

Lord Gardiner of Kimble's statement at an Extraordinary Virtual meeting of the G20 Agriculture Ministers

May I thank the presidency for convening this meeting at such a critical time. Across the world, so many people have been affected, and her Majesty's Government and all in the United Kingdom are mindful of what is happening in our own country and across the world in these difficult times.

As we all know, this virus knows no borders. We must ensure a coordinated global response by increasing our international dialogue and cooperation to tackle the immediate challenges and ensure high standards of biosecurity which will be paramount to prevent similar events happening again.

As the Ministers responsible for agriculture, we need to ensure the flow of critical agricultural products, foodstuffs, products and services essential for food production and their distribution along food supply chains.

Alongside other measures, the UK has temporarily relaxed elements of competition law to enable supermarkets to work more closely together to ensure people can access the products they need. And delivery hours to supermarkets are being extended to ensure shelves can be replenished more quickly.

Farmers, seasonal workers and input and output distributing agents must be able to move safely as required. I commend the efforts of all workers supporting the immediate and longer term fight against this pandemic.

It is imperative that we keep our markets and borders open and work together to ensure the continued flow of international trade. Global food security can only be achieved by ensuring supply and access to food everywhere.

Those living with low food security are especially vulnerable to the impacts of disruptions to the food system caused by COVID-19. This is exacerbated by existing vulnerabilities caused by climate change and natural disasters. Our response must recognise this.

I would like to praise the work of the Agriculture Market Information System and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. These organisations can assist our efforts by tracking the impacts of the pandemic and promoting transparency.

We will continue our work on protecting the foundations of all food production – a healthy environment and a stable climate. We must commit to supporting an environmentally sustainable and inclusive recovery, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

The verdict is clear: working together is integral to protecting human life. My officials and I stand ready to work with our partners around the world to

combat COVID-19 together.