it would obviously result in a new scenario - we'd be looking at an EU external border - and I don't think these are issues that can be resolved entirely by the UK and Ireland," he said.

"Ultimately, there may be issues that would be decided by the 27 EU member states, so at best this will give rise to a great degree of uncertainty. I don't believe it's therefore possible for people to say with any degree of certainty that the situation will remain the same - I don't believe it can."

Mr Flanagan said a UK vote to leave the EU would result in an "enormous challenge of an unprecedented nature".

**Source:** The Irish News

**May 20, 2016**

## 'Anything which would bring a land barrier between **north and south** would be a disaster'

A BREXIT would be a "disaster" for Northern Ireland, former Irish ambassador to the UK Dáithí O'Ceallaigh has warned.

Mr O'Ceallaigh, who served as ambassador between 2001 and 2007, said any reimposition of a border would have negative consequences.

"Anything which would prevent or lessen the interconnection for people **north or south** would not be good for the people of the north, and it would not be good for the people of the south," he said at the IIEA conference yesterday.

"If there is a Brexit, one way or another, there would be some reimposition of customs. Anything like that which would bring a land barrier between **north and south** would be a disaster." He said the future of Northern Ireland exists in the close co-operation between London and Dublin, under the European umbrella.

"Should Britain leave that umbrella, I'm fearful," he said.

Former European Commissioner Peter Sutherland, inset, said a British exit from Europe would be "devastating" to whole sectors of the community in the North.

Although he didn't specifically name the DUP, he said he was amazed that the party was so "imbued with a sense of exceptionalism that it is in favour apparently of Brexit".

**Source:** The Irish Independent