



October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about food standards and future trade deals.

I fully recognise the importance the public attach to the UK's high standards of food production and the unique selling point it provides for our farmers, whose high-quality produce is in demand around the world.

I know that in trade negotiations, the Government will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards, which is why I believe Amendment 93 made to the Agriculture Bill in the House of Lords to be an unnecessary potential source of duplication and confusion. I would also like to assure you that the Government will not compromise on matters relating to the health and wellbeing of our children during trade negotiations.

Without exception, all animal products imported into the UK under existing or future free trade agreements from all trading partners, including the EU and others, will have to meet our stringent food safety standards, as they do now. These standards have been built up over many years and have the trust of the public and the world. I know the Government will not adjust those standards to secure trade deals. The standards will be based on science and decided by the UK alone.

The UK's newfound status as an independent trading nation has the potential to bring huge benefits to our farming industry, including our family-run farms. Indeed, new free trade agreements could lead to gains for UK agriculture. For example, analysis by the Department for International Trade shows that an agreement with the US would strengthen UK farmers' incomes.

The Government is engaging with the agricultural sector, including the National Farmers Union, as part of its trade discussions. The government has established the Trade and Agriculture Commission as well as trade advisory groups, ensuring that British farmers, businesses, and consumers will play a central role in the nation's trade policy. Ministers share my determination to ensure our future trade agreements will deliver benefits for our brilliant farmers and food producers.

Regarding amendments made to the Agriculture Bill in the House of Lords relating to the composition and status of the Trade and Agriculture Commission, I know my Ministerial colleagues are always considering how best to strengthen the machinery of government to ensure effective decision-making and scrutiny and I will continue to have discussions with them on these matters.



Chris Heaton-Harris

Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

The Government is establishing a Trade and Agriculture Commission - a move supported by the National Farmers' Unions in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as Northern Ireland's Ulster Farmers' Union.

The Commission will ensure close engagement with the agriculture industry to help inform, shape and guide agricultural trade policy. It will be independently chaired by food safety expert Tim Smith, a former Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency. Within a fixed term, the Commission will consider trade policies that the Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, producers and exporters. The Commission will also ensure the agriculture sector remains competitive and that animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined. When its work is concluded the Commission will produce a report, which will be presented to Parliament by the Department for International Trade.

Regarding the Agriculture Bill, I voted alongside the Government against new clauses one and two. The UK already imports food from countries such as Canada, South Africa and Japan through preferences in existing free trade agreements – none of these agreements require those countries to follow domestic UK production standards.

The amendments would have put up new trade barriers and prevented the Government from being able to agree fair and mutually beneficial trade deals. Indeed, forcing all our trading partners to produce to UK domestic standards would only result in fewer export opportunities for our own farmers. In addition, the amendments, if implemented, would have caused real challenges for developing countries and our Commonwealth partners, as for them it would be particularly difficult to align with UK domestic production standards.

I hope this response has provided some clarity and reassurance.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY