



MARKETS	
AT	
FOR FULL MARKET DATA VISIT <a href="#">MARKALLEN.COM</a>	
LIVESTOCK	
	ONE YEAR AGO
<b>CATTLE</b>	
Finished store cattle p/kg (GB) v	362.9
Finished store cattle p/kg (GB) w	350.4
Finished store cattle p/kg (GB) w	187.2
Finished heifers p/kg (GB) v	197.6
Finished youngstock All p/kg (GB) v	180.3
Continental (€/head) (C)	257.9
Friesian-cro (€/head) (G)	50.0
Dairy cows (GB) w/e 28 April	1,005
<b>SHEEP</b>	
Lambs (old) p/kg (GB) w	417.6
Lambs (old) p/kg (GB) w	412.8
Lambs (old) p/kg (GB) w	176.7
<b>PIGS</b>	
Cull sows live w/e 1 May	62.9
SPP (GB) d w/e 28 April	156.2
APP (GB) d w/e 21 April	159.0
<b>ARABLE</b>	
Feed wheat	143.4
Milling wheat	150.0
Feed barley	121.2
Oilseed rape	328.8
Feed peas	154.2
Feed beans	167.7
Ex-farm spot prices	
<b>FUEL</b>	
Oil - West 1	47.8
Intermediate	n/a
Red diesel p	
Red diesel prices between the Scot delivery the following week. * No update available	
suppliers on a 5,000-litre payment terms.	
<b>CURRENCY</b>	
Pound	(\$1.3941)
Euro	(\$1.2196)
Dollar	€0.7326 (€0.7173) €0.8335 (€0.8199)

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# It's time to give the green light to gene editing

The Agriculture Bill, now awaiting consideration in the House of Lords, has attracted widespread media attention of late – mostly in relation to the demands of some MPs to set minimum standards for future imports.

That particular objective was kicked into touch by the Boris Johnson government a couple of weeks ago. But another amendment is now set to steal the limelight, with a cross-party group of politicians, scientists and farmers seeking to have a clause inserted that would allow the use of gene editing once we are past the Brexit transition period.

If introduced, it could give British plant and animal breeders access to technologies which, until now, have been denied them by EU legislation.

The Brussels approach has been to classify gene editing the same as all genetic modifications – a view endorsed by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in 2018. Yet the arguments in favour of overturning this restrictive classification seem overwhelming.

For a start, the two technologies are very different. Gene editing involves tweaking the DNA within an organism, while genetic modification imports DNA from a separate organism. As such, gene editing is more precise and limits new traits to those that could have occurred naturally.

The potential benefits are manifold, enabling far quicker and more targeted improvements in both plant and animal performance. It could lead to raised productivity, more efficient resource use, improved pest and disease resistance, greater drought tolerance and even better nutrition.

This could all be achieved at lower cost and would benefit producers in this country as well as in the less-developed parts of the world. Furthermore, the EU's approach is out of step with how these techniques are regulated elsewhere, such as in the US, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Australia and Japan.

As ever, there are counter arguments. The Soil Association says we should stick to the "precautionary principle" – though the greater precision of gene editing compared with conventional plant breeding suggests this is an overly cautious approach.

There is also the issue of consumer perception and the possibility that a mischievous media could turn it into the next food scare – though the public does seem more accepting of biosciences than was the case a few years ago.

The third issue is that of trade, and fears that the EU could insist on equivalence of standards as a prerequisite for any future free-trade deal. But again, that seems far-fetched, as the EU already allows the importation of GMOs from other parts of the world, despite restricting the cultivation of such crops on its own soil.

Furthermore, member states are known to be pretty unhappy about the ECJ ruling classifying gene editing and GMOs the same way. A new UK approach could set an example they would wish to follow.

For all these reasons, it is time the UK took a lead on this issue. Given the challenges that lie ahead for feeding a growing domestic and global population, farmers are going to need all the tools available, and gene editing is one that provides a wealth of possibilities.

Encouragingly, the government seems to be onside. It has consistently opposed the ECJ's ruling, while one of Boris Johnson's first proclamations as prime minister was his wish to "liberate the UK's extraordinary bioscience sector from anti-genetic modification rules".

As such, the industry should be pushing at an open door. The time has come for government to give that door a final and decisive shove.

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