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NFU organises organic poultry stakeholder meeting with DEFRA

The proposed changes to EU organic regulations are likely to have a particularly significant impact upon organic poultry producers. In particular, the latest proposals put forward by the European Parliament suggest that organic poultry producers should source at least 30% of their feed from within 150km of their farm. Clearly, this is unworkable in the context of the UK feed market and poses a major threat to the organic poultry sector.

In light of this, Oliver Rubinstein (NFU Assistant Food Chain Advisor) organised an organic poultry stakeholder meeting, to outline our concerns to staff from DEFRA, who play a key role in the final stages of the negotiation process. DEFRA are keen to engage with producers and this was a valuable opportunity to offer first-hand evidence about the likely impacts of any changes in regulations. Although this meeting primarily looked at the poultry sector, many of the issues discussed were relevant across the organic sector.

As well as the small scale of the UK feed market, the meeting also discussed issues around feed quality and factors holding back UK feed production. Likewise, competition from other EU states with less stringent rules is also a concern for members and the importance of obtaining clear evidence on the UK's organic imports and exports was also brought up. Similarly, issues around breeding and access to genetic resources were also raised as well as the need to encourage new entrants to the market.

DEFRA share our concerns with the proposals and the NFU will be working closely to ensure that they have all the evidence needed, to support their negotiations. Whilst they share our concerns, the key

message from DEFRA is that much of the detail within the proposals – such as the 150km feed sourcing 'region' – is likely to change, so it is essential that lobbying work continues.

The meeting was kindly hosted at Smallacombe Farm in Devon by Simon Thomson and Ross Gardner from Otter Valley Poultry. Martin Humphrey (Humphrey Feeds) and Richard Kempsey (Stonegate) provided an industry perspective and Colin Downey (NFU County Advisor – Gloucestershire) also attended.



