

Finlay Carson MSP
The Convener
Rural Affairs, Islands & Natural Environment Committee
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

9 May 2022

Dear Finlay

COMMITTEE EVIDENCE SESSION ON THE AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (AMENDMENT) ORDER 2022

During the Rural Affairs, Islands & Natural Environment Committee's consideration of the UK Statutory Instrument The Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board (Amendment) Order 2022 on 20 April 2022, the Committee asked for further details of how levy payers in the continuing AHDB levy-paying sectors could influence future proposals made by the AHDB in consultation. I undertook to provide a written response with those details.

As I mentioned when giving evidence to the Committee, this SI introduces a new duty on the AHDB to hold a regular vote at least once every five years on proposals for how the levy will be spent in each of the continuing levy-paying sectors. AHDB is currently conducting a first regular vote, which asks levy payers to rank the importance of a range of priorities for AHDB's work in their sector, and also to suggest additional priorities. Depending on the feedback received, AHDB may consult or engage further to establish a set of priorities which have clear industry support – there is no limit in the regular vote provisions as to how many votes AHDB can run for each sector, only that they must have a vote at least once every five years. This will increase levy payer influence in setting the priorities that they want to see AHDB delivering for them in future.

I should also highlight that the legislation continues to include the provision that if 5% of eligible levy payers within a particular sector request it, the AHDB must run a ballot on whether or not the levy for that sector should continue. However, whilst this is an important backstop, the aim of the new regular vote is to avoid the need for this provision to be triggered, by making the AHDB more responsive to levy payers.

Kind regards



MAIRI MCALLAN