

## More home food production

Yesterday there was an Urgent Question on the EU ban on exports of bi valve molluscs from the UK to the EU. The Defra Secretary told us he had prior assurance from the EU confirming the legality of this trade post Brexit, but the EU have now changed their mind. The UK has been supplying continental restaurants and food shops with some shellfish. The English fishermen supply them straight from the sea, with continental processors cleansing them for sale with their own depuration facilities. He promised to seek urgent reversal of the decision, understanding the damage it is doing to small fishing businesses. It affects oysters, muscles and clams, not the larger trade in lobsters and crabs. Demand on the continent is down anyway given the widespread closure of restaurants.

I urged him to make help available to the UK industry so we can process the shellfish here. Then they could be exported as food products. It would also mean we could sell them through our own fishmongers and food stores. The EU is being unreasonable over various food trade issues. It is high time the UK government took tougher action to enforce our UK internal market and ensure the smooth passage of food into and out of Northern Ireland, and time to be firm over fish. I did get a more encouraging reply to a recent written question on growing more of our own food.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (144914):

### **Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote and support more protected growing of vegetables and salad crops to extend the UK growing season. (144914)

Tabled on: 28 January 2021

**This question was grouped with the following question(s) for answer:**

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential to extend the UK fruit growing season; and what support his Department provides to growers to extend their season. (144915)

Tabled on: 28 January 2021

### **Answer:**

**Victoria Prentis:**

We have the ideal climate and landscape to enable us to produce a wide range of fruit, vegetables and salad crops throughout the year. Innovation such as the development of new plant varieties and growing systems has already allowed growers to extend the domestic growing season for products such as strawberries.

We will continue to encourage and support our growers to produce more high-

quality home-grown fruits and vegetables, ensuring a reliable and sustainable supply of top quality and healthy home-grown fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the year, all produced to high environmental standards.

Growers of protected and salad crops are currently able to apply for financial support to help them improve their productivity via the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme, and looking ahead the Agriculture Act will provide powers to offer financial support to anyone starting, or improving the productivity, of an agricultural or horticultural activity.

Later this year, growers will have the opportunity to apply for support to invest in equipment, technology and infrastructure via the new Farming Investment Fund. This will help them to boost their productivity whilst also reducing impact on the environment.

The answer was submitted on 08 Feb 2021 at 14:57.