

A new farming policy

One of the big wins from Brexit should be a new farming policy. The Common Agricultural Policy has not been kind to UK farmers. Market share in temperate food products has shrunk badly during our time in the EU, whilst cheaper products from non EU sources have been kept out by tariffs. We have developed a huge balance of trade deficit with the EU in food.

The government always responds positively when I raise the issue of how we can follow a farming policy from the 1 January that gives more help to UK producers, and encourages more domestic production. The government has promised to maintain current overall subsidy levels this Parliament once we are out of the EU, but to gradually redirect them. Large scale profitable farmers will enjoy less subsidy for producing food. More subsidy will go for environmental goods including the promotion of more natural landscapes.

The government will take advantage of our new freedoms to raise animal welfare standards. It is currently consulting on banning the export of live animals, and banning the transport of live animals through the UK by overseas interests. That is welcome.

I would like to see more definition of the schemes available from 1 January to offer support to farmers keen to expand their food production. Market gardeners wishing to whittle away the huge deficit on vegetables, temperate fruits and salad items need to loan and grant schemes to put in the extra covered areas to boost output. As stated before, the fishing industry needs loan and grant schemes to increase our fleet capacity to land our fish. Dairy and meat producers also may need help with mechanising and improving output.

Our competitors use these methods to gain market share. The government has promised us more of a response, so bring it on.