

CONSULTATION

This consultation document seeks your views on options for the future of support arrangements for the Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) in Northern Ireland.

Comments should be made by mail, fax or e-mail to:

**Policy Development Branch
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
Room 355 Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SB**

E-mail: policy.development@dardni.gov.uk

Fax: 028 9037 8532

The consultation period will last 12 weeks and **all comments must be received by 29 May 2009.**

If you consider that your views can be expressed better through other means the Department will be happy to meet with representative groups or discuss your views via telephone.

At the end of the consultation period, we intend to publish on our website copies of all responses received. We will assume therefore that your response can be made publicly available in this way unless you indicate clearly in writing that you wish all or part of it to be excluded from this arrangement.

The Data Protection Act states that the information provided by the respondents to this consultation exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential, information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public please include an explanation in your response.

In summary, this means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not of confidential nature; and
- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see website at:

www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk).

HOW THIS DOCUMENT WORKS

- **Key points** – where appropriate key points are highlighted in the text in bold type.
- **Chapters** – chapter headings are carried at the top of each page and continue through for each chapter.
- **Stakeholder views** – where there are direct views from stakeholders in Chapter 11, these are shown in *italics*.
- **Options** – these are presented and discussed in **Chapter 12**.
- **Consultation questions** – these are presented in **Chapter 13**.
- **Web references** – Web links can be copied directly into an Internet browser address bar.
- **Footnotes and references** – material referenced from relevant sources or further definitions are numbered in the text. Full details are given at the bottom of the same page as a ‘footnote’.
- **Abbreviations** – all terms are listed in full in the Glossary/List of abbreviations.