# Minutes

# INTRODUCTORY MEETING FARM ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL (FAWAC)

**Date:** 4th June 2021

**Venue:** Via Webex

**Meeting Time:**  10.30am

**Attendee’s:**

Ciara Feeney Reid (Chair), Brendan Golden IFA, Gerald Quain ICMSA, Bernadette Early Teagsac, Mairead Wallace Pickett, Ray Doyle ICOS, Stephen Arthur, IFA, Martin Blake (CVO DAFM), Patricia Reilly, DAFM, Sean Murray, DAFM, Geraldine Corcoran DAFM,

Apologies: Alison Hanlon, UCD, Conor Dowling, ISPCA,

1. **Introduction**

Ms Ciara Feeney Reid the new Chairperson of the group welcomed everyone and introduced her self as the new Chair. To start the Chair gave a brief description of her background and invited the group to share theirs.

**Ciara Reid Chairperson**

The Chair informed the group of extensive experience working initially as a vet in UK, then in industry for a time, and returned to clinical practice. Ciara is a former chairperson of Veterinary Ireland. As Chair of FAWAC she outlined that she is independent and her only vested interest is as a consumer. Ciara outlined the role of FAWAC was to fulfil.

**Martin Blake CVO** – Martin introduced himself and informed the group that he was present at the first ever meeting of FAWAC. He spoke of the commitment of members of FAWAC and chairmanship of former chair Professor Fotrell. Martin advised that the Programme for Government is an opportunity for FAWAC to recast and renew, he outlined the increasing importance assigned to animal welfare referencing the Animal Welfare Strategy and the new Animal Welfare Division. Martin is looking forward to hearing contribution of committee moving forward from earlier issues.

**Patricia Reilly** – Patricia Reilly introduced herself as the new head of the Department’s Animal Welfare Division, her career to date including joining DAFM during Foot and Mouth and working as agricultural attaché in Poland and in the cabinet of Maura Geoghegan-Quinn in Brussels and the Hungarian Commissioner. Patricia also outlined the commitments if the Programme for Government , the ongoing CAP negotiations, and the importance of Ireland being recognised as a country that promotes welfare of animals. Patricia spoke briefly of the Animal Health and Welfare strategy that was launched earlier this year by Minister McConalogue following an extensive public consultation in 2018.

**Brendan Golden** welcomed Ciara as chairperson. He outlined the challenges faced by farmers which he encountered in his role as IFA National Livestock Chairman. He explained as a farmer of his first hand experience of the pressures of farming and the ways in which different management conditions effect welfare. He opined that, with the number of new policies being introduced there was in danger of driving smaller family farms out of business. Brendan spoke of his commitment to farmers and promoting best practice to his members.

**Bernadette Early** informed of her attendance at the first FAWAC meeting. Her background was in pharmacology, before joining Teagasc to work mainly in Research. Bernadette had two papers accepted for publication in the last week relating to pain management and calf disbudding. Bernadette is currently working on topical issues such as underfoot conditions, where there is no current EU legislation. Bernadette advised that an area of concern is the transport of unweaned calves.

**Mairead Wallace Piggot**, is a private vet from Millstreet and a former president of Veterinary Ireland. Mairead outlined that on the ground vets can identify were issues are arising and from where. Maiead praised the benefits of the FAWAC early warning system.

**Gerard Quain,** congratulated Ciara on her appointment. He is a mixed farmer, focussing mainly on dairy. His role is to represent milk suppliers. He underlined that live exports was vital to farmers and directly related to the welfare of exported calves.

**Ray Doyle,** welcomed Ciara to the group. Ray has worked with ICOS since 2007. He represents cooperatives and dairy processors and livestock marts on the group. He outlined how vital it is to underpin welfare standards to ensure markets Irish Cattle and produce.

**Stephen Arthur**, is the chairman to the IFA Dairy Committee and a family dairy farmer in Wicklow on the ground. He spoke of on the ground farmer issues, and the need to communicate to the public that farmers take pride in their animals and their welfare standards.

**Sean Murray** introduced himself and outlined his civil service experience across a wide range of Departments, and his experience across the Department of Agriculture, including his recent role in Animal Welfare.

1. **Terms of Reference of Committee**

Sean Murray had circulated the terms of reference to the committee and asked for input into same. Sean also agreed to forward a copy of the Departments Animal Welfare Strategy to all members.

1. **Consideration of more stakeholders**

The group were invited to consider if there were any stakeholders not currently participating in the committee that warranted an invitation to participate.

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1. **Dates of meetings**

The dates of the next four meetings were agreed as June 18th, September 17th, October 29th and December 10th, start time 9.30 with a hope to eventually move to physical meetings before year end.

1. **Conclusion**

The Chair ended the meeting by adding that although everyone came from different backgrounds the groups discussions would be robust and respectful. Consensus on all issues may be difficult but in those situations, decisions would be made based on majority. The Chair informed of her hope that the group would live up to the reputation of FAWAC and its previous achievements.