

Let's transform UK agriculture

All the time we have been in the EU the Common Agriculture Policy has kept the UK under controls which have not suited us. Market share has fallen. We have seen more and more temperate food brought in from the continent, reducing our home market share. Food miles have increased, our roads have been clogged with more foreign trucks travelling longer distances with food imports.

Much of our salad needs and flowers now come in from the Netherlands. Many of our vegetables come in from Spain. Large amounts of dairy produce come from France. Beef comes in from several countries, and pork arrives especially from Denmark. Many of these items are things we could grow or rear for ourselves. The Netherlands has no climate advantage over us. Low value vegetables should not be cheaper when hauled hundreds of miles from Spain.

Once we are free to set our own tariffs we can remove all tariffs on food we cannot produce for ourselves. There should be no further need for taxes on citrus fruits, for example. We may also well decide to have lower average tariffs on temperate food than the EU makes us impose, as we will be levying them on the EU as well as on the rest of the world.

We will also decide on our own levels of farm subsidy and how it should be allocated. The new UK system should place a premium on increasing our market shares. There should be tax and subsidy inducements to increase output and to mechanise farms. The UK should harness AI and robotics to the cause of farm improvement, building two industries at the same time. Intelligent use of newly targeted subsidies and sensible tariffs could give us a big boost with more home grown food and more domestic development of the technology a new farm should deploy.

We need more investment in extending the growing seasons for vegetables, fruit and flowers and other market gardening activities. We could grow more with the right glasshouses and polytunnels, just as the Dutch do with similar weather.