

# Truss formally launches Trade and Agriculture Commission

At an event in Whitehall, International Trade Secretary Liz Truss is today (Tuesday 28 July) launching the new Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Animal welfare, consumer and environmental groups met with the Department for International Trade, at a formal launch to talk about how they can support the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

This is part of a major drive by Liz Truss to engage the public and industry in decisions about the UK's trade policy.

She will be joined by Tim Smith, Chair of the Commission – and former head of the Food Standards Agency – and by other members of the Commission. Environment Secretary George Eustice will also deliver a video message.

In addition to Trade and Agriculture Commission's Chair and Members, attendees include: Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), National Sheep Association, British Veterinary Association, Initiative for Free Trade, Tesco and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).

The government's Trade and Agriculture Commission met for the first time on Friday 24 July. The Commission was established to bring together stakeholders across the industry, calling on their expertise to advise on:

- Trade policies the Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, while ensuring the sector remains competitive and that animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined.
- Advancing and protecting British consumer interests and those of developing countries.
- How the UK engages the WTO to build a coalition that helps advance higher animal welfare standards across the world.
- Developing trade policy that identifies and opens up new export opportunities for the UK agricultural industry – in particular for SMEs – and that benefits the UK economy as a whole.

At this first meeting they discussed;

- The detailed aims and scope of the Commission
- The ways of working and terms of engagement needed for success
- A provisional timetable and structure of working groups

The Commission reports directly to International Trade Secretary and it will produce an advisory report at the end of its six months' work.

It will ensure our high standards are upheld and our farmers are able seize new opportunities to export their goods abroad. This will help the UK

agriculture sector to be amongst the most competitive and innovative in the world.

The quality of Commission members ensures that the advice produced will be representative and robust – and the government will listen.

**International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss, said:**

We're stepping up our engagement with all the groups who have an interest in Britain's agriculture trade policy. The Trade and Agriculture Commission will ensure the voices of the public and industry are heard, and that their interests are advanced and protected. It will advise the government on how Britain can remain a world-leader in animal welfare and environmental standards, and how we can seize new export opportunities for our farmers.

This is about putting British farming at the heart of our trade policy and ensuring that our agriculture industry is amongst the most competitive and innovative in the world.

The Trade and Agriculture Commission will act as an advisory board to the Secretary of State for International Trade by producing a report which:

- Considers the policies that Government should adopt in free trade agreements
- Reflects consumer interests and those of developing countries
- Considers how the UK engages the WTO to build a coalition that helps advance higher animal welfare standards across the world.
- Develops trade policy that identifies and opens up new export opportunities for the UK – in particular for SMEs

The agriculture and food industries are our largest manufacturing sectors employing more than 4 million people and contributing £120 billion to our economy. The new Commission will play a crucial part advising on how trade policy can create further growth and stimulate this critical pillar of our economy.

**Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:**

The Government is committed that in all of our trade negotiations we will not compromise on our high environment protection, animal welfare and food safety standards. I would like to thank the Trade and Agriculture Commission's members and others who support our efforts to ensure that in any future trade deals we will uphold these standards.

I very much look forward to working with the Commission this year and of course to the report and recommendations that they come up with.

**Chair of the Agriculture and Trade Commission, Tim Smith, said:**

The Commission has an engaged, passionate membership who share my commitment to providing the Government with robust, evidence-based advice on ensuring that trade policy is fair for consumers, farmers and producers.

This is a critical moment in time for UK farmers and food producers. There is a real appetite for growth and for seizing new opportunities. For consumers, who we will place at the centre of our work, there is an opportunity to build trust in our existing world class standards and to demonstrate the value of those standards to the global market.