

Information Further to Ministerial Answers

Information further to OAQ 1533(FM) issued by Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister for Wales

To William Graham:

During my Assembly Question session of 16 May, I undertook to write to you about any possibility of Assembly Government assistance for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

The funding of emergency services is not a devolved matter. The RNLI therefore does not receive funding from the Assembly Government. The demands on the Assembly budget to fund those functions that are devolved is enormous. At this time there are no plans to allocate the Assembly to fund the RNLI or other very worthy causes that fall into the category of non-devolved emergency services.

The RNLI provides a marvellous service and long may they continue to do so. If they have not already done so, I can only suggest that the RNLI explores the following possible funding sources:

The Wales Council for Voluntary Action maintain a list of funding avenues available to the voluntary sector. Their contact details are:

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Baltic House
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff
CF15 5FH
Tel: 02920 2043 1700
www.wcva.org.uk
email: help@wcva.org.uk

Alternatively, it may be useful to contact The Big Lottery Fund to see what advice or assistance they could offer. Their contact details are:

Big Lottery Fund
6th Floor
1 Kingsway
Cardiff
CF10 3JN
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/
Telephone: 029 2067 8200
Fax: 029 2066 7275
Email: enquiries.wales@biglotteryfund.org.uk

Information further to OAQ1555(FM) issued by Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister

To Janet Davies:

During our Plenary exchange on 16 May, in relation to Lynne Neagle's question about fair-trade country status for Wales, I promised to write in response to your intervention on representations to the Council of Ministers on the effect of the EU's Common Agriculture Policy on fair trade projects. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

The process of negotiation and decision making at the EU level can be a complex process. More importantly, there are proven internal UK processes to ensure that the Assembly Government contributes directly to the shaping of the UK's negotiating position on matters relating to the CAP that would also cover the agricultural aspects under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Doha Development Agenda (DDA) discussions to benefit developing countries, particularly from the African, Caribbean and Pacific areas. On the WTO and DDA agricultural agenda, the key issues relate to domestic support, market access and export subsidies.

The Assembly Government has fully endorsed the recent reform to the CAP, recognising that more needs to be achieved if the EU is to play its role in helping the developing countries to make economic progress within an increasingly competitive global market for agricultural projects. This will be among a range of issues relevant to both Wales and the UK that I will raise directly with Mariann Fischer Boel, the EU's Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, when I meet her later this month.

Carwyn Jones has regular discussions with his Ministerial colleagues from elsewhere in the UK, supported by extensive engagement by officials, on a range of agricultural issues, including the CAP. What I would say is that the Assembly Government played an integral role, both in terms of developing the UK's negotiating position and as part of the UK team, at Minister and at official level, in the EU level discussions that delivered fundamental reform to the CAP in 2003—a reform package that dictates the CAP to 2013. Indeed, the Assembly Government had signalled in 'Farming for the Future', published in November 2001, that CAP reform was a key aspect in providing the basis for a sustainable agricultural industry for Wales.

The agreement reached in 2003 was wholly consistent with our view about the reform package needed on the CAP. Furthermore, it is recognised that this internal EU reform to the farm subsidy system had implications in the context of the WTO and the DDA.

A key element of the reform process was to break the link between production and CAP subsidy receipts. More commonly known as de-coupling, this basis for CAP reform was implemented in Wales, as elsewhere within the UK and most of the other Member States, during 2005. In so doing, the new style Single Payments became 'green box' compatible for WTO purposes in that the EU de-coupled domestic support arrangements for farmers are now regarded as having no, or at the most, minimal trade distorting effects.

Additionally, the CAP reform removed the incentive associated with the previous CAP subsidy regime where farmers could maximise their income through a production system that bore little reality to the needs of the market and consumer demand. With farm enterprises now driven more by market reality, the past tendency for over-production and surpluses that the EU traditionally exported onto world markets with the aid of export subsidies will be reduced.

On the WTO/DDA aspects, although individual countries, including those from the EU like the UK, are members of the WTO in their own right, the EU negotiates on trade issues as a single body, with the European Commission having the negotiating responsibility for the EU

collectively. The UK contributes to this process through the EU's internal negotiating and co-ordinating mechanisms. Although the most recent WTO meeting in Geneva last month failed to make progress, it was agreed at the Hong Kong discussions in December 2005 that export subsidies in agriculture would end by 2013 with a substantial reduction implemented by 2010. This commitment will be taken forward by the EU.

Looking to the future, the European Commission will be publishing in 2008 a "health check" on the 2003 CAP reform package. One element of this work will be to inform debate within the EU about the future direction for the CAP after 2013. The Assembly Government already has work underway to inform our position about the possible implications for Wales. We have set up an independent group that is required to report by the summer of next year on the prospects for farming, the environment and the countryside in 2020. The conclusions reached will help to inform the Welsh Assembly Government's approach on the future direction for the CAP that would have regard not only to the needs of Wales and Welsh farming but one that recognises the global position of agriculture and the needs of developing countries.