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MEP calls on Euro Commission to review electronic sheep tagging

An EFA press release from Jill Evans MEP

Jill Evans MEP today succeeded in securing a promise from the European Commission to consider a review of controversial legislation on electronic tagging of sheep (EID). Since the entry into force of the EID legislation in 2010, Welsh farmers have repeatedly demonstrated that there are practical problems and that more flexibility is needed.

Ms Evans met European Commissioner John Dalli at the European Parliament in Strasbourg today where she raised the concerns of Welsh farmers about electronic sheep tagging.

Jill Evans commented:

"Welsh farmers have made every effort, and invested millions of pounds, to comply with this EU legislation, but the fact is that it will always be impossible to tag and account for every single sheep in a flock, especially when they are farmed up in hills and mountains. Sheep will get lost. Added to this is the fact that the technology available is not yet able to deliver a 100% reliable result.

"Many of my colleagues hear the same thing from their farming constituents and therefore I wasn't surprised when 14 MEPs responded to my initiative to meet with the responsible Commissioner to discuss a way forward. I believe it was a very informative discussion and I am pleased to announce that Commissioner Dalli told us that he will consider a review of the legislation to identify the problems."

Farmers are also concerned that from 2012, older sheep not previously covered by the legislation will also have to be tagged. This issue was also raised by Jill Evans in the meeting. She commented:

"The Commissioner seemed to understand our concerns about the tagging of older sheep becoming mandatory and I believe that he would not oppose extending this implementation date."

Jill Evans added:

"I will now be trying to convince the Welsh government to become more involved with this issue and lobby the Commission and European Council to also work for an extension of this deadline. I hope that the Deputy Minister for Agriculture will be able to make his voice heard on this as it will have serious implications for

our rural industry in Wales."

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Jill Evans

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