

British 'land bridge' to Europe for exports from Republic of Ireland set to remain open



Concern: Simon McKeever

Irish exporters who go through the UK to get their produce to mainland Europe or further afield should still be able to do so after Brexit, the Revenue Commissioners expect.

Michael Colgan, who is head of the Revenue's Brexit Unit, explained that it is the body's "working assumption" that the UK land bridge for firms would still be available.

Two-thirds of Irish exporters go through the UK, a survey has suggested, and expectations of continued use of the land bridge will come as a huge relief.

"We would envisage that land bridge movements would be catered for (post Brexit)," Mr Colgan said.

"That is our working assumption."

A survey carried out by the Irish Exporters Association earlier this year found that two-thirds of exporters go through the UK to get their produce to customers on mainland Europe and further afield. And 40% said that using a longer, yet more direct, route would adversely affect the quality of the product.

The body said the number of exporters relying on the UK as a land bridge to the continent was "hugely significant".

Currently, the common transit procedure of the EU is used for the movement of goods between the 28 EU member states, the EFTA countries, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

The rules are effectively identical to those of the union transit, which, according to the European Commission, is used for customs transit operations between member states and is applicable to the movement of non-union goods for which customs duties and other charges at import are at stake, and of union goods, which, between their point of departure and point of destination in the EU, have to pass through the territory of a third country.

"Our working assumption is that the UK will be in the common transit after Brexit," Mr Colgan told a Brexit business event organised by InterTradeIreland.

Separately, the head of the Irish Exporters Association, Simon McKeever, said that businesses are becoming increasingly interested in getting registered as Authorised Economic Operators (AEOs) in case of the need for customs checks post-Brexit.

"In those cases, checks are carried out in the facilities owned by those operators by customs officials.

"The big concern for our members is customs.

"It is no longer currency. It's absolutely the customs side of things and how that will affect their supply chain," he said.

Belfast Telegraph