

# Trade and Agriculture Commission put on statutory footing

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss is today extending the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC), and placing it on a full statutory footing, giving farmers a stronger voice in UK trade policy.

The Commission was initially launched for a six-month period in July to bring together voices from across the sector and report back to inform top-level trade policy and negotiations.

Since then it has heard from dozens of experts on farming, animal welfare, the environment and trade, called for evidence from hundreds of key voices across the industry, as well as engaging local farmers, producers, businesses and MPs across the UK through a series of virtual regional roadshows.

Now, as Britain prepares to put into statute the trade deal struck with Japan and moves closer to becoming a fully-fledged trading nation, the Government has decided to extend the Commission past its previous fixed term and give it a more active role through a new legislative underpinning, to be reviewed every three years.

It will produce a report on the impact on animal welfare and agriculture of each free trade deal the government signs after the end of the EU transition period on January 1. This report will be laid in Parliament before the start of the 21-day scrutiny period under the terms of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act.

The move – part of the government’s ambition to place farmers at the heart of its trade policy – will allow Parliamentarians access to independent and expert advice when reviewing the impact of each trade deal on farming.

The commission will continue to report to Truss and will continue with the report it is currently producing, which will advise on:

- Trade policies the Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, to ensure that animal welfare, food production and environmental standards are not undermined and to identify new export opportunities.
- 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.

The Commission is publishing an interim report shortly, and the full report will be published in February 2021 and presented to Parliament.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

As trade secretary, I want deals that deliver for British farmers and help them sell more brilliant produce around the world. I will never sign up to anything that threatens their ability to compete, or that undermines their high standards.

Our trade policy is deeply rooted in British values – democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a fierce commitment to high food and farming standards. Any deal that does not abide by those values or deliver for vital industries like agriculture will remain firmly on the shelf.

The Trade and Agriculture Commission is an important part of our vision for a values-led and value-generating trade policy. It is about putting British farming at the heart of our trade agenda, and ensuring the interests of farmers and consumers are promoted and advanced as we move closer to becoming an independent trading nation on January 1st.

George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, said:

By putting the Trade and Agriculture Commission on a statutory footing, we are ensuring that the voices of our farmers, as well as those of consumers and key environmental and animal welfare groups, continue to be heard while we are in the process of scrutinising future trade deals.

The food producers that we have in this country are second to none, and we know that there is a growing global demand for our great British produce.

We will always back Britain's farmers and food producers and will make sure they can seize the vast range of opportunities outside of the EU, so that their world-famous produce can continue to be enjoyed all around the world.

Tim Smith, chair of the TAC, said:

From a standing start in July the Trade and Agriculture Commission has been able to cover a huge amount of ground and I know that it will play a key role in establishing independent scrutiny of Britain's new trade deals. It's good to know that our contribution is being recognised in this way.

Britain has fantastic farmers and growers producing high quality food to world leading standards. Our job is to use evidence from a

wide range of experts and with diverse opinions to establish our trading priorities for when we report to Parliament in February.

NFU President, Minette Batters said:

The decision to extend the Trade and Agriculture Commission and put it on a statutory footing in order that it can report on any new trade deals for scrutiny in parliament will be hugely welcomed by Britain's farmers.

This demonstrates the government's commitment to not only safeguarding our standards of production in future trade deals but demonstrates an ambition to be global leaders in animal welfare and environmental protection. We look forward to working with the Department for International Trade and Defra in our shared ambition to export high quality British food around the world.

The government has been consistently clear that in all trade negotiations, the UK will not compromise on its high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

During trade negotiations, the Department for International Trade consults widely with its agri-food Trade Advisory Group, comprised of farmers and other senior figures from across the industry. The Government also has a suite of tools – including tariffs, tariff quotas and safeguards – to ensure that British farmers with their high standards are not unfairly undercut in any trade deal.

On Friday, the government tabled an amendment to the Agriculture Bill, to bolster parliamentary scrutiny of free trade agreements. It will place a duty on the Government to report to Parliament on whether, or to what extent, commitments in new Free Trade Agreements relating to agricultural goods are consistent with maintaining UK levels of statutory protection in relation to human, animal and plant life and health; animal welfare; and environmental protection. This report will be laid at the same time, or ahead of, any FTA laid before Parliament, demonstrating how we are meeting our commitments on standards.

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## **Prime Minister announces new national restrictions**

The Prime Minister [has announced tougher national restrictions in England from Thursday.](#)

With the NHS weeks from being overwhelmed, and a higher death toll than the first wave predicted without new restrictions, the Prime Minister, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Scientific Advisor, and Cabinet agreed there was no alternative to tougher national measures.

The Prime Minister will update Parliament on Monday, and MPs are set to vote on the measures on Wednesday. This follows a Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister earlier today.

He said that no one wants to impose these kinds of measures, but no responsible Prime Minister could ignore the evidence presented.

He also said that, whilst Christmas will inevitably be different this year, tough action now could mean families may be able to be together.

Belgium, France, Germany and other countries have already put in place national restrictions, following earlier local measures.

From Thursday 5 November, everyone must stay at home, and may leave only for a limited set of reasons. These include:

- For education;
- For work, if you cannot work from home;
- For exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household, support bubble or on your own with one person from another household;
- For all medical reasons, appointments and to escape injury or harm;
- To shop for food and essentials;
- And to provide care for vulnerable people, or as a volunteer.

A full set of exemptions will be set out in law.

Single-adult households will still be able to form an exclusive support bubble with one other household, and children can move between homes if their parents are separated.

Non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues will be closed. Click and collect services can continue and essential shops, including supermarkets, will remain open, so there is no need for anyone to stockpile.

Pubs, bars, restaurants must close, except for takeaway and delivery services.

People should work from home wherever possible. Workplaces should stay open

where people cannot work from home – for example, in the construction or manufacturing sectors.

Shielding as practised in the spring will not currently be reintroduced. The clinically vulnerable, or those over the age of 60, should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise contacts with others. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should not only minimise their contacts with others, but also not go to work if they are unable to work from home.

There is no exemption for staying away from home on holiday. This means people cannot travel internationally or within the UK, unless for work, education or other legally permitted exemptions. Overnight stays away from primary residences will not be allowed, except for specific exceptions including for work.

Inbound international travel will continue to be governed by the travel corridor approach, and those currently on a domestic holiday will be allowed to finish their holidays, but are still subject to the requirements in England not to go out without a reasonable excuse.

Public services, such as job centres, courts, and civil registration offices will remain open.

There is no exemption for communal worship in places of worship (except funerals and individual prayer), organised team sports, or children's activities.

Elite sport will be allowed to continue behind closed doors as currently.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, known as the furlough scheme, will remain open until December, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. The cost for employers of retaining workers will be reduced compared to the current scheme, which ends today.

As the Prime Minister and Education Secretary have said, keeping young people in education is a national priority so early years settings, schools, colleges and universities will all remain open. Parents and carers should make sure their children keep attending school. However, universities and adult learning providers should consider increasing online provision where possible.

Parents will still be able to access registered childcare and other childcare activities where reasonably necessary to enable parents to work. Parents are also able to form a childcare bubble with another household for the purposes of informal childcare, where the child is 13 or under.

Ministers are also clear that it is vital to keep the provision for non-Covid healthcare needs going. Unless clinicians tell patients otherwise, they should continue to use the NHS, get scans and other tests, turn up for all appointments and collect medicines and treatments.

Ministers have done everything in their power to avoid another national

lockdown.

The natural rate of R is around 3, meaning local restrictions have helped slow the spread of the virus, whilst NHS Test and Trace is testing more than any other country in Europe.

But the R rate is still above 1, meaning infections, hospitalisations and deaths continue to double, and the virus is now a national problem.

On present trends, in the South West, where incidence is low for example, it is clear they would run out of hospital capacity in a matter of weeks unless we act.

Whilst work is underway to boost capacity, including preparing the Nightingales, it is impossible to create extra bed space, and recruit extra doctors and nurses, at the rate necessary to outpace the virus.

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## **Furlough Scheme Extended and Further Economic Support announced**

People and businesses across the UK are being provided with additional financial support as part of the government's plan for the next phase of its response to the coronavirus outbreak, the Prime Minister announced today (31 October).

Throughout the crisis the government's priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods. Today the Prime Minister said the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – also known as the Furlough scheme – will remain open until December, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. Under the extended scheme, the cost for employers of retaining workers will be reduced compared to the current scheme, which ends today. This means the extended furlough scheme is more generous for employers than it was in October.

In addition, business premises forced to close in England are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month under the Local Restrictions Support Grant. Also, £1.1bn is being given to Local Authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

To give homeowners peace of mind too, mortgage holidays will also no longer end today.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

Over the past eight months of this crisis we have helped millions

of people to continue to provide for their families. But now – along with many other countries around the world – we face a tough winter ahead.

I have always said that we will do whatever it takes as the situation evolves. Now, as restrictions get tougher, we are taking steps to provide further financial support to protect jobs and businesses. These changes will provide a vital safety net for people across the UK.

### **Job Retention Scheme**

Employers small or large, charitable or non-profit, are eligible for the extended Job Retention Scheme, which will continue for a further month.

Businesses will have flexibility to bring furloughed employees back to work on a part time basis or furlough them full-time, and will only be asked to cover National Insurance and employer pension contributions which, for the average claim, accounts for just 5% of total employment costs.

The Job Support Scheme, which was scheduled to come in on Sunday 1st November, has been postponed until the furlough scheme ends.

Additional guidance will be set out shortly.

### **Mortgage Holidays**

Mortgage payment holidays will no longer end today. Borrowers who have been impacted by coronavirus and have not yet had a mortgage payment holiday will be entitled to a six month holiday, and those that have already started a mortgage payment holiday will be able to top up to six months without this being recorded on their credit file.

The FCA will announce further information on Monday.

### **Business Grants**

Businesses required to close in England due to local or national restrictions will be eligible for the following:

- For properties with a rateable value of £15k or under, grants to be £1,334 per month, or £667 per two weeks;
- For properties with a rateable value of between £15k-£51k grants to be £2,000 per month, or £1,000 per two weeks;
- For properties with a rateable value of £51k or over grants to be £3,000 per month, or £1,500 per two weeks.

Today's announcements are only part of the government's world-leading economic response to coronavirus – the largest package of emergency support in post-war history – to protect, create and support jobs.

The furlough scheme protected over nine million jobs across the UK, and self-

employed people have received over £13 billion in support. This is in addition to billions of pounds in tax deferrals and grants for businesses.

## **Further information**

### **GRANTS**

- Business grant policy is fully devolved. Devolved Administrations will receive Barnett consequential which they could use to establish similar schemes.

### **JOB RETENTION SCHEME**

- This extended Job Retention Scheme will operate as the previous scheme did, with businesses being paid upfront to cover wages costs. There will be a short period when we need to change the legal terms of the scheme and update the system and businesses will be paid in arrears for that period.
- The CJRS is being extended until December. The level of the grant will mirror levels available under the CJRS in August, so the government will pay 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500 and employers will pay employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and pension contributions only for the hours the employee does not work.
- As under the current CJRS, flexible furloughing will be allowed in addition to full-time furloughing.
- Further details, including how to claim this extended support through an updated claims service, will be provided shortly.
- The Job Support Scheme will be introduced following the end of the CJRS.

## **Who is eligible?**

### **Employers**

- All employers with a UK bank account and UK PAYE schemes can claim the grant. Neither the employer nor the employee needs to have previously used the CJRS.
- The government expects that publicly funded organisations will not use the scheme, as has already been the case for CJRS, but partially publicly funded organisations may be eligible where their private revenues have been disrupted. All other eligibility requirements apply to these employers.

### **Employees**

- To be eligible to be claimed for under this extension, employees must be on an employer's PAYE payroll by 23:59 30th October 2020. This means a Real Time Information (RTI) submission notifying payment for that employee to HMRC must have been made on or before 30th October 2020.  
\*As under the current CJRS rules:
- Employees can be on any type of contract. Employers will be able to agree any working arrangements with employees.
- Employers can claim the grant for the hours their employees are not



working, calculated by reference to their usual hours worked in a claim period. Such calculations will broadly follow the same methodology as currently under the CJRS.

- When claiming the CJRS grant for furloughed hours, employers will need to report and claim for a minimum period of 7 consecutive calendar days.
- Employers will need to report hours worked and the usual hours an employee would be expected to work in a claim period.
- For worked hours, employees will be paid by their employer subject to their employment contract and employers will be responsible for paying the tax and NICs due on those amounts.

#### **What support is being provided and employer costs:**

- For hours not worked by the employee, the government will pay 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500. The grant must be paid to the employee in full.
- Employers will pay employer NICs and pension contributions, and should continue to pay the employee for hours worked in the normal way.
- As with the current CJRS, employers are still able to choose to top up employee wages above the scheme grant at their own expense if they wish.
- The Government will confirm shortly when claims can first be made in respect of employee wage costs during November, but there will be no gap in eligibility for support between the previously announced end-date of CJRS and this extension.

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## **Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 31 October 2020**

Good evening and apologies for disturbing your Saturday evening with more news of Covid and I can assure you I wouldn't do it unless it was absolutely necessary.

First I will hand over to Chris and then Patrick who will present the latest data.

Thank you very much Patrick, and Chris. I am afraid that no responsible PM can ignore the message of those figures.

When I told you two weeks ago that we were pursuing a local and a regional approach to tackling this virus, I believed then and I still believe passionately that it was the right thing to do.

Because we know the cost of these restrictions, the damage they do, the impact on jobs, and on livelihoods, and on people's mental health.

No one wants to be imposing these kinds of measures anywhere.

We didn't want to be shutting businesses, pubs and restaurants in one part of the country, where incidence was very low, when the vast bulk of infections were taking place elsewhere.

Our hope was that by strong local action, strong local leadership, we could get the rates of infection down where the disease was surging, and address the problem thereby across the whole country.

And I want to thank the millions of people who have been putting up with these restrictions in their areas for so long. I want to thank local leaders who have stepped up and local communities.

Because as you can see from some of those charts, the R has been kept lower than it would otherwise have been, and there are signs that your work has been paying off

And we will continue as far as we possibly can to adopt a pragmatic and local approach in the months ahead

But as we've also seen from those charts, we've got to be humble in the face of nature

And in this country alas as across much of Europe the virus is spreading even faster than the reasonable worst case scenario of our scientific advisers

Whose models as you've just seen now suggest that unless we act we could see deaths in this country running at several thousand a day

A peak of mortality alas far bigger than the one we saw in April

Even in the South West, where incidence was so low, and still is so low, it is now clear that current projections mean they will run out of hospital capacity in a matter of weeks unless we act.

And let me explain why the overrunning of the NHS would be a medical and moral disaster beyond the raw loss of life

Because the huge exponential growth in the number of patients – by no means all of them elderly, by the way – would mean that doctors and nurses would be forced to choose which patients to treat

Who would get oxygen and who wouldn't

Who would live and who would die,

And doctors and nurses would be forced to choose between saving covid patients and non-covid patients

And the sheer weight of covid demand would mean depriving tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of non-covid patients of the care they need

It is crucial to grasp this that the general threat to public health comes not from focusing too much on covid, but from not focusing enough, from failing to get it under control

And if we let the lines on those graphs grow in the way they could and in the way they're projected to grow, then the risk is that for the first time in our lives, the NHS will not be there for us and for our families

And even if I could now double capacity overnight – and obviously I am proud that we have massively increased capacity, we do have the Nightingales, we've got 13,000 more nurses now than last year, we have many more doctors – but it still would not be enough, because the virus is doubling faster than we could conceivably add capacity

And so now is the time to take action because there is no alternative.

From Thursday until the start of December, you must stay at home.

You may only leave home for specific reasons, including:

For education; For work, say if you cannot work from home; For exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household or on your own with one person from another household; For medical reasons, appointments and to escape injury or harm; To shop for food and essentials; And to provide care for vulnerable people, or as a volunteer.

I'm afraid non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues will all be closed – though click and collect services can continue and essential shops will remain open, so there is no need to stock up.

Pubs, bars, restaurants must close except for takeaway and delivery services.

Workplaces should stay open where people can't work from home – for example in the construction or manufacturing sectors.

Single adult households can still form exclusive support bubbles with one other household, and children will still be able to move between homes if their parents are separated.

If you are clinically vulnerable, or over the age of 60, you should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise your contacts with others.

I know how tough shielding was, and we will not ask people to shield again in the same way again. However we are asking those who are clinically extremely vulnerable to minimise their contact with others, and not to go to work if they are unable to work from home.

I am under no illusions about how difficult this will be for businesses which have already had to endure hardship this year. I am truly, truly sorry for that.

This is why we are also going to extend the furlough system through November.

The furlough scheme was a success in the spring. It supported people and businesses in a critical time. We will not end it. We will extend it until December.

There will be some differences compared to March.

These measures above all will be time-limited, starting next Thursday 5 November. They will end on Wednesday 2 December, when we will seek to ease restrictions, going back into the tiered system on a local and regional basis according to the latest data and trends.

Christmas is going to be different this year, very different, but it is my sincere hope and belief that by taking tough action now, we can allow families across the country to be together.

My priority, our priority, remains keeping people in education – so childcare, early years settings, schools, colleges and universities will all remain open. Our senior clinicians still advise that school is the best place for children to be.

We cannot let this virus damage our children's futures even more than it has already. I urge parents to continue taking their children to school and I am extremely grateful to teachers across the country for their dedication in enabling schools to remain open.

And it is vital that we will keep provision for non-Covid healthcare groups going.

So please – this is really important – unless your clinicians tell you otherwise, you should continue to use the NHS, get your scans, turn up for your appointments and pick up your treatments. If at all possible, we want you to continue to access these services, now and through the winter. Indeed it's only by taking this action that we can protect the NHS for you.

On Monday I will set out our plans to parliament. On Wednesday, parliament will debate and vote on these measures which, if passed, will as I say come into force on Thursday.

We have updated the devolved administrations on the action we are taking in England and stand ready to work with them on plans for Christmas and beyond.

We should remember we are not alone in what we're going through. Our friends in Belgium, France and Germany have had to take very similar action.

So as we come together now to fight this second wave, I want to say something about the way ahead

Because people will reasonably ask when will this all end

And as I have said before I am optimistic that this will feel very different and better by the spring

It is not just that we have ever better medicine and therapies, and the

realistic hope of a vaccine in the first quarter of next year

We now have the immediate prospect of using many millions of cheap, reliable and above all rapid turnaround tests

Tests that you can use yourself to tell whether or not you are infectious and get the result within ten to 15 minutes

And we know from trial across the country in schools and hospitals that we can use these tests not just to locate infectious people but to drive down the disease

And so over the next few days and weeks, we plan a steady but massive expansion in the deployment of these quick turnaround tests

Applying them in an ever-growing number of situations

From helping women to have their partners with them in labour wards when they're giving birth to testing whole towns and even whole cities

The army has been brought in to work on the logistics and the programme will begin in a matter of days

Working with local communities, local government, public health directors and organisations of all kinds to help people discover whether or not they are infectious, and then immediately to get them to self-isolate and to stop the spread

And I can tell you tonight that the scientists may be unanimously gloomy about the immediate options

But they are unanimously optimistic about the medium and the long term future

We will get through this – but we must act now to contain this autumn surge

We are not going back to the full-scale lockdown of March and April

It is less prohibitive and less restrictive

But from Thursday the basic message is the same

Stay at home. Protect the NHS. And save lives.

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## **Mark White becomes UK's second Groceries Code Adjudicator**

Press release

Mark White has been appointed the UK's second Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA).



Mark White has today taken on the role of Groceries Code Adjudicator. He has succeeded Christine Tacon after acting as Deputy Groceries Code Adjudicator for the past three months.

He said:

This is a significant time for the groceries sector and I am delighted to be in a role where I can play a part in ensuring fairness for those who supply our major supermarkets.

The relationship between the UK's regulated retailers and their direct suppliers is entering a new era created by or, in some cases, brought forward by, Covid-19 and that will bring its challenges.

A great deal of progress has been made since the Groceries Supply Code of Practice was introduced and my thanks go to Christine Tacon for the immense role she played in achieving real change in the sector.

However, there is still more to do and the pandemic has created huge economic challenges that will undoubtedly have an impact on the designated retailers and their direct suppliers. I want to bring my commercial and legal experience to ensure the retailers continue to comply with the Code and build constructive relationships with their suppliers.

I intend to build on the collaborative approach that Christine Tacon had with the designated retailers and drive forward the whole-house approach to compliance including training within each of the retailers. My objective is that I will never to have to arbitrate a dispute or carry out an investigation – but if I have to, I will.

To suppliers my message is that my door is open. I am there to support you and you can trust me to preserve your confidentiality at all times because I know concerns about retaliation can be very real.

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