

## COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE BRIEFING NOTE

### BREXIT: TRADE IN FOOD

#### Westminster Hall Debate



The Voice of the Countryside

**“Third Report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Brexit: Trade in Food, HC 348, and the Government Response, HC 1021” (Neil Parish MP, Con, Tiverton and Honiton)**

**Thursday 14 June, 1.30pm – 3.00pm**

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#### Background:

- The Countryside Alliance welcomed the report from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee which called for a fund to prepare British farming for Brexit, a specific impact analysis for each agricultural sector, and new trading partnerships to be explored, to ensure that farming is ready to adjust to trading outside the EU.
- The Committee’s report, published on 18 February, concludes that during trade talks with the EU “the Government must ensure that the interests of the [agricultural] industry are not pushed aside for the benefit for other high-profile industries, such as financial services.” It also states that “as the Government looks beyond the EU for new free trade agreements, it must not sacrifice our reputation for animal welfare and environmental standards.”
- Trade is one of the three central issues facing the food and farming industry as we leave the EU, along with labour and support payments. Trade is also important for related sectors in the rural economy such as shooting and the game market. The majority of firearms and ammunition used in the UK are imported from countries within the EU and the import of game birds and export of game meat is a vital trade for the shooting industry. It is vital that the Government considers the wider supply chain of the rural economy when developing trade policy.
- There is a growing market for game meat in this country. Figures for 2016/17 show that sales of game meat in the UK were in excess of £114 million and are forecast to rise to £143 million by 2020. We also export a significant amount of game meat to the EU and it is vital that UK producers continue to have tariff-free and frictionless access to this market. As we establish new trade deals with non-EU countries, it is important that UK game meat is promoted in order to develop new markets for our high quality produce around the world. We encourage the Government to support the work of the [British Game Alliance](#) in promoting the consumption of high quality game meat at home and abroad.
- The UK produces some of the best food in the world, with the highest standards of safety and animal welfare. Our new relationship with the EU, and any new trade agreements with non-EU countries, must protect these standards and allow our produce to be promoted globally and compete on the basis of quality, not just price. We are pleased that the Committee has recognised the potential negative consequences of a ‘race to the bottom’ scenario created by unfavourable trade deals with countries with lower welfare and food safety standards to those in the UK.

- In the Government's response to the report, we are encouraged by the commitment not to undermine the UK's reputation for quality by lowering standards in pursuit of trade deals. We also welcome the Government commitment to maintain legal protection for food names currently protected by EU law. However, we are disappointed at the lack of sectoral analysis for agriculture. The Government acknowledges that "the UK sheep meat sector is very dependent on access to the EU market (in terms of exports)". However, it does not provide any information on how this sector could be supported in the event of tariffs being applied on our trade with the EU and has refused to support a fund to prepare British farming for Brexit as the Committee suggested.

#### **Countryside Alliance Position:**

- **Government to seek tariff-free and frictionless trade with the EU in food and farming.**
- **Government to seek tariff-free trade with the EU in firearms, game birds and game meat, and ensure that the negotiations to leave the EU are not used to advance an anti-shooting agenda by restricting trade in these areas.**
- **Government to ensure that any new trade deals with non-EU countries recognise and protect the high standards of safety and animal welfare which UK consumers expect and which our farmers and producers adhere to.**
- **Government to continue to develop new international markets for food and agricultural produce, and secure terms of trade that allow UK farmers and producers to compete on the basis of quality, not just price. This should include increasing the annual budget of the Food is GREAT campaign which is currently only £1.25 million, with only £888,000 of this fund spent on international activity.**

#### **For more information please contact:**

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