

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM
FOR
POLITICAL DIALOGUE

REVIEW OF THE BEEF
INDUSTRY CRISIS IN
NORTHERN IRELAND
(Interim Report)

by

STANDING COMMITTEE OF
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES ISSUES

1 November 1996

REVIEW OF THE BEEF INDUSTRY CRISIS IN NORTHERN IRELAND (Interim Report)

"..... I have been very impressed that all parts of the industry have worked together, farmers' unions, the renderers, the meat exporters - everybody has tried to be helpful in this situation - and we are aware of the seriousness of the situation. I sometimes say there has been nothing like it since the famine - maybe you get overwhelmed by the one which affects you - but I think there is an argument that there has been nothing like this since the famine"

Mr John Murray
Permanent Secretary
Department of Agriculture
for Northern Ireland

25 September 1996

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BEEF INDUSTRY CRISIS
IN NORTHERN IRELAND
(Interim Report)**

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REVIEW OF THE BEEF INDUSTRY CRISIS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the last plenary meeting of the Forum before the Summer Recess held on Friday 26 July 1996, it was agreed, inter alia, that a Committee be set up with the following terms of reference:

"to examine the problems being faced by farmers and fishermen and report to the Forum by 31 December 1996."

- 1.2 During the Summer Recess, advertisements seeking written submissions from interested groups and individuals were placed in the Northern Ireland morning and evening newspapers.

- 1.3 The Forum reconvened after the Summer Recess on Friday 6 September 1996 and on Thursday 12 September the first meeting of the Agriculture Committee was held at which Mr David Campbell was elected Chairman. The written evidence available was reviewed at this meeting and it was agreed that as a matter of urgency, the first task of the Committee would be to investigate and report on the Beef Industry Crisis in Northern Ireland.

- 1.4 On Friday 13 September a motion dealing with the Beef Industry Crisis (BSE), proposed by Mr Dodds, was debated in the Forum. This debate

which lasted 4½ hours, gave all members of the Forum the opportunity to address the issues of this complex situation which not only affects farmers equally on each side of the religious divide, but which has had an economic and social impact on the wider rural community. At the conclusion of the debate, the following resolution was unanimously agreed:

"This Forum appalled at the continuing crisis in Northern Ireland's beef industry. demands:

1. that Northern Ireland be recognised as having special status for BSE purposes so that the world-wide export ban can be lifted as soon as possible;
2. that the backlog of cattle in the over-30 months cattle slaughter scheme be eliminated;
3. that BSE 'flagging' should apply to herds, not holdings and that a voluntary "buy-up" scheme be introduced for BSE 'flagged' suckler herds;
4. that specific beef intervention for Northern Ireland be introduced;
5. that Government provide fair and adequate compensation for beef producers in keeping with previous commitments; and
6. that HLCAs be increased in the autumn review.

Furthermore, the Forum urges the Minister responsible for agriculture, Baroness Denton and the Minister responsible for agriculture, fisheries and food Douglas Hogg, to honour their commitment to safeguard the Northern Ireland beef industry."

- 1.5 This resolution was forwarded to the Agriculture Minister, Baroness Denton, by the Chairman of the Forum on 19 September 1996.
- 1.6 The Agriculture Committee having taken approximately 13 hours of oral evidence over a period of three weeks, decided as a matter of urgency to prepare an interim report for presentation to the Forum, this interim report to contain recommendations which would influence the approach being taken on this issue by the Department of Agriculture, the Government and the EU.
- 1.7 The Committee is aware of, and pays tribute to the work of a number of bodies and individuals within the agriculture industry including the Northern Ireland Members of Parliament, and MEPs all of whom have pleaded the Northern Ireland case at Westminster and in Europe.

2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), a disease of cattle which results in degeneration of the brain and eventual death was identified in 1986. Following study of the disease it was concluded in late 1987 that the cause of BSE was animal feed containing meat and bonemeal from ruminants, and in June 1988 the disease was made notifiable. A temporary ruminant feed ban was enforced in July 1988 requiring an immediate end to the use of such feeding material.
- 2.2 In August 1988 a slaughter policy was introduced - all cattle identified as being infected with the disease being killed. After further research, the feed ban was extended and a ban on certain specified bovine offal came into force in England and Wales (November 1989), being extended to Northern Ireland and Scotland in January 1990.
- 2.3 The first case of BSE in Northern Ireland was recorded in July 1988 and since then 1,724 cases have been identified. During the same period 163,000 cases occurred in Great Britain and 143 in the Republic of Ireland. The disease has also occurred in indigenous cattle in France, Portugal and Switzerland. The relatively low incidence of the disease in Northern Ireland is noteworthy. Within the Northern Ireland herd (approximately 1.6 million head), the disease peaked in 1993. The current incidence rate is 6 per month (or 72 per year) representing 0.004% of the herd.

2.4 The restrictions in force before the present crisis which tightened up controls are included in the Specified Bovine Offal Order 1995.

2.5 The present crisis began with an announcement in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Health on 20 March 1996 about new conclusions from the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (House of Commons debate, 20 March 1996 c 375).

"The Committee has considered the work being done by the Government Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh, which specialises in Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease. That work, which relates to the 10 cases of CJD that have been identified in people aged under 42, has led the Committee to conclude that the Unit has identified a previously unrecognised and consistent disease pattern. A review of patients' medical histories, genetic analysis and consideration of other possible causes have failed to explain those cases adequately.

There remains no scientific proof that bovine spongiform encephalopathy can be transmitted to man by beef, but the Committee has concluded that the most likely explanation at present is that those cases are limited to exposure to BSE before the introduction of the specified bovine offal ban in 1989"

2.6 With effect from 29 March 1996, the Government banned the manufacture of feeding stuffs for farm animals using mammalian meat and bonemeal and extended the specific bovine offal controls to cover

heads and lymph glands. The Minister also announced a ban on the sale of meat from newly slaughtered cattle over 30 months.

- 2.7 It is clear that the present crisis has arisen because of the perception by the consumer that there is a link between BSE and CJD - BSE being the disease in animals and CJD the equivalent disease in humans.
- 2.8 CJD it must be explained, is a very rare human disease, affecting one person in a million each year. In the course of an oral evidence session held on 25 September 1996, the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (Mr Murray) pointed out that CJD has been found sporadically, without any cause being identified, throughout the world, and in countries where BSE has not been identified. He also explained that the incidence of CJD in Australia, where BSE does not occur is almost the same as in the UK. Mr Murray also referred to the identification by the CJD Surveillance Unit in early 1996 of a new variety of the disease which affected younger people. As at July 1996 this new strain of CJD had affected 11 people in the United Kingdom - despite this, the overall incidence of the disease still remains at one in one million.
- 2.9 The 20 March 1996 announcement mentioned at paragraph 5 above had a dramatic adverse effect on markets for beef across Europe. On 26 March, the EU banned the export of beef and beef products from the UK. This ban is extremely serious for Northern Ireland, since 85% of farms here have cattle and output from the beef sector is worth £400m, the equivalent of 40% of total agricultural output.

2.10 55% by volume of beef produced in Northern Ireland is exported outside the UK. 77% is exported outside Northern Ireland. The industry employs 16,000 people on farms, 3,500 in processing plants and a further 3,000 approximately in ancillary industries. The beef industry is therefore very significant in terms of the overall economy of Northern Ireland.

2.11 The following measures have been taken by the Government since the EU ban to reassure the public:

- the banning of animal protein from all animal feed, and the prohibition of the use of animal protein in fertilizers;
- the intensification of supervision at abattoirs, cutting and rendering plants;
- the ban on beef from animals aged over 30 months for human consumption.

In addition further measures covering intervention, a calf slaughtering scheme, and support for the rendering industry have been introduced.

2.12 However, the top priority which remains is to recover the Northern Ireland export market for beef. The unique Northern Ireland computer system which enables the movement of every bovine animal to be traced from birth to slaughter, is a major selling point, as is the fact that the

incidence of BSE in Northern Ireland is only 1% of that in GB and is falling. In addition Northern Ireland has a centralised veterinary service which ensures a uniform highly professional facility in each meat plant and rendering facility.

2.13 In June 1996 at Florence, a framework for the lifting of the EU ban, was agreed. A significant feature of this is a selective cull designed to reduce the number of future cases of BSE, by removing cattle born and reared in the same group as animals which have succumbed to BSE which may therefore have been exposed to the same feed. Around 2,000 cattle would be slaughtered in Northern Ireland under this scheme.

2.14 It has since been announced that scientific evidence now available means that further work will be needed on appropriate culling strategies and that the Government also intends to consult further with the EU on proposals for relaxing restrictions on animals in certified and other herds which have no contact with BSE. Northern Ireland will be exceptionally well placed to benefit from such a certified herd scheme.

2.15 With regard to Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances (HLCAs), an additional £60m has been provided on a UK basis by the Government in respect of cattle in the hills through the 1997 Scheme. The Northern Ireland share of this is not yet known, but should be approximately £12m.

2.16 As at 25 September 1996, a very considerable backlog of animals awaiting slaughter exists because of the available rendering capacity.

2.17 In human terms, the crisis has had a disastrous effect on farmers and their families, an effect which will be long lasting and which will not be easily forgotten. In the words of the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Mr Murray "I think there is an argument that there has been nothing like this since the famine."

2.18 On 24 October 1996, it was announced that a team of scientists led by Professor Collinge at the Imperial College School of Medicine at St Mary's, London had developed a test that establishes that the prions present in patients with 'new variant' CJD were almost identical to the prions found in cattle with BSE.

The Prime Minister, Mr Major, commenting on the announcement, said that the Government had taken all the necessary precautions and that there is no new, fresh, public health concern. "People can eat beef as safely today as they could yesterday."

The President of the Ulster Farmers' Union, Mr Greer McCollum commenting on the announcement indicated that there are no more cases of CJD today than there were 10-15 years ago and that CJD is one of the rarest diseases in the UK, and continues to occur in other countries around the world where BSE has not been found.

3. POINTS ARISING FROM EVIDENCE

3.1 The Committee notes that:

3.1.1 the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland is united in its approach to this crisis which knows no political or religious borders;

3.1.2 with regard to the Northern Ireland agriculture economy

- agriculture, forestry and fishing account for 5% of gross domestic product in Northern Ireland (compared to 2% in GB);
- when food processing and agricultural input supply are included the share of gross domestic product rises to 8%;
- about 6% of the Northern Ireland workforce is engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing and a further 4% in ancillary industries;
- the agri-business sector as a whole makes a significant contribution to the production base of the regional economy, accounting for about one-quarter of the GDP from and one-third of the employment in agriculture and the production industries taken together;
- approximately 39,000 people are employed in the agriculture industry;
- output for finished cattle and calves in Northern Ireland amounts to £400m annually;

- the estimated number of people employed in the processing industry for animal by-products and beef and sheep meat sectors is 3,950 while the agricultural supply sector employs 4,640;
- exports of cattle and calves from Northern Ireland in 1995 were valued at £26.6m;
- exports of beef products from Northern Ireland in 1995 were valued at £271.1m;
- the number of steers, heifers and young bulls at market in 1995 was 367,900 valued at £263.8m;
- 9,800 store cattle were exported in 1995, valued at £45m;

3.1.3 while 163,000 cases of BSE have been recorded in GB, only 1% of this total has been recorded in Northern Ireland (some 1,724 cases) over the same period;

3.1.4 while GB imports beef to meet its needs, and therefore can withstand the effect of the BSE crisis much more easily, Northern Ireland must export beef and therefore is unable to sustain its beef industry in the face of a world-wide export ban;

3.1.5 unless the world-wide ban on Northern Ireland beef is lifted without delay, the Northern Ireland beef sector will collapse with disastrous

effects on farmers, the agricultural industry and the wider Northern Ireland economy;

3.1.6 the Northern Ireland beef industry is better placed than all its competitors within the UK and abroad to take advantage of the lifting of the ban, a framework for which was set out in the Florence Agreement of June 1996;

3.1.7 the positive selling points with regard to Northern Ireland beef are

- the unique identification and traceability system for cattle which is in place in Northern Ireland and which is not yet available in GB;
- the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme to which 75% of the 10,000 main beef producers in Northern Ireland belong and with which, increasingly, the major supermarkets are registering;

3.1.8 with regard to the over-30 month Cattle Slaughter Scheme

- 89,000 of 170,000 registered cattle have been slaughtered to date;
- a further 2,000 cattle per week are entering the system;
- current throughput of the Scheme in Northern Ireland is approximately 4,000 cattle per week with a net destruction rate of 2,000 cattle per week, ie a 6-month backlog;
- estimates of the backlog range from 40,000 cattle to 100,000 cattle;

- farmers in general do not have the capacity to house or feed these animals over the winter period;
- it was generally indicated that this backlog must be cleared immediately, and that Government has a responsibility to ensure that this occurs;
- rendering capacity is the limiting factor in this Scheme;
- rendering plants in Northern Ireland are working to maximum capacity and processing more material than ever before;
- essential maintenance work in the rendering plants will cause delays;
- rendering plants in Northern Ireland are working under much more severe constraints than their GB counterparts;
- possible means of accelerating the Scheme's throughput include
 - increased usage of cold storage;
 - use of spare rendering capacity potentially available in Scotland;
 - burning and burying of carcasses at a central location;
 - use of existing/proposed incineration capacity both in Northern Ireland and GB for the destruction of carcasses;
 - the boning out of carcasses;

3.1.9 with regard to special status

- the industry is calling for Northern Ireland to be given special treatment because of the unique computer system which enables movement of every bovine animal to be traced from birth to slaughter;
- the incidence of BSE in Northern Ireland has fallen to .004 of the total herd;
- 75% of the main beef herds in Northern Ireland are registered under the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme;
- Northern Ireland is 20 years ahead of the GB systems both in technical innovation and produce marketing systems;
- no other region in the world can match the high standards of protection offered by the Northern Ireland beef industry;

3.1.10

with regard to calls for a Northern Ireland Beef Stamp:

- the national identification of each member state of the EU must be stamped on beef as proof of origin;
- beef originating in Northern Ireland must therefore bear a UK stamp;
- DANI are investigating the possibility of a Northern Ireland identification somewhere within the national UK Stamp;

- the introduction of the Certified Herds Scheme may provide a means of introducing a Northern Ireland identity stamp;
- that DANI have already managed to use a Northern Ireland identity stamp in certain limited circumstances;

3.1.11 with regard to Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances (HLCAs)

- the Government has announced that an additional £60m will be provided nationally in 1997 in respect of cattle in the hills;
- HLCA rates were significantly reduced in 1993 and in 1994 and have remained static since then;
- DANI will shortly be negotiating the Northern Ireland share of this £60m with Her Majesty's Treasury and the other UK Agriculture Departments.

3.1.12 with regard to BSE flagged herds/holdings

- there are in Northern Ireland some 300 suckler herds and 900 dairy herds which have had a case of BSE;
- the holdings of farmers in the UK with BSE affected cattle have been flagged by the EC, not the herds, thereby making it impossible for a UK farmer to de-populate and start afresh;

- suckler herd farmers are facing particular problems in that they may be unable to sell their cattle;
- a buy-out scheme for the 300 farmers has been proposed which because few animals are involved, would cost approximately £3m;

3.1.13 with regard to Intervention

- as markets outside the UK are no longer available a substantial proportion of beef must be diverted to alternative outlets;
- the EU's Beef Intervention Scheme is effectively the only other market which exists and therefore plays an absolutely essential role in removing cattle for human consumption from farms;
- the calls for future Northern Ireland beef intervention tenders to be awarded in full and for the establishment of specific beef intervention with no weight limits.

3.1.14 with regard to Milk Overproduction

- a considerable proportion of animals awaiting slaughter under the over-30 Months Scheme are cull dairy cows;
- as these animals are still being milked, milk production levels are currently running dramatically in excess of quota;
- as demand for replacement dairy heifers is greatly reduced, more animals will be held on farms;

- in all these circumstances, milk production levels will rise, and as a result farmers could face a superlevy;

3.1.15 with regard to casualty and fallen cattle

- more stringent application of the public health regulations is required;

3.1.16 with regard to livestock marts

- throughput at marts is down 33% approx;
- the slaughter of animals over 30 months has meant that cull cow sales have ceased;
- this has led to the closure of the Strabane Mart;
- sale prices have fallen by £200 approx per animal and at £4 commission lost for each animal sold, this equates to a loss of £2.5m to the industry;
- marts are experiencing a 40% reduction in earnings which if no relief occurs soon will mean further closures;
- marts are not obtaining their market share of cull cows;

- the view of the Association of Livestock Auctioneers is that Meat Plants have an unfair advantage as the central booking office for the cull is controlled by NIMEA's Chief Executive;
- there are only 9 Meat Plants and several of these are controlled by one party;
- the Association of Livestock Auctioneers is calling for compensation for its members for loss of business - compensation which has already been paid to other parts of the industry;
- the Association of Livestock Auctioneers is calling for relief from rates presently being re-assessed under the non-domestic revaluation;

3.1.17 with regard to the Beef Assurance Scheme

- cattle up to 42 months of age enter the Slaughter Scheme;
- farmers are being charged £35 to join plus £3.35 per head, over the whole herd, regardless of the number of animals;

3.1.18 with regard to hides of over-30 month old cattle

- 30,000 hides are in storage at Lisburn which are unable to be moved unless designated for non-food use;
- DANI are examining this problem as a matter of urgency;

3.1.19 with regard to the ban imposed by the Republic of Ireland on the export from Northern Ireland of live cattle

- an EC ban exists because of high UK BSE status;

3.1.20 with regard to the Certified Herds Scheme

- this Scheme will not be acceptable to the EU unless the Florence Agreement is adhered to;
- that this Scheme is being pressed with the EU by the DANI Minister;
- that this Scheme is the best possible option for Northern Ireland;

3.1.21 with regard to the future

- even if the ban on export of beef is lifted soon, the recovery of markets will take some time;
- concerted marketing activity will be necessary, bringing together the agricultural industry, IDB and other bodies in a high profile PR exercise;
- while the agriculture industry will have to find some resources for such an exercise, Government finance will be necessary to help recover lost ground;

3.1.22 with regard to Government assistance to the agriculture industry

- an additional £46m has now been made available nationally as follows
- £29m towards supplementing the income of beef producers;
- £16m+ to provide extra cold storage capacity;
- advance payments of up to 80% of beef special premium subsidies;
- the Northern Ireland share of this assistance is not yet known;

3.1.23 with regard to meat and bonemeal

- the withdrawal of meat and bonemeal has had the effect of increasing the price of other proteins eg soya;
- the Republic of Ireland uses meat and bonemeal in ruminant feeds in the intensive sector;
- it is illegal for producers in Northern Ireland to purchase feed containing meat and bonemeal from the Republic of Ireland;

3.1.24 it is the view of the Northern Ireland Grain Trade Association

- that calves born after 1 August 1996, including those from 'flagged' herds, should be 'unflagged' as the use of meat and bonemeal is now illegal;

- that compounders support the farming industry, unsecured credit standing at present at £30m (representing two months' credit) and that if the backlog of cull cattle is not cleared quickly the Grain Trade will be unable to recover cash through no fault of the farmer;

3.1.25 with regard to Supermarkets

- Wellworths' beef sales dropped by 40% immediately post-March 1996, and that currently, sales in this area are still 14-20% down;
- Wellworths' sell only beef originating in Northern Ireland;
- Stewarts obtains all its meat from Northern Ireland, 98% from one factory - all animals used coming from Farm Quality Assured herds;
- Stewarts would wish to see the creation of a Northern Ireland Food Ministry separate from the Department of Agriculture;
- Stewarts consider that the only approach which will prop up consumer confidence is the introduction of an ante-mortem test;
- Marks & Spencer source beef from a limited number of approved abattoirs, none of which at present are in Northern Ireland;

3.1.26 with regard to the Banks

- bank borrowing increased by £104m from, £287m in 1992 to £391m in 1996 (an increase of 36% during the period) reflecting the increased buoyancy of the agriculture economy prior to 20 March 1996;
- 20-25% reduction in prices across the board will mean a reduction in cashflow for grass based enterprises in the agriculture industry of approximately £70m;
- policy is to work with individual farmers, identifying problems and adopting, where possible, a constructive and supportive stance;
- no details of borrowers' total commitment is available (eg HP and leasing details not available or not indicated).

4. REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

- 4.1 Having reviewed all the evidence submitted to date, the Committee wishes to express its admiration for the commitment of all sectors of the agricultural industry to the task of finding a solution to the BSE crisis.
- 4.2 Indeed, the crisis has united all shades of political opinion in the pursuit of answers to the problems posed by the disease. As indicated earlier in this Review, the crisis knows no political or religious borders and the Committee in conducting the Review has been conscious of the relevance to this issue of the remit of the Forum, viz the promotion of dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland.
- 4.3 The Committee wishes to stress that the severity of the crisis is such that every person in Northern Ireland will feel the effects. The Northern Ireland Banks in their evidence explained that, resulting from the crisis, a cash shortage of £70m exists - this is £70m which is not available to the local economy - £70m which is not being spent in shops and stores across Northern Ireland.
- 4.4 Finally, the Committee is convinced that on the evidence available, Northern Ireland Beef is without doubt, the best and safest beef in the world and would commend its consumption both at home and abroad.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 **The Committee recommends** that the Agriculture Minister should adopt a regionalised policy within the United Kingdom to enable those definable regions which are best able to fulfil the requirements of the European Standing Veterinary Committee and the terms of the Florence Agreement in the short term to be allowed to do so. **The Committee further recommends** the implementation in Northern Ireland of a certified herds scheme, the implementation of the Accelerated Selective Slaughter Programme, and the progressive lifting of the beef export ban. **It is also recommended that** even when the ban is lifted, beef support measures must remain in place until such time as the industry returns to normal.

5.2 The Committee expresses its deep concern about the mounting backlog of cattle awaiting slaughter through the over 30 month scheme, and stresses that the increasing delays in the slaughter programme are the single most important problem affecting farmers, who as a result face the prospect of severe animal welfare problems in the New Year.

The Committee recognises that it will take time to clear the backlog and **therefore recommends** a payment to farmers to compensate for the cost of housing and feeding animals not cleared in advance of the target date of Christmas 1996. In addition, **the Committee** being aware of reported abuses of the system for dealing with the slaughter of animals in

the over 30 months scheme, **recommends** the inclusion of ear tag numbers at the time of registration.

The Committee sees no justification in over-30 months clean beef cattle receiving less compensation than cull cows and **recommends that** this be addressed as a matter of urgency.

5.3 **The Committee recommends that** DANI should monitor closely the situation of milk producers who may over-produce as a result of having to keep cows awaiting slaughter, **and further recommends that** no superlevy should be imposed for such proven over-production.

5.4 **The Committee recommends that** the EU should continue to meet Northern Ireland beef intervention tenders in full and should introduce specific beef intervention without weight limits.

5.5 The Committee can determine no logical basis for holdings being BSE "flagged" rather than herds. **The Committee recommends** that DANI should press MAFF and EU to have this unfair situation corrected. **The Committee further recommends** that specific compensation for "flagged" holdings should be available and suggests that such assistance should take the form of a voluntary buy-up scheme or a headage payment.

5.6 **The Committee recommends that** calves born since 1 August, 1996 be 'unflagged', irrespective of whether they are from a 'flagged' or

'unflagged' herd as there will have been no chance of infection as a result of consumption of infected meat and bonemeal.

- 5.7 **The Committee recommends that** DANI, in negotiating the HLCA payments for 1997 in Northern Ireland, should emphasise the special financial difficulties affecting Northern Ireland's hill farmers.
- 5.8 **The Committee** appeals to banking and other financial institutions to show sympathy for agricultural businesses experiencing unusual difficulties as a result of the BSE crisis. **The Committee** recognises that there may be a minority of situations where repayment "holidays" or loan rescheduling may not prove sufficient to save otherwise viable businesses. **The Committee recommends that** in these situations borrowings might be rescheduled as interest-free for specific periods to enable survival of the businesses.
- 5.9 **The Committee recommends** the establishment of an Agricultural Hardship Fund, involving all sectors of the industry, to provide relief for agricultural businesses in severe proven financial difficulty as a result of natural disaster. **The Committee recommends that** it progresses this recommendation further.
- 5.10 **The Committee recommends that** the Agriculture Minister should make representations to the Valuation and Lands Agency seeking the provision of relief for those in the agriculture industry who are being reassessed as part of the non-domestic rate revaluation.

5.11 **The Committee recommends** the establishment and funding of a special marketing initiative to promote Northern Ireland beef to consumers in Northern Ireland and in traditional export markets including 'third world' markets - such an initiative to involve all interest groups in the beef industry and to highlight the many positive selling points including:

- extensive green field production;
- unique traceability and identification;
- highest standards of veterinary and processing inspection;
- Farm Quality Assurance Scheme.

The Committee recommends that it progresses this recommendation further.

5.12 **The Committee recommends that** DANI should negotiate the introduction of a certification stamp which clearly identifies the origin of Northern Ireland beef.

5.13 As an aid to the recovery in consumer confidence, **the Committee recommends that** MAFF proceeds with haste to develop an ante-mortem test for BSE in cattle.

5.14 **The Committee** is concerned with the dramatic effect agri-health scares have had on sectors of the agricultural industry, **and therefore**

recommends the examination of the administration of agriculture in Northern Ireland and the potential benefits of instituting a Ministry of Food. **The Committee recommends that** it progresses this recommendation further.

MB31.WM

APPENDIX A

WRITTEN EVIDENCE

AND

ORAL EVIDENCE

WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Written evidence has been received from the following:

The Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association

The Ulster Farmers' Union

Mr David Swann

Ulster Farm By-Products Limited

The Association of Livestock Auctioneers

Marks & Spencer

CWS

ORAL EVIDENCE

Oral evidence has been taken from the following:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 19 September 1996 | - | The Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association (Mr J Carmichael and Mr L Craig) |
| | - | The Ulster Farmers' Union (Mr I Mark and Mr W Aston) |
| | - | The Livestock & Meat Commission (Mr D Ritchie and Dr A Robson) |
| | - | The Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association (Mr R Watson, Mr C Matthews, Mr D Wilson and Mr A Waugh) |
| 25 September 1996 | - | The Association of Livestock Auctioneers (Mr G Robinson, Mr H Boyd, Mr S Irvine and Mr H Linehan) |

- The Master Butchers' Association
(Mr H Marcus);
 - Ulster Farm By-Products/Duncrue Food Processors
Ltd (Mr D Higginson, Mr B McCartney and
Mr A McBride);
 - The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
(Mr J Murray - Permanent Secretary and
Dr R McCracken - Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer)
- 26 September 1996 - The Northern Ireland Grain Traders' Association
(Mr D Sweeney, Mr D Cooley, Mr G Starritt and
Mrs D Robinson);
- 2 October 1996 - 'Wellworths' Supermarket;
- 'Stewarts' Supermarket;
- 3 October 1996 - The Northern Ireland Bankers' Association.

APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL CHARTS

APPENDIX C

MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEE D AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES ISSUES

MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEE D
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES ISSUES

Ulster Unionist Party	-	Mr D Campbell	-	Chairman
		Mr J Speers		
		Mr J Gaston		
		Mr J Junkin		
Democratic Unionist Party	-	Mr D Stewart	-	Vice-Chairman
		Mr E Poots		
		Mr J Shannon		
		Mr W Clyde		
Alliance Party	-	Mr K McCarthy		
UK Unionist Party	-	Mr E Fowler		
Ulster Democratic Party	-	Mr J White		
Progressive Unionist Party	-	Mr D Ervine		
NI Women's Coalition	-	Ms R Keenan		
Labour Party	-	Mr J Masson		