

'No deal' could have devastating impact on Welsh farming and fisheries – Lesley Griffiths

Speaking a day before the meaningful vote and ahead of her meeting with the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, the Minister said a 'no deal' should be avoided at all costs to protect our valued rural and coastal communities.

Welsh red meat and shellfish will be particularly vulnerable in the event of a 'no deal', with 90% of our red meat exports and also 90% of shellfish exports going to the European Union. The prospect of high tariffs in the event of a no deal Brexit will only add to the cost of exporting.

Leaving the EU without a deal would also mean all consignments of live animals and products of animal origin will need an export health certificate and need to enter the EU through a Border Inspection Post (not available in Calais) – adding to the costs of production and bureaucracy.

Welsh shellfish are transported live and delivered within 24 hours from Welsh nets to EU markets. Any delays in this supply chain will result in poorer quality sea food and an increase in mortality, which will lead to a reduction in prices. Ongoing problems could even cause the industry to collapse.

The Minister said:

“We have always been clear a no deal Brexit is not an option for Wales’ farming and fishing industries. Crashing out of the European Union could decimate our rural and coastal economies and must be avoided at all costs.

“Any no deal scenario would be bad for Welsh farmers as 90% of our red meat exports go to the EU. High tariffs, increased bureaucracy and delays at the border will only add to costs of exporting.

“But a no deal combined with the removal of UK import tariffs would be the worst case scenario for Welsh and British agriculture, allowing cheap food imports at a time when our exports could be subject to tariffs of up to 50% for some sectors.

“This would also be the case for our shellfish industry, which is equally dependent on exporting to the EU. Any delays at ports preventing delivery of the live products within 24 hours could potentially wipe out the industry.”

Lesley Griffiths added:

“Our food companies are already experiencing difficulties recruiting from the EU due to the initial drop in the value of sterling. A further reduction would only exacerbate these difficulties.

“I make no apology for outlining these very real prospects of a no deal. We cannot underestimate or ignore the truly devastating impact crashing out of the European Union will have on our industries.

“As a government, we will do all we can to support the sector to prepare for Brexit and the challenges ahead. Through our EU Transition Fund, we have already provided £6m for projects to help our farming, fishing and food industries ensure their competitiveness in changing markets and enable them to thrive in a post-Brexit world.”