



**Tithe an
Oireachtais**
**Houses of the
Oireachtas**

An Comhchoiste um Thalmhaíocht, Bia agus Muir

Tuarascáil

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**Tionchar Timpeallachta ag Astaíochtaí Tionscail Áitiúla i gCaisleán an
Chomair, Contae Chill Chainnigh**

Bealtaine 2023

Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Report

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**Environmental Impact of Local Industrial Emissions
in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny**

May 2023

Environmental Impact of Local Industrial Emissions in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny

On 30th of November 2022¹ the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine (‘the Committee’) held a public meeting on the topic of ‘Environmental Impact of Local Emissions’. The Committee met with Mr. Dan Brennan where he raised issues with regards to the environmental impact allegedly caused by industrial emissions from the Ormonde Brick Factory on his farm in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny.

The Committee heard evidence from Mr Brennan and other witnesses about the poor condition and growth of cattle on his farm during the period of operation of the neighbouring Ormonde Brick Factory, ending in 2008. Mr. Brennan was accompanied at this meeting by, in person and remotely, Mr. Matt Dempsey; Mr. Pádraig Walshe (*rest in peace*); Mr. Jim Crilly; and Mr. Michael Lambe who gave evidence in relation to this alleged environmental impact.

The Committee subsequently wrote to the Environmental Protection Agency (the “EPA”), the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and the CRH group (the successor to the company which operated the Ormonde Brick Factory), offering them the opportunity to respond to what had been said on the 30th November 2022. Those parties, in effect, all took the position that the issues had been satisfactorily investigated by an Inter Agency Group, including the EPA, which had reported in 2010. The Inter Agency Group had reported that it had not found evidence to indicate that environmental pollution caused ill thrift and poor growth rates in animals on the farm and had suggested that the problems in the herd were multifactorial in source and that common infectious diseases were likely to have been responsible.

The Committee, however, heard extensive criticism of the methods and practices used by the investigating bodies during the hearing on the 30th November 2022.

While the Committee is not equipped to conduct an investigation of these matters, it has concerns arising from what it heard both as to the alleged environmental and health effects of emissions from the factory and also as to the response of the regulatory authorities in

¹ Houses of the Oireachtas, *Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine*, Debate, 30 November 2022. [Link](#) to debate.

investigating the cause of those effects. The Committee does not consider that the issues have been satisfactorily investigated to date. The Committee, has, accordingly, decided to recommend that the Government should establish a Commission of Investigation under section 3 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004² to inquire fully into these matters. The Committee further requests that the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine should make the necessary proposal to the Government under section 3 of that Act.

In line with Standing Orders and the Committee's remit it was agreed at a private meeting on 3 May 2023 that following the publication of this report, it should be debated in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.



Jackie Cahill T.D.
Cathaoirleach
May 2023

² Irish Statute Book, *Commissions of Investigation Act 2004*, Act, 18 July 2004. [Link](#) to Legislation.