



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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20 Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 20 June enclosing your Committee's report on the future of land management in Wales. Please accept my apologies for the unacceptable delay in responding.

I was delighted to attend the Royal Welsh Show in July where I met my Welsh Government counterpart, Lesley Griffiths AM, farming unions and farmers. I also met the Secretary of State for Wales and the farming unions in advance of this visit to develop and strengthen these relationships and I look forward to maintaining them going forward.

Leaving the EU means that we will have an unparalleled opportunity to develop alternative domestic arrangements for farming and rural land use that can better contribute to a strong and productive economy, a world leading food and farming industry and a cleaner, healthier environment. Supporting the UK's farmers will form an important part of our exit from the EU.

As we develop our proposals for agriculture reform, we will continue to listen to, and engage with, those who have a shared interest and responsibility for the future of the industries. I have shared your thoughtful report with the relevant officials who will use it to inform their thinking to develop future policy. My comments on the issues you have raised are set out below.

Single market

As we leave the EU we are not looking to retain membership of the Single Market, but to develop a bold and ambitious free trade agreement as part of a new, deep and special partnership with the EU. We want to have the greatest possible tariff-free and barrier-free trade with our European neighbours, as well as to negotiate our own trade agreements around the world, to make sure that UK companies have the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets.

Welsh lamb

The UK government recognises the benefits from protecting the very best of our traditional and geographical food products, including Welsh lamb, which has, of course, been awarded 'Protected Geographical Indication' status. We continue to work with producers to make sure appropriate protections are in place, now and after we leave the EU, to make sure these high quality, characteristic and territorially important food products remain protected from imitation.

We have huge ambitions for the farming industry: we are determined to grow more, sell more and export more great Welsh and British food. We will work to make sure that the UK has a productive, resilient and trusted agriculture sector.

It will be a priority to maintain the UK's high standards of food safety and of animal welfare. Any trade deals we enter into will need to be right for consumers, businesses and farmers, and will need to continue to protect our environment.

Constitutional arrangements

The UK government is also absolutely committed to the devolution settlements. The First Secretary of State, Damian Green, wrote to the First Minister for Wales, Carwyn Jones on 12 July and they have met subsequently. His letter and the discussion they had earlier this month recognised that close working between the UK and Welsh governments is clearly going to be needed throughout the EU Exit negotiations.

Our objectives throughout this engagement are to deliver certainty and continuity for farming businesses throughout the UK but also to allow for all of us to scrutinise the need for common frameworks properly. We need to examine what frameworks are needed and, where they interact with the devolution settlement, how to proceed in a way that will work best for Wales and everyone in the UK. It is the aim of the UK government to establish common frameworks only where they are needed, and remains our expectation that the outcome of this process will be a significant increase in the decision making power of each devolved administration.

Access to labour

The food and farming sector needs to attract, retain and develop talented people. The sector offers diverse and exciting career opportunities and we want it to be a career destination of choice.

The UK government has previously announced its intention to commission advice from the Migration Advisory Committee to better understand the reliance on EU migrant workers across the economy and consider the UK's labour market needs, and to consult business and communities on options to shape our future immigration system.

Access to a sufficient and appropriately skilled workforce is essential for the whole food chain. The UK government is committed to ensuring that there is a strong skills system that can drive increases in productivity, improvements in social mobility, and help make a success of EU exit.

Until we have left the EU, the UK will remain a member with all of the rights and obligations that membership entails and employers in the agricultural and food processing sectors are free to continue to recruit EU workers to meet their labour needs.

Agricultural support

Leaving the EU means leaving the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). We now have an historic opportunity to take back control of our policies on agriculture and the environment. We will be able to design new policies tailored to UK agriculture, countryside and the environment, and provide better value for money to the UK taxpayer.

The UK government has pledged to continue to commit the same cash total in funds for farm support for the duration of this parliament, providing much needed certainty to farmers and landowners.

British food enjoys a reputation for quality that has been built on high animal welfare standards, strong environmental protections and the dedication of farmers and growers to meeting ever more demanding consumer expectations. We want to support farmers to grow more, sell more and export more great British food.

Continued support is critically important, and so is reform.

The UK government has pledged to work with farmers, food producers and environmental experts across Britain to devise a new agri-environment system, to be introduced in the following Parliament.

We want to make sure that we have system of agricultural support that respects the work of farmers and puts environmental protection and enhancement first. That means support for woodland creation and tree planting, encouraging biodiversity and high standards of animal welfare.

Decisions on the replacement of EU funding will be taken in light of wider UK strategic priorities and other domestic spending decisions. As we transition to longer term arrangements, we will make sure we continue to engage meaningfully with the devolved administrations and that their circumstances are taken into account.

Thank you again for your letter.

With every good wish,

Yours,
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Michael Gove