



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear Sara,

Thank you for your letters of 17 June to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defra about food standards and trade. Your letter has been passed to Defra as the department responsible for this policy area and I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

My Government colleagues and I share your pride in our high standards, which as you rightly point out are crucial in underpinning our high-quality, Great British produce, that is used by the world-beating talent we have in the culinary arts. We have no intention of undercutting this reputation for quality by lowering our food and animal welfare standards in pursuit of a trade deal.

The UK Government will not compromise on our standards. Our manifesto is clear that in all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards. We remain firmly committed to upholding our high environmental, good safety and animal welfare standards outside the EU. The EU Withdrawal Act will transfer all existing EU food safety provisions, including existing import requirements, onto the UK statute book. These import standards include a ban on using artificial growth hormones in domestic and imported products and set out that no products, other than potable water, are approved to decontaminate poultry carcasses. Any changes to existing food safety legislation would require new legislation to be brought before Parliament.

The Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland will continue to ensure that all food imports comply with the UK's high safety standards and that consumers are protected from unsafe food. Alongside this the UK will repatriate the functions of audit and inspections that are currently carried out by the European Commission to ensure that trading partners continue to meet our import conditions for food and feed safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare.

Given these solid legal underpinnings and systems, we do not believe amendments to the Agriculture Bill are necessary. The Bill helps farmers to stay competitive with measures to increase productivity and invest in new technology. It will also improve transparency in the supply chain to help food producers strengthen their position at the farm gate and seek a fairer return from the marketplace. We are keen to complete the passage of this Bill so we can implement these and other exciting programmes it will deliver.

As an independent trading nation, the UK will recognise global rules on trade, as we have as a bloc in the EU, alongside ensuring that trade agreements live up to the values of farmers and consumers across the UK. World Trade Organisation rules allow for the adoption of measures on public policy grounds such as protecting human, animal and plant life or health, public morals and conservation, provided these are not disguised restrictions on international trade. We will use the most appropriate levers available to achieve our policy aims.

We are clear that any trade deal we strike must be fair and reciprocal to our farmers, and must not compromise our high standards. We want to negotiate a range of an ambitious and comprehensive free trade deals that will unlock new opportunities for our fantastic producers. However, we will not water down our standards nor put the UK's biosecurity at risk as we negotiate new trade deals.

We have also established a new Trade and Agriculture Commission. Retailers, farming unions, consumer, hospitality and environmental bodies from across the UK have been named as members. It will be chaired by food safety expert Tim Smith; a former Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency and Tesco Group Technical Director. The English, Scottish and Welsh branches of the National Farmers Union (NFU) are all represented, as are the Ulster Farmers Union and the Farmers' Union of Wales. Other members include the British Retail Consortium, UK Hospitality, and the Food and Drink Federation. It will report directly to International Trade Secretary Liz Truss, advising on:

- Trade policies the Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, while ensuring the sector remains competitive and that animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined.
- Advancing and protecting British consumer interests and those of developing countries.
- How the UK engages the WTO to build a coalition that helps advance higher animal welfare standards across the world.
- Developing trade policy that identifies and opens up new export opportunities for the UK agricultural industry – in particular for SMEs – and that benefits the UK economy as a whole.

The scope of the Commission was agreed after close consultation between farming unions, the Department for International Trade and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It will be set up for six months and submit an advisory report at the end of its work which will be presented to Parliament by the Department for International Trade.

Yours sincerely,



VICTORIA PRENTIS MP