EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Farming with Nature Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs ('the Department') to accompany this Statutory Rule which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under section 48 and paragraphs 7(2) and (3) of Schedule 6 to the Agriculture Act 2020 and is subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The Statutory Rule will give legal effect to the Farming with Nature Transition Scheme which will come into effect within 2025.

3. Background

3.1. The Farming with Nature Package forms part of the Sustainable Agricultural Programme. It will replace the current Environmental Farming Scheme and will provide a package of support for farmers to increase the extent of habitats across farmed land in Northern Ireland.

4. Consultation

4.1. The Department consulted from 21 December 2021 to 15 February 2022 on proposals to introduce a Farming with Nature Package as part of the Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland consultation. Stakeholder responses received in respect of these proposals were considered and included in the analysis of the Future Agricultural Policy Decisions in Northern Ireland published on 22 March 2022.

4.2. The Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group (APSG) has been established by the Department to ensure that stakeholder views are understood and properly considered during the development of the DAERA Sustainable Agricultural Programme, formerly the Farm Support and Development Programme. In addition, a Farming with Nature Co-Design Group was established in June 2024 comprising of stake holders from environmental and agricultural organisations. A number of meetings have been held with both these groups to present and discuss Farming with Nature policy proposals.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. Not applicable as the Department is proposing to introduce technical amendments.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. Not applicable as the Department is proposing to introduce technical amendments.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Not applicable as the Department is proposing to introduce technical amendments.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Regulations do not have any human rights implications, nor are they incompatible with EU law. The Regulations are therefore deemed to comply with the requirements of section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

9.1. There are no EU implications associated with this statutory rule.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. Work is ongoing across the other UK Devolved Administrations to develop and implement new farm support polices following UK exit from the EU. While there are agricultural support schemes in GB, there are none that are directly comparable to Farming with Nature.

11. Additional Information

11.1 For further information contact Zita Hale, Agricultural Policy Division, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Zita.hale@daera-ni.gov.uk).