

No help for farmers from Adjudicator

SDLP MLA and Vice Chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee Joe Byrne has said the appointment of the new Groceries Code Adjudicator, Christine Tacon, is of no real benefit to farmers looking for better prices for their produce.

Mr Byrne was speaking following a meeting with her. He said: "The role of the Groceries Code Adjudicator is a major disappointment to the interests of farmers here in Northern Ireland. At a meeting between the Adjudicator and the Assembly ARD Committee I asked what role and function she would have in helping Northern Ireland farmers to get better farmgate prices.

"I asked about the disparity in farmgate prices for beef cattle and

sheepmeat between Northern Ireland and GB. Unfortunately she told the Committee she had no powers or role in affecting farmgate prices or how Northern Ireland might get better prices in line with GB farmers.

"Really the Groceries Code Adjudicator has a very limited role and function relating to contractual disputes between the big supermarkets chains and their direct suppliers. Issues like prompt payment and disputes about supply conditions having been violated are primarily the main functions of the Adjudicator.

"Unfortunately the farmers are not going to get much help or support from the Groceries Code Adjudicator which is deeply disappointing."