



October 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about maintaining British food production standards ahead of any future trade deals.

You may be aware of my continued support for the UK's farming industry. I want to see all our farmers benefit from using our high-quality produce as a unique selling point, as it is in high demand all around the world. If you would like to see my comments in the Commons regarding buying British and selling British, you can view this here (<https://www.james Sunderland.org.uk/parliament/james-sunderland-urges-government-build-british-buy-british-and-sell-british>).

British consumers want high welfare produce and if our trading partners want to break into the UK market, they should expect to meet those standards. The manifesto I stood on was clear that in all trade negotiations, our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards will not be compromised. The Government will stand firm in trade negotiations to ensure any deals live up to the values of our farmers and consumers.

I am pleased that all food coming into this country will be required to meet existing import requirements. I know that the EU Withdrawal Act will transfer all existing EU food safety provisions, including current import requirements, onto the UK statute book. These import standards are included within law 2003/74/EC, which bans 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. No trade deal can overturn the law and no one is even trying to lower standards. Any changes to existing food safety legislation would require new legislation to be brought before Parliament.

There are several reasons why I believe the Lord's amendments to this bill risk causing adverse effects. Firstly, it will significantly diminish the government's ability to sign new trade deals. Growing all our own produce will not make us more secure. Any type of local shock - a bad harvest for example, and the whole supply chain could be destabilised. This will only increase prices, hitting the poorest in our society the hardest.

Secondly, I do not entirely agree with the notion that these trade deals would hurt our farmers by undercutting them on price. This argument conveniently ignores the other half of the deal - where our farmers would have a vastly broader market to export to - currently British farmers face a 17% tariff on cheese and a 27% tariff on beef exports to the US, with our world-renowned British lamb being barred altogether.

Thirdly, the bill also gives off the impression of the UK being solely a food-importing nation. We sell wine to France, tapas to Spain, curry to India - having these amendments in place does not help our farmers. The small potential gain from less domestic competition is massively overshadowed by the loss from greatly diminished exporting prospects.

These amendments tie the hands of the Government in trying to negotiate a comprehensive trade deal. There is an overwhelming majority of areas in which our farming practises are identical to those of New Zealand and Australia. However, discrepancies over a tiny minority of areas would derail the entire deal, if this amendment were to pass.

Furthermore, the amendment changing the role and structure of the Trade and Agriculture

Commission is unnecessary, given the strength of membership, its broad representation and extensive remit. I am content that the UK will maintain a robust institutional framework for upholding the quality and safety of the food we import and consume through a range of Government departments, agencies and bodies such as the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Health and Safety Executive. You can view my comments on the commission here (<https://www.jamessunderland.org.uk/news/james-sunderland-welcomes-launch-trade-and-agriculture-commission>).

Finally, I am pleased that the Government are already engaging with the agricultural sector as part of its trade discussions, including the National Farmers Union. It is encouraging that Ministers share my determination to ensure our future trade agreements will deliver benefits for our brilliant farmers and food producers.

We must not forget what the Agriculture Bill is for. It is about ensuring our world-class British Farmers continue to get the financial support they need, by creating a new domestic subsidy regime to replace the EU one we are leaving. The Agriculture Bill has never been about trade.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me. I wish you and your family stay safe throughout the Autumn months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Sunderland', written on a light yellow background.

James Sunderland MP
Member of Parliament for the Bracknell Constituency
Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst and Wokingham Without