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Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
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By email only
31 January 2019

From Clare Moriarty
Permanent Secretary

Dear Neil,

As requested in your letter of 20 December, I am writing to update you on Defra’s testing of the Department’s EU Exit IT projects.

Defra’s Digital, Data and Technology Services EU Exit Programme is developing six new digital and/or IT services to support: (1) Trade in Fish (export catch certificates); (2) Imports of Animals and Products of Animal Origin; (3) Exports of Animals and Products of Animal Origin; (4) Chemicals Registration (REACH); (5) Animal Medicines Registration; (6) Fluorinated Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances Quota Trading.

We are committed to delivering operational digital services across the programme by 29 March 2019 as part of our preparations for ‘no deal’ exit. We have carried out ongoing testing since January 2018 to ensure that each service will be ready to perform as expected, both individually and in combination, and in different user scenarios. We have also closely examined the stability and security of these services, and through this process we have been able to identify and correct problems when needed.

In addition to the process above, we are working to make sure that our services are user friendly by testing the training and guidance that will be available to users in a “model office” environment. Usability testing has been completed for the Exports of Animals and Products of Animal Origin system; is underway for the Imports of Animals and Products of Animal Origin system and Fluorinated Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances Quota Trading system, and will start for the Trade in Fish system in late January and the Chemicals Registration system in late February.

Once these stages are complete, systems are opened up to real world users for Public Beta testing. This stage of testing gathers further feedback on how the services are performing and if any additional improvements can be made to enhance their usability and capability to
deliver business readiness on 29 March 2019, if required. We have factored in additional time in case we need to respond to any issues identified in these final test phases.

The Exports of Animals and Products of Animal Origin system is now live. The Fluorinated Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances Quota Trading system is due to go live shortly, with the remaining systems going live between now and 29 March.

To date no significant blockers or defects hampering the performance and expected use of the systems and services have been encountered. However, as a contingency, we have also identified where some services might require an interim solution for 29 March 2019 while development continues. Decision points have been identified for each system when contingencies will be invoked if necessary to ensure effective service delivery. These decision points take account of the need to communicate with businesses and other users of the new services. We have identified key communication milestones and are developing messaging with specific calls to action for IT readiness in each project's communication plan.

I hope this information is helpful and we look forward to welcoming the Committee on 7 February 2019 to the Defra IT 'Show and Tell' event.

CLARE MORTIARY