

World craves British food this Christmas

- Great British Christmas Dinner to be enjoyed in 64 countries around the globe
- Demand for festive fare such as turkey and Brussel sprouts has risen
- Scotch Whisky, chocolate and cheese lead the Christmas exports charge

More diners across the world will be tucking into British produce than ever before this Christmas, with global sales of British turkey, Brussel sprouts and other festive favourites hitting record levels in recent years.

The Great British Christmas Dinner is set to be enjoyed globally, with 64 countries in 2018 – 17 more than previous years – importing British turkeys for a quintessential festive feast. Meanwhile, global demand for the UK's Brussel sprouts has increased by almost 40%. This festive staple is proving particularly popular in the Netherlands, which makes up 73% of the £1.5 million market.

Rounding up the Christmas plate, worldwide demand for British carrots and turnips has increased by 52%.

Meanwhile, 109 countries around the world will be tucking into British cheese on Christmas Day, with the Republic of Ireland forking out £116 million and exports up by 21%. Outside of Europe, cheese exports to China are growing annually by 19%, while the US is the top non-EU destination for UK cheese exports with the market valued at £50 million.

The UK's highest grossing export continues to be whisky, dominating the market at £4.8 billion – with Scotch Whisky exports to China growing from £10 million in the early noughties to £77 million. This is followed by chocolate (£713 million), and cheese (£675 million).

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

As we leave the EU, we want people, both at home and abroad, to be lining up to buy British, and it is fantastic to see quintessentially British fare on Christmas tables the world over.

This is testament to the hard work of our brilliant farmers and food producers and the crucial role they play in making Britain a leader for high-quality, high-welfare, seasonal produce.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

The UK is home to world-renowned quality produce and it's great to see British businesses already taking advantage of increasing

global demand during the festive period.

Over the past year, total exports of UK food and drink reached a record £22.5 billion. As part of the government's ongoing [Food is GREAT campaign](#), government and British industry are aiming to boost British trade in food and drink exports to £23 billion over 2020, and government will continue to work with exporters to help them tap into new markets.

- The market for British turkey is estimated at £35 million, with 64 countries importing British turkey (an increase of 17 markets), with Germany spending £6.7 million.
- British potato exports have increased by 10%, with a value of £58 million (40 markets).
- British hazelnuts have an export value of £4.1 million, with Poland consuming 59% of this at £2.4 million.
- British beer has an export value of £489 million, with 113 consumer countries and US expenditure of £106 million.

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Further information:

All data provided (unless otherwise specified) compares UK 2018 and 2017 export statistics sourced from Defra analysis of HMRC Overseas Trade Data

[British medics in Samoa among the humanitarian heroes of 2019](#)

International Development Secretary Alok Sharma has hailed the UK's 'humanitarian heroes' – the thousands of aid workers working overseas who've helped millions of people around the world in 2019.

From fighting Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo to dealing with humanitarian emergencies like the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, and reacting to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, UK aid heroes have worked tirelessly across the globe to save lives.

UK aid efforts are currently focused on sending British medics to fight a deadly measles outbreak in Samoa over Christmas.

And throughout 2019, UK aid has been at the forefront of tackling major global challenges

Thanks to UK aid:

- Over 250,000 people have received vaccinations against Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo and neighbouring countries since August 2018 – amid the ongoing threat of violent attacks on brave health workers.
- Aid heroes helped the survivors of Cyclone Idai with food for 700,000 people and temporary shelter for 50,000 people.
- More than 20 million women and girls in the world's poorest countries a year can now access contraception, helping to save over 8,000 lives and prevent over seven million unintended pregnancies that can stop girls going to school and fulfilling their potential.
- 45 million children around the world have been vaccinated against polio, which means Nigeria could be certified polio free in 2020.
- More than 550,000 people at risk of starvation in Zimbabwe have received food and vital cash assistance.
- 100,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh received food for a year, while 250,000 were given clean water and sanitation.
- One million Yemenis have received food, access to better water supply and sanitation each month and 70,000 children have been treated for malnutrition.
- Developing countries will receive more help to tackle the impact of climate change as we double our aid spend in this area.
- Some of the most vulnerable people affected by the Syria conflict received food and medicine – with over a million vaccinations and almost 30,000 food rations.

International Development Secretary Alok Sharma said:

I want to thank the many UK aid workers who have helped millions of people around the world in 2019, including those at risk from Ebola or polio, humanitarian crises and conflicts. It is crucial our work continues in 2020, with 1 in 45 people around the world facing a humanitarian crisis next year.

The work of these aid heroes never stops. Right now, for example, UK medics are helping children in Samoa suffering from measles – a deadly disease, but one which is entirely preventable. I am proud that they are giving up Christmas at home to save lives.

The UN has warned that nearly 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2020 – the highest figure in decades.

Becky Platt, a paediatric nurse from Hertfordshire, spent two weeks with the UK's Emergency Medical Team (EMT) in Samoa tackling the measles outbreak earlier this month. Other members of the EMT are working in Samoa over Christmas.

Becky said:

We cared for some of the most critically unwell children I have seen in over 20 years of nursing during the measles outbreak in Samoa.

While being incredibly challenging, the experience was also hugely rewarding, and I believe we made a real difference to children and families.

It was an opportunity to work with outstanding international colleagues and to bring valuable skills and experience to our work in the NHS.

Notes to editors

- The UN's Global Humanitarian Outlook estimates that in 2020, nearly 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection. This represents 1 in about 45 people in the world and is the highest figure in decades.

ENDS

Prime Minister visits British troops in Estonia for Christmas

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will travel to Estonia today (Saturday 21 December) to celebrate Christmas with British troops stationed there.

The visit is a chance for the Prime Minister to personally thank servicemen and women for their service and make clear the Government's commitment to the armed forces.

The Prime Minister will serve Christmas lunch to the servicemen and women at the Tapa military base near Tallinn, and eat with them in the canteen.

Tapa is home to 850 British troops from the Queen's Royal Hussars who, alongside personnel from Estonia, France and Denmark, lead the NATO battlegroup.

This is the UK's largest operational deployment in Europe and forms part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, to ensure the principle of collective defence can be upheld on the Alliance's eastern border.

The Prime Minister will meet troops from across the UK and tour the military base – including a hangar where he'll see tanks and other vehicles. He'll also have a bilateral with Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas.

The defence and security of the UK is a top priority for the Prime Minister. The UK is the biggest defence spender in Europe and makes a leading contribution to the NATO Readiness Initiative.

The Government is committed to continuing to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence, and next year we will spend an additional £1.9bn on the military budget.

Military personnel and veterans are at the heart of the Government's approach to defence. The Prime Minister has pledged to honour the Armed Forces Covenant, and earlier this year he created the Office for Veterans' Affairs to offer comprehensive support to those who have given so much to their country.

Speaking ahead of the visit, the Prime Minister said:

The men and women of our Armed Forces serve tirelessly every single day to keep us all safe. While we enjoy Christmas with family and friends, they will be working hard across the world to defend Britain and our allies. And today in Estonia I will meet troops working on the front line to guarantee Britain's security.

This year our military efforts in Estonia have been immense. British troops form the largest part of NATO's mission in the country, RAF Typhoons working in Estonia have scrambled to intercept Russian aircraft straying into NATO airspace, and British Apache and Wildcat attack helicopters have bolstered NATO efforts to enhance our security, reassure our allies and deter our adversaries.

So at this time of year we should all take a moment to be thankful for the sacrifices made by our troops, many of whom will be spending Christmas on our deployments and bases around the world – be it the Baltics, Ukraine or Afghanistan – and those in Britain too.

Government update on the proposed acquisition of Cobham PLC by Advent International

On 19 November 2019, the Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom announced that she was consulting on steps to address the national security concerns raised by the proposed acquisition of Cobham, a UK defence company, by Advent

International, a US private equity firm. This government consultation on the undertakings offered by the companies to address the concerns identified ran until 17 December 2019.

After meetings with the parties, advice from the Defence Secretary and carefully considering the consultation responses, Ms Leadsom has made the decision that the undertakings offered by the parties mitigate the national security risks identified to an acceptable level. She has therefore accepted the undertakings that were consulted on, rather than referring to the Competition and Markets Authority for a Phase 2 investigation and cleared the merger to proceed.

Under the Enterprise Act 2002, the Business Secretary has the power to intervene over any future sale of Cobham that raises national security concerns.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

This decision has been meticulously thought over, and I have taken advice from the Defence Secretary, the Deputy National Security Adviser and government officials across multiple departments. I have also met with both of the companies on several occasions, as have several senior members of my Department.

Having considered the consultation responses and further advice from the Defence Secretary, I am satisfied that the undertakings mitigate the national security risks identified to an acceptable level and have therefore accepted them and cleared the merger to proceed.

While trade and investment play an important part in the UK economy, when intervening in mergers on national security grounds, I will not hesitate to use my powers to protect national security, if it is appropriate to do so.

Separately, the companies have given a legally binding commitment that there will be significant protection of jobs and have also agreed with the Takeover Panel that Cobham's headquarters will remain in the UK, that the Cobham name will continue to be used and that there will be a guaranteed level of R&D spend. This will secure the future of Cobham and the important role it plays in our world-leading defence sector and economy.

The undertakings to mitigate the national security concerns, which came into force today, are:

- ensuring that sensitive Government information continues to be protected
- honouring the terms of existing contracts and notifying the Government if there is a material change to the ability to supply key services
- requiring prior notice to the Ministry of Defence and Home Office if there are plans to sell the whole, or elements of, Cobham's business

In agreement with the parties, a number of non-material amendments to the undertakings were made.

Separate to the public interest intervention and the mitigation of national security concerns, the discussions about the economic implications with the parties have concluded. The parties have made post-offer undertakings to the Takeover Panel to:

- maintain Cobham's headquarters in the UK for each of its each of its Communications & Connectivity, Aviation Services UK and Missions Systems UK businesses
- continue the use of Cobham as a registered name in the UK
- ringfence the level of research and development spend in the UK
- the parties have made a further legally binding commitment to the Business Secretary to significantly protect jobs. (This commitment has been made through a [deed, published alongside this announcement](#).)

The UK greatly benefits from foreign direct investment (FDI) being the top destination in Europe for inward investment. The UK's merger regime is an important part of this and is characterised by transparent rules and administered consistently by independent institutions. Each merger is judged on a case by case basis on whether it raises national security concerns, irrespective of the country acquiring or investing in a transaction in the UK.

Read the [decision notice](#).

[Working to prevent the four million lives at stake in Syria](#)

Thank you very much, Madam President. Thank you once again to the Special Envoy and for all the work his team are doing. And thank you very much to Rajaa Altalli for being here today and sharing your story. I'm very sorry for the suffering that you and your family have experienced.

Like others, you know, we thank the Special Envoy for his tireless efforts to bring peace to Syria, but the breakdown of talks during the second Constitutional Committee meeting is extremely disappointing. And as we all know, these long-awaited meetings require serious engagement and commitment from all sides if they're going to succeed. We support Mr Pedersen's position that the government and opposition co-chairs need to agree an agenda before a third round of the committee can be convened. But we regret attempts by the Syrian authorities to introduce conditions widely accepted as unnecessary to intentionally stall the talks. And we call on the authorities to respect the rules of the Committee and to return to negotiations.

We are also concerned that the Syrian authorities appear to be disassociating themselves from the Constitutional Committee in official statements and in the media – this suggesting that the Syrian delegation represents “the point of view” of the Syrian regime, as is not the regime itself. I’d therefore like to ask Syrian representative to allay these concerns by reaffirming to this Council that its delegation to the Constitutional Committee is indeed the, “government delegation.”.

Now, we understand that Mr Pedersen is not able to share all full details of negotiations and progress towards the reopening of talks during these briefings, not least because of time constraints. But we do believe that there would be merit in considering other means by which Mr Pedersen could keep the Council apprised of the details.

If I may, I’d like now to turn to what Ms Altalli told us. Again, thank you for your briefing. The United Kingdom has always been clear that the political process should reflect broad and diverse cross-section of Syrian society. We need to remain mindful that a successful political settlement in Syria goes well beyond the Constitution. It’s crucial that all elements of Security Council Resolution 2254 be taken forward in tandem, and this includes creating conditions for refugee return, preparations for free and fair elections in 2021 and the release of detainees.

We are thus deeply concerned to hear of the arrests of 174 people who returned to Homs from Rukban IDP camp. This happened despite having obtained clearance from the Syrian authorities and guarantees they will be exempt from persecution. The Syrian authorities and Russia need to stay true to their word and respect the promises they have given.

And on torture, I don’t think I can put it better than the German representative did. These are truly horrific cases and unacceptable and they need to stop.

Special Envoy, you have our support in advancing all the other baskets of the political process. I would like to reiterate that the United Kingdom will not consider providing any reconstruction assistance without credible, substantive and genuinely political process firmly underway.

I’d like now, Madam President, to turn to Idlib, where we remain extremely concerned about the continued airstrikes. We note reports on 2 December of attacks on the markets of Saraqeb and Maarat an Numam which have killed at least 14 civilians. Attacks on hospitals, such as in Qah IDP camp on 20 November and other civilian infrastructure are inexcusable and they go against the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law.

And furthermore, Madam President, it’s unbelievable that the Syrian authorities would conduct more such attacks given the ongoing Board of Inquiry investigation. And the United Kingdom looks forward to the Board of Inquiry’s update to this Council.

In northeast Syria, we welcome the fact that the ceasefire continues broadly to hold, but we’re concerned by reports of an attack near a school in the

YPG-held Tel Riphath, which killed at least 10, including eight children. We call on all parties involved to respect the ceasefire and their obligations towards civilians and international humanitarian law.

I'd like to say a word, in closing, about Syrian refugees. Syrians have a right to return to their homes voluntarily, in safety and dignity, in line with international humanitarian law. We support the UN judgment that conditions in Syria are not yet conducive for safe and dignified return.

Finally, Madam President, the United Kingdom, as a member of the Global Coalition, is proud of its role in the successful fight to liberate the territory held by Daesh in Syria and Iraq. We remain committed to securing the enduring defeat of Daesh. Much remains to be done and we cannot lose sight of the threat they pose, even without territory that keeps dangerous and pervasive ideology needs to be eliminated.

Explanation of vote by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Syria

Thank you very much, Madam President. I'd like to echo what the Belgian ambassador said. It is a sad and sorry day and a truly dreadful day for the people of Syria. It's a day I hope that the Council will never repeat. And I just want to say again to the minister from Kuwait how much we appreciate the efforts your delegation has put into this. And I am only sorry that you should have to be here to see this.

Madam President, the United Kingdom made two votes today. We voted for the first resolution because UN cross-border assistance remains critical to the 4 million people who depend on it for lifesaving assistance, as critical today as it has been since 2014, when the resolution has been allowed to pass each year until now.

Madam President, the Russian Federation and China gave no credible explanation for their veto or for the cynical attempt to score political points by tabling a second resolution that halved the number of crossings and halved the length of time. There is no justification for this. Indeed, the Secretary-General said that a further deterioration of an already extremely difficult humanitarian situation for people throughout Syria, where over 11 million people remain in need of assistance.

So no one could pretend, Madam President, that things were improving on the ground. I listened very carefully to what the Russian representative said, and I heard him say that they were motivated "purely by the humanitarian aspect." Madam President, even by known standards, this is breathtaking in its hypocrisy. The veto of the first resolution and the tabling of the second are not acts that address humanitarian concerns. They don't meet OCHA's formal written request to the Council. They don't help the millions of ordinary citizens in Syria whose lives are now in jeopardy. And they certainly don't help the UN or the cause of multilateralism.

Madam President, now the responsibility is on the Syrian and Russian authorities. It is they who will now be responsible for the people whose

lives hang in the balance. I hope the Russian taxpayers are feeling generous.

Madam President, the United Kingdom voted against the Russian text because we will not negotiate with a gun held to our heads over a cynical offer that would save fewer lives than we know is needed and that the UN very clearly set out was necessary. But it's important even at this juncture to look ahead, given how many lines remain at stake.

Therefore, Madam President, the United Kingdom hopes that the council can pass through this sorry episode and can return to discussion ready to identify a productive and effective way through that meets OCHA's needs before 10 January when the current mandate expires.

I have said in this chamber before that Russia should not play dice with people's lives. Four million lives are at stake, Madam President, and we need to keep that critical fact before us as we try and sort out this dreadful mess.

Thank you.