



Department for International Trade

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26 January 2021

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 12 January on behalf of your constituent, regarding food standards and trade and agriculture related amendments passed to the Trade Bill.

The Bill is an important element of the independent trade policy the UK will operate. It contains key measures that will deliver for UK businesses and consumers across the UK, providing continuity and certainty as we take action to build a country that is more outward-looking than ever before.

The Trade Bill does not deal with future free trade agreements. The powers to transition trade agreements apply only to those countries with which the EU has signed a trade agreement before Exit Day. Consequently, the powers in this legislation cannot be used to implement any future free trade agreement with countries such as the US and Australia.

I would like to reassure your constituent that none of the continuity agreements with 63 countries, which can be implemented under the Trade Bill, undermines any domestic standard.

In addition, the Government amendment to put the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) on a statutory footing provides an advisory role for the TAC to help inform the report required by section 42 of the Agriculture Act. The TAC will advise the Secretary of State on International Trade on the extent to which measures in free trade agreements applicable to trade in agricultural products are consistent with UK levels of statutory protection relating to animal and plant life and health, animal welfare and the environment. It will not advise on human health. This advice will come from other appropriate bodies.

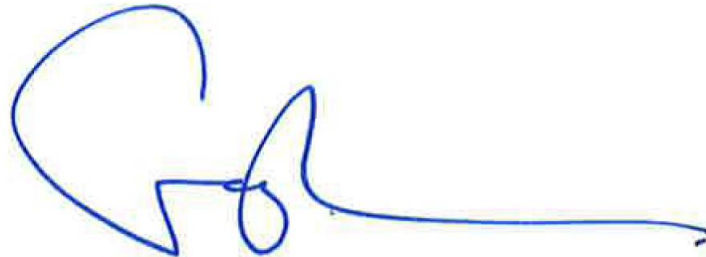
I would also add that this Government will stand firm in trade negotiations and we will always do right by our farmers and aim to secure new opportunities for the industry. In our negotiating objectives for a UK-US Trade Agreement, published last year on 2 March, we are clear that in all of our trade negotiations we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

It is important to note that any changes to existing food safety legislation would be scrutinised by Parliament. They cannot be put into statute without scrutiny.

Food Standards Agencies will continue to ensure that all food imports comply with the UK's high safety standards and that consumers are protected from unsafe food which does not meet these standards. Decisions on these standards are a matter for the UK and will be made separately from any trade agreements. Now that the UK is a fully independent trading nation, we will be able to decide how we set and maintain our own laws, standards and regulations.

I hope this response reassures your constituent as to the Government's approach to standards in free trade agreements.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'G Hands', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

THE RT HON GREG HANDS MP
Minister of State for Trade Policy
Department for International Trade