

29th October 2020

Dear Constituents,

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

We have high standards in this country, of which we are justly proud, and Ministers have said that there is no way the Government will reduce those standards. 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 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 Trade and Agriculture Commission has now been launched which will ensure that the voices of the public and industry are heard, and that their interests are advanced and protected. It will advise the Government on how Britain can remain a world-leader in animal welfare and environmental standards, and how we can seize new export opportunities for our farmers.

I believe that the Lord's amendment to the Agriculture Bill requiring imports of food and agricultural goods to meet domestic standards risked adverse effects. This amendment would have made it very difficult to secure any new trade deals, and I know that such conditions are not in place for imports under agreements negotiated during our membership of the EU. I am assured that Ministers will drive a hard bargain for access to our market, and existing import conditions will need to be respected. I also had concerns that the amendment would jeopardise the 19 currently unsigned agreements that the UK is seeking to roll over. Trade, of course, already takes place under those agreements, with existing import requirements met. However, unpicking those and demanding the numerous extra conditions in the amendment could upset the current deals if partners refused and walked away.

Finally, I know that it falls to our independent food regulators, the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland, to ensure that all food imports into the UK are safe and meet the relevant UK product rules and regulations. The Food Standards Agency's risk analysis process is rigorous, completely independent of Government and based on robust scientific evidence, along with other

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Rt Hon Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

legitimate factors such as wider consumer interests and the impact on the environment, animal welfare and food security.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

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