

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE INTERIM MEETING OF THE AHDB PORK BOARD



ON 15 SEPTEMBER

TELECONFERENCE

PRESENT: Mike Sheldon (MS) - Chair, Richard Buckle (RBu), Mark Houghton (MH), Simon Watchorn (SW), Robert Beckett (RBe), Rupinder Ashworth (RA), Robin Thompson (RT), Adam Cheale (ACH), Tim Bradshaw (TB), Robert Mutimer (RM), William De Klein (WDK)

APOLOGIES: Chris Aldersley (ChA)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Angela Christison (AC) - Strategy director – AHDB Pork, Christine Watts (ChW) - Chief Communications & Market Development Officer, Phil Hadley (PH) - International Market Development Director, Duncan Wyatt (DW) - Lead Analyst (Red Meat), Bethan Wilkins (BW) - Senior Analyst - Market Specialists, Claire Barber (CB) - Animal Health & Welfare Scientist, Carol Davis (CD) - Lead Analyst - Farm Economics, Mandy Nevel (MN) - Head of Animal Health & Welfare, Richard Laverick (RL) - Chief Officer – Livestock, Information Programme, Jen Waters (JW) - Head of Knowledge Exchange – Pork, Lenka Rihova (LR) – Minutes

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 13.30 and welcomed those in attendance. Apologies were received from Chris Aldersley. Claire Barber, Bethan Wilkins and Carol Davis (the authors of the analysis of free farrowing), Duncan Wyatt and Bethan Wilkins (report - impact of ASF in Germany on the market) joined the meeting. The gratitude of this Board was expressed to those who produced these reports. Richard Laverick attended in relation to item 10.

The Board papers had been distributed prior to the Board meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 2 - Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Minutes from the meeting on 22ND July 2020

The minutes of the last meetings held on 22nd July were accepted as a correct record and will be signed by the Chairman.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Matters arising

The Chair reported on the Governance Review. The Board should have received a survey from a company called Campbell Tickell (the consultant working group on this project). MS sits on the Governance Review group. No questions raised. Invitations to join a range of focus groups to follow. The Chair encouraged the Board to complete the survey and join at least one of the focus groups.

AC recapped on the matters arising and action points, confirming all items were either completed, on the agenda or in hand.

AC reported on item 13 (*To take a view on what is the best way of euthanising piglets and whether AHDB has a role in developing best practice*). The Red Tractor Technical Advisory Committee is already looking at this subject and will make recommendations to the red tractor board. It was suggested to wait for the recommendations of the RT Board and decide on AHDB's role on receipt. Topic to be discussed at November Board meeting.

The Board agreed to take the *update on VAT status* off the list and address when the situation changes. There is no further update on this at present.

AGENDA ITEM 5 - Directors Report

The report was taken as read.

It was clarified that we do not have any bad debts currently but an increase in debtors.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – China Market – impact assessment on industry/AHDB role.

The Board discussed the increased risk of losing China export market because of spreading ASF, and AHDB's role if the situation develops unfavourably. A request was made that we should look in



more detail at ideas to support the domestic market, but processors were quick to point out that the market would not swiftly change and price/availability of cuts trumped all.

A paper had been produced by MI updating the predicted impact of ASF in Germany, and the potential impact if ASF reached UK. There would be no way of completely countering impact if we lost the China market, so a negative price impact would be inevitable. Long term, the Chinese do not want to rely too much on international markets & importing products. All work by AHDB to counter this risk had been identified – seeking new markets, boosting domestic demand, tracking market developments and supporting farmers.

There is a lot of uncertainty in the industry regarding exports to China at present (political matters, EU Exit, Covid-19, ASF in Germany). It was felt that the political pressure, especially over Hong Kong, had receded. PH commented that, while reinstatement of exports to China following a Covid-19 outbreak at a UK plant was hoped to have been achieved within 28 days, there was no guarantee of such an outcome in future.

It was suggested to look at pushing streaky bacon as a way of moving belly in the domestic market. However, processors pointed out that the belly market is very price sensitive. Promoting streaky bacon may not be achievable, due to consumer and government trends in attitudes to fatty and processed meat.

The main concern remains as the threat of ASF entering UK. The main risks include contaminated lorries, lorry drivers and discarded pork products, with the most vulnerable sites being wild boar/ feral pigs, outdoor units, and units with poor biosecurity. The board requested a fresh look at potential control of wild boar / feral pigs; pig unit biosecurity and associated risk assessments; and public notices about the risk of discarded pork products.

ChW commented on marketing campaigns and scenario planning in relation to domestic market opportunities.

It was suggested that if we get a severe market disruption, we should have some leeway on what types of products AHDB could promote. It was proposed to seek DEFRA's views on flexibility.

The Board agreed the following actions:

- **Wild boar** – whether it was feasible to achieve more
- **Biosecurity** – raising standards of biosecurity on pig farms
- **Increase public awareness** (public notices, information for lorry drivers - food import danger)
- **Market preparation** (how to accommodate unwanted parts of carcass)

AGENDA ITEM 7 – Free Farrowing – impact assessment on industry/AHDB role.

This relates to a decision by the German government to implement a ban on close confinement farrowing with the completion horizon of about 15 years. The detailed analysis had been circulated to the Board, NPA and DEFRA. The report lays out the challenge to industry that a ban on farrowing crates would pose.

The Board was briefed on an NPA meeting with Lord Goldsmith. More meetings, with NPA and others, are expected on this subject, before the minister takes a final view. NPA felt that the content of the report was excellent.

The Board expressed concern at the risk of a rapid ban. In particular, there is very little field data on the long-term use of temporary crates or free farrowing systems at scale. It was also emphasised that worker safety is extremely important, along with piglet welfare.

The Board agreed to support arguments for a long and assisted transition.

The Board agreed not to promote or publish the report but to provide it to seriously interested parties who ask for it.

AGENDA ITEM 8 - Pig Health Scheme results

The paper with the most recent results from the Pig Health Scheme has been distributed. The gratitude of this Board was expressed to those who contributed to the report. MN to pass the



comments on. MN confirmed that the final report is available on request and will be published on AHDB website.

The service and results are extremely valuable to the industry. There was some frustration that we have had to suspend it due to Covid-19, but ultimately understood. The delay has been caused by the issue of access to the processing plants and was outwith the control of AHDB (social distance issues and outbreaks, risk management). The Board would like the inspections to recommence as soon as the processing plants and assessment providers are able to do so.

It was proposed to have a Board member (a processor) on the Pig Health Scheme Steering group, and MH volunteered for this role.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - Reputation of the Industry – training materials

This item addresses the subject that on too many occasions farms featuring in footage appear to have a lack of knowledge in handling pigs. The aim was to collectively address this issue.

MN and JW reported on the training materials (how to handle pigs properly) that have been developed. AHDB has worked with Red Tractor, NPA and others. Training materials have been pulled into a web page and will be available on the AHDB website. There has been a greater demand from the industry about more compulsory training, and AHDB is collaborating with Red Tractor and others to deliver this. The Board was reassured that NPA producer and allied industry group would be supportive of making this training compulsory.

The Board wished to express its gratitude to Manitoba Pork, for its helpfulness in sharing video material.

In addition, the Board was informed that there is a cross sector group within AHDB focusing on the reputation of livestock production and the cultural changes required within the industry, particularly with regards to animal welfare. Furthermore, Red Tractor is also working on reputational issues.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - Update on migration of EAML2 to LIP/ potential future developments of pig movement system

RL reported on migration of EAML2 to LIP. The board paper has been distributed, describing how discovery piece of work in hand between AHDB and Livestock Information Ltd. The aim of which is to fully understand the implications of this migration and the transition process. The paper was very well received. The discovery work is likely to be complete by November or early December, subject to resources and capability of LIP, after the disruption caused by Covid-19.

The Board wished to express a special thank you to Jenny Newman and Lauren Dimmack, the principal authors of the discovery paper.

While keen to see progress in moving to a new movement service, the Board expressed its anxiety that the current system was not always being used properly. An example was that correct lorry registration numbers were not always recorded.

RL assured the Board that the pig movement system would be as good as or better than now once fully migrated to LIP. The overall project is expected to remain on budget.

AGENDA ITEM 11 - AOB & Dates of future meetings

The next meeting is on 17th November.

The Stockman training stopped, in the light of Covid 19 precautions. However, the learners will be able to finish the programme once feedback from the industry has been received (digital course vs face to face).

The meeting closed at 15:35.