

Letter from the Environment Secretary to the food and drink industry

To those working hard to feed the nation,

In the face of what is perhaps the greatest health challenge this country has faced in our lifetime, I want to pay tribute to all those who are working around the clock to keep the nation fed – in our fields, processing plants, factories, wholesalers, stores and takeaways and all of those moving goods around the country and to our homes.

The last three weeks have been stressful and difficult for everyone working to feed the country and provide them with other essential items. Food retailers have faced an unprecedented increase in demand and those working in food production and distribution have had to work harder than ever to ensure that food and drink are kept on the shelves.

The Government has recently taken some unprecedented steps to close cinemas, leisure centres and other public venues and to instruct people to stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives.

However, there are many key workers that are crucial to the resilience of our country. Our NHS staff will be working harder than ever in the weeks ahead. Those of you working to provide the nation with food and other essentials are also delivering an absolutely vital service.

I am in regular dialogue with the food and drink industry and the Government has offered guidance to employers to ensure that when you do your job, you can do so safely. The advice of Public Health England is that there is very little risk of the virus being spread on food or packaging.

Everyone working in the food and drink industry has rallied in an extraordinary way to respond to this unprecedented challenge. Having worked in the food industry myself, I am personally enormously proud and thankful for all the work that you have done in recent weeks, and will be asked to do in the weeks ahead. In many cases you are the hidden heroes, and the country is grateful for all that you have done.

Yours sincerely,

George Eustice