

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

4th February 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the UK's future agricultural policy.

Food and farming is a bedrock of our economy and environment, generating £112 billion a year and helping shape some of our finest habitats and landscapes. I am pleased that the Government are committed to matching the current budget available to farmers in every year of this Parliament, providing certainty and stability.

Leaving the EU creates a once in a generation opportunity to design a domestic agricultural policy that will stand the test of time. We can bring in innovative new ideas to support investment in healthy, sustainable British food production and do much better for farming, the environment and animal welfare. The Agriculture Bill will allow the UK to move to a system of paying farmers public money for public goods including environmental protection, access to the countryside, and work to reduce flooding. In order to spend more on boosting productivity and environmental benefits, Direct Payments will be phased out over an agricultural transition period, which is due to start in 2021 and run for seven years.

I am pleased that the Agriculture Bill will champion British food by improving transparency and fairness in the supply chain and through investing in new technology and research to ensure our food producers remain competitive and innovative. The Government will also help food producers strengthen their negotiating position at the farm gate and seek a fairer return by collecting data from across the supply chain.

We must take this opportunity to use public money to reward environmentally-responsible land use, as well as maintaining and enhancing high standards of animal welfare. I am convinced that we will harness this opportunity and ensure that our best days as a food and farming nation lie ahead of us.

I note your request for me to speak at the Second Reading of the Agriculture Bill. As a Government Minister, the convention is that I only speak in debates related to my own ministerial department.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

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