



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

10th November 2020

Dear Consultant,

RE: THE AGRICULTURE BILL.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the *Agriculture Bill* which was again before the House of Commons last week; I have read your comments and associated concerns with great interest.

I understand that there has been a great deal of anxiety about this Bill and I would like to take this opportunity to set out the legislation in its full context and provide an update on recent proceedings. I also want to commend Ministers for having listened and identified meaningful solutions to address the concerns that have been raised.

There is no doubt that British consumers want high welfare produce – and I assure you if our trading partners want to break into the UK market, they should expect to meet those standards. Our manifesto commitment is clear that in all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards. The Government will stand firm in trade negotiations to ensure any deals live up to the values of both our farmers and consumers.

Last week, the Government put forward its own amendment in response to proposed House of Lords amendments to the Bill. The Government amendment bolsters parliamentary scrutiny of free trade agreements and will place a duty on the Government to report to Parliament on whether, or to what extent, commitments in new free trade agreements relating to agricultural goods are consistent with maintaining UK levels of statutory protection in relation to human, animal and plant life and health; animal welfare; and environmental protection.

Parliament plays an important role in scrutinising our trade policy and I am therefore pleased that this amendment will increase its oversight of any future free trade agreements. At the end of negotiations, Ministers will lay the final agreement text in Parliament alongside an explanatory memorandum and a final impact assessment.

Aside from this, the Government has extended the Trade & Agriculture Commission and will place it on a full statutory footing in the *Trade Bill*, giving farmers a stronger voice in UK trade policy. The Commission will produce a report to be laid in Parliament on the impact on animal welfare and agriculture of each new free trade deal signed after the end of the transition period, which will allow parliamentarians access to independent and expert advice when reviewing the impact of each trade deal.

Regarding the promotion of sustainable farming, I would like to assure you that the Government is committed to organic agriculture, and I am pleased it is legislating for a UK organics policy. Ministers intend to use powers in the *Agriculture Bill* to amend the present organics regime to support organic farmers further, and to benefit the environment, maintain consumer confidence,



promote research and innovation in the sector, and reflect this in future trade agreements. This will be done in consultation with the sector.

Moreover, until 2024, farmers may apply for Countryside Stewardship grants to support them whilst converting to organic production. The DEFRA 'Organics Farming Statistics United Kingdom 2019' stated that nearly half a million hectares were farmed organically in the UK. This is an increase of 2.4 percent since 2018.

On the issue of the relationship between trade agreements and health outcomes, there is no evidence to suggest that a free trade deal with the United States, or indeed with any other country, would lead to an increase in child obesity in the UK.

The health and diets of our children is at the heart of the Government's commitment to the high food standards that protect and benefit British farmers and consumers, and which will not be compromised in any trade negotiation.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**