

My intervention during the debate on the Direct Payments to Farmers (Legislative Continuity) Bill, 28th January 2020

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that as we move on to the new policy, there will be an emphasis on growing more food at home for import substitution, so that these general moneys can lead on to moneys that help us to build a bigger domestic food industry?

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr George Eustice): My right hon. Friend will be aware that we have presented a separate Agriculture Bill, which has had its First Reading. It sets out all the powers we would need to reform agriculture policy. The direct payment regulations before us bring the CAP into UK law and on to the UK statute book, and in the Agriculture Bill, there are powers to modify these regulations, so that we can remove the rough edges and simplify them. There are also powers in the Agriculture Bill to strike a very different course for our agriculture—a course based on payment for public goods, but also on providing farmers with grants to invest in new technology, so that they can improve their profitability or add value to their produce. That Bill also recognises that our food security is vital, and commits the Government to reviewing it every five years. That, however, is obviously a matter that we will debate in the coming weeks and months; I want to return to this direct payments Bill.