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CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE BEEF & LAMB SECTOR

Climate change is an extremely complex issue but mainly refers to the ongoing rise in average global temperatures (global warming) that have been recorded in the last century. Greenhouse gasses (carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane) are largely emitted as a result of human activities, such as fossil fuel burning and deforestation, and have been widely accepted as the major contributing factor to these increasing temperatures. The livestock industry has however been singled out by many commentators as a major contributor to climate change so it is important to put things in context. Certainly the agriculture, forestry and food sector does contribute to greenhouse gas emissions with official figures estimating this at 7% of total UK emissions (21% in Northern Ireland), but the sector also has an important role to play in mitigating the impact of climate change.

In Northern Ireland over 90% of our agricultural land is in managed grassland, which is either directly grazed by livestock or conserved for the winter-feeding of these animals. Cattle and sheep are efficient converters of this grass to beef and lamb for human consumption and the natural processes involved does lead to the production of methane and nitrous oxide. The livestock industry in Northern Ireland recognises the potential impact that its activities may be having on climate change and has been taking active steps to reduce its contribution. For example, farmland under grass which has little potential for growing other crops, if it is well managed by livestock farming, can contribute significantly to climate change mitigation by permanently locking up carbon dioxide in the soil, can improve biodiversity by preventing land abandonment, can help regulate flows of rainwater to water systems (reducing potential for soil erosion and flooding), as well as contributing to the food security of the UK by meeting consumer demand for beef and lamb.

The farming industry has also been improving its technical efficiency through genetic improvement programmes, better fertiliser and manure management practices, adoption of new soil and grassland management techniques (such as the introduction of clover into grass swards), all of which have combined to make livestock production more sustainable from an environmental viewpoint. The industry is also taking active steps to measure its existing 'carbon footprint' and is working closely with government and research bodies to identify areas where further improvements can be made.

The logo consists of the letters 'LMC' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. The letters are closely spaced and have a clean, modern appearance.