



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Dr William McCrea MP MLA  
Chairperson, Committee for  
Agriculture and Rural Development  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Rt. Hon Hilary Benn MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Defra  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

5 November 2007

Dear Secretary of State

The Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development received a presentation from a delegation comprising the Ulster Farmers Union Dairy Committee and Dairy UK at their meeting of 4 November 2008.

During this presentation, the delegation apprised the Committee that demand for dairy products had slumped in the second and third quarters of 2008 and that this had resulted in a significant reduction in revenue into the Northern Ireland dairy industry during 2008, which has been reflected in lower prices to dairy farmers compared with 2007.

The Committee, in considering this matter, believes that the challenge for the Northern Ireland dairy industry in dealing with market volatility is two-fold: in the short term, market support by the Commission is needed urgently, ***the priority being the reintroduction of Export Refunds***. In the medium/long term the industry will need assistance from the Northern Ireland Executive to help it achieve a better balance within the product portfolios of dairy companies, and to help improve competitiveness against global competitors, so that the Northern Ireland dairy industry is better prepared to respond to future market volatility.

On behalf of the Committee, I would ask that you take the matter of reintroducing export refunds up with the Commissioner for Agriculture as a means of supporting this vital Northern Ireland Industry.

Yours faithfully

Dr William McCrea MP MLA  
Chairperson to the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development