

gwd/0414
11 October 2019

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
King Charles Street
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AH

Dear Secretary of State

Temporary Tariff Regime

The farming industry is greatly dismayed following the announcement of the Government's review of its temporary tariff regime to be used in the event of the UK exiting the European Union without a deal.

As representatives of the tenanted sector of agriculture, we have listened carefully to the many promises made by the Government that it would strongly support UK agriculture and work with the industry to ensure its long-term sustainability. We have also heard many pledges about protecting domestic producers from unfair competition from abroad particularly in respect of food and food ingredients produced to standards below those which apply within the UK. However, in its first major test of these promises, the Government has utterly failed to deliver.

Whilst we welcome the tariff protection for beef, lamb and some dairy products we are completely at a loss to understand why the Government has decided to apply a zero tariff to imports of commodities such as cereals, eggs, potatoes and skimmed milk powder. With over 90% of our bread using British wheat, the egg market already oversupplied with international producers continuing to use cages banned in the UK and dairy farmers currently under pressure, the decision of the Government makes no sense at all.

In a recent meeting with the DEFRA Secretary of State we, alongside the NFU and CLA asked for sight of the economic analysis which was being used to underpin the Government's decision-making - that is still awaited. We argued strongly against pursuing a zero-tariff policy in these areas. There is a huge risk of damage to our domestic interests if these tariffs are applied. Whilst we understand the concern not to create a negative impact on consumers, we fail to see how applying reciprocal tariffs on these commodities would have the negative effect you fear. The TFA believes the Government should be taking the precautionary approach of applying reciprocal tariffs and reviewing them against the evidence of impact upon consumers. Moving ahead with a zero-

tariff regime in these areas immediately, could mean that we lose significant capacity at home which we will never get back.

A closely connected policy area here is the Government's position on standards. We have heard repeated assurances from Government Ministers that the UK will not import food and food ingredients produced to standards which are illegal in the UK. However, to date there has been a failure to commit to legislation in this area. Again, in our recent meeting with the DEFRA Secretary of State, we were told that the Government was not going to tie its hands in trade negotiations by introducing a legislative commitment in this area. You can understand that given the Government's decision on tariff schedules we are justifiably worried that your assurances in respect of standards will also come to nothing. Therefore, we ask the Government once again to bring clarity to this issue by committing to applying our domestic standards at our borders. Without such a legislative commitment your verbal assurances can only be taken as empty promises.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George Dunn', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**George Dunn BA MSc FRAgS
Chief Executive**

Copy to The Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP