

Where is the UK's tariff schedule for March 30 2019?

I am writing to Liam Fox at the Department for International Trade to ask to see the UK's proposed tariff schedules for trading with the world after March 29 2019, assuming we leave without an agreement with the EU. I will say:

I welcome the government's determination to complete preparations for leaving the EU without an agreement and to share the details with the public and Parliament in good time. I am sure you and your department will be pleased to set out the terms on which the UK will trade with the world once we have left, and to get on with negotiating new free trade agreements with the many countries in the world which would like one with us, as well as with the EU assuming they too wish to share the ideas of their Canada free trade agreement more widely.

One of the most important statements that the UK is open for business and ready for life outside the EU will be the publication of our schedule of tariffs or trading terms for when we have left. It would be good to know the proposals as soon as possible, as business could start to exploit the advantages of a better schedule as soon as it knows what the UK's intentions are. I assume you do not intend to simply copy the full EU tariff schedule we currently have to use for non EU trade, but would wish to set out a tariff schedule tailor made for the UK's needs.

Once we are out the EU then of course if we continue to impose tariffs on the rest of the world we will have to impose the same tariffs on the EU. I would like to know your thinking on how we might modify their schedule, especially in the following ways.

Would we remove all low tariffs on the grounds that costs of collection hardly make them worthwhile? This could simplify business life for many. Would we remove high agricultural tariffs from food we cannot produce for ourselves, to give consumers a better deal? Why, for example, would we want to keep tariffs on citrus fruit after we have left?

Would we adjust agricultural tariffs on products we can produce here to a lower average level than the current high level imposed on non EU product, when EU product has to face the same tariff level? Is there an optimum tariff level on products like beef and pork which would still offer good protection for UK farmers, but would cut the cost of non EU imports? Much of the competitive threat to UK farmers currently comes from no tariff product from the continent.

Would we remove all tariffs from components needed in the supply chain for the manufacture of complex goods in the UK?

Setting our own schedule gives us great scope to get rid of tariffs which hurt the UK consumer which are designed to help continental business more than us, and gives us scope to concentrate remaining tariffs in areas of UK farming and industry that need some protection as they adjust to the new

global approach the UK will be taking.

I look forward to seeing the publication of your proposals. These could be good for UK trade and our economy. They are likely to result in import substitution in areas like farming.