

National Farmers Union, on behalf of the
UK Farming Roundtable
Agriculture House
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House of Commons
London
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28th March 2019

Avoiding a No Deal Brexit

We are writing to you as the UK Farming Roundtable, which consists of organisations representing farmers and growers from all agricultural sectors across the UK. We are intensely frustrated at the continuing impasse over the UK's departure from the EU and urge you to take whatever steps are necessary, right now, to ensure the UK does not leave without a deal in the coming days.

Government and parliament must ensure our departure from the EU is an orderly one. The farming sector is clear that leaving without a deal would cause huge economic damage to British farming. Over recent months farming organisations, alongside individual farmers and growers, have consistently warned MPs of the severe consequences that no-deal would have, not only for our agricultural and horticultural sectors and the jobs they provide, but also for food supply in the UK and the high standards to which our food is produced and our farmed environment is managed.

To this end, if parliament has failed to coalesce around a single and clear option for an orderly departure from the EU by the end of the day on Wednesday 3rd April, government must request an extension from the EU27 to the Article 50 negotiations. This extension must be of sufficient length to allow government and MPs to agree a stable way forward out of the current impasse that ensures a stable operating environment for farm businesses. A further extension of just a matter of weeks is not acceptable, given the damaging time and resource that has already been expended in managing the threat of a no-deal departure over recent weeks and months.

It is unacceptable for farming – and for wider British businesses – to be in a perpetual state of uncertainty with no clear idea of the trading conditions they could be operating under in just a matter of days. This extreme uncertainty is already having real-world impacts on British farming and food production, with investments being put on hold, critical jobs remaining unfilled and farm-gate prices facing increasing downward pressure.

Time is almost up. MPs must now consider the concessions they will need to accommodate to bring to an end the enormous and damaging uncertainty that is already undermining our food and farming sectors, not to mention the wider economy.

Yours sincerely

Minette Batters

President, NFU

Andrew McCornick

President, NFU Scotland

John Davies

President, NFU Cymru

Ivor Ferguson

President, UFU

Tim Breitmeyer

President, Country Land and Business Association

Helen Browning

Chief Executive, Soil Association

George Dunn

Chief Executive, Tenant Farmers Association

Zoe Davies

Chief Executive, National Pig Association

Phil Stocker

Chief Executive, National Sheep Association

Chris Mallon

National Director, National Beef Association

Richard Griffiths

Chief Executive, British Poultry Council

Mark Williams

Chief Executive Officer, British Egg Industry Council

David Goodwin

AGRI Chairman, National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs