



Select Committee on the European Union

Energy and Environment Sub-Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Brexit: farm animal welfare

Wednesday 5 April 2017

10 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Teverson (The Chairman); Lord Cunningham of Felling; Lord Curry of Kirkharle; Viscount Hanworth; Lord Krebs; Duke of Montrose; Lord Rooker; Lord Selkirk of Douglas; Baroness Sheehan; Lord Trees; Baroness Wilcox.

Evidence Session No. 1

Heard in Public

Questions 1 - 17

Witnesses

I: Minette Batters, Deputy President, National Farmers Union; Gudrun Ravetz, President, British Veterinary Association; David Clarke, Chief Executive, Red Tractor; Chris Mallon, Chief Executive, National Beef Association; Phil Stocker, Chief Executive, National Sheep Association; Dr Georgina Crayford, Senior Policy Adviser, National Pig Association; Dr Siobhan Mullan, School of Veterinary Sciences, University of Bristol; Richard Griffiths, Chief Executive, British Poultry Council; Professor Lynn Frewer, Professor of Food and Society, Newcastle University; Professor Richard Bennett, University of Reading; Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Adviser, Compassion in World Farming; Joe Bailey, RSPCA; Mark Williams, British Egg Industry Council; Dr Sophia Hepple, Government Veterinary Adviser on Farmed Animal Welfare, the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

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Examination of witnesses

Minette Batters, Gudrun Ravetz, David Clarke, Chris Mallon, Phil Stocker, Dr Georgina Crayford, Dr Siobhan Mullan, Richard Griffiths, Professor Lynn Frewer, Professor Richard Bennett, Peter Stevenson, Joe Bailey, Mark Williams and Dr Sophia Hepple.

Q1 The Chairman: Colleagues, friends, witnesses, participants and members of the general public, I welcome you and start this meeting of the EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee, which also looks at agriculture and fisheries. As a Committee, we have been looking at a number of Brexit issues, including fisheries, environment and agriculture. Today, we are looking at the specific aspect of Brexit and farm animal welfare, which I suspect will play a major part in both the Brexit negotiations and how British agriculture moves into the future. We were very keen to do this slightly differently in a one-off evidence session, so I thank you all for being here. May I remind Members that it is still important that they declare any interests? Just in case we get on to fisheries, I declare that I am a board member of the Marine Management Organisation.

We will split this session into two parts. First, Ministers have expressed clear intentions to maintain high standards of welfare for farm animals after Brexit. What are the critical issues that must be addressed in relation to farm animal welfare regulations, compliance and enforcement to deliver these intentions? This is our first theme. I will ask our witnesses to give a short introductory statement. It is really important to stick to the time and I think that you have all been asked to contribute for two minutes. I will start from one end of the table and work round, so you know when you will be, rather than doing it completely randomly and by surprise. Then we will open it out into a debate with Members. We have approximately one hour for that and our session will end, after the two themes, at 1 o'clock. This is a really important subject.

Mark Williams, would you like to introduce yourself very briefly? You have two minutes all together, and I will make it clear when we reach two minutes to make sure that we keep to time.

Mark Williams: Good morning. My name is Mark Williams and I am chief executive of the British Egg Industry Council, which is the inter-professional organisation for the egg industry here in the United Kingdom. I also wear a slightly wider hat at the moment; I am also secretary-general to the European egg industry, which gives a great insight, shall we say, into our European colleagues.

The egg industry is one of UK agriculture's success stories for a number of reasons. Probably the most important is that as an industry we never benefited from direct subsidy back in the olden days, and having to respond to consumer demands has tended to make the operators very market-focused. You will all have seen the retail shelves full of different eggs produced from different systems of production.

Animal welfare is vital to my members in producing eggs for British consumers. As many of you will know, the egg industry was the first industry to have a system of production completely banned across the European Union in 2012, when so-called battery cages were removed from production. They have now been replaced by enriched cages, and we of course have other systems as well.

We are very proud that we have the most free-range hens in Europe—20 million—and you could argue that we have the most commercial free-range hens in the world based on our shores. We believe that we are ahead of many other European countries in that respect.

The Chairman: You have 10 seconds, Mark.

Mark Williams: All I will say is that all systems of egg production have advantages and disadvantages. It is the job of the stockman to maximise the advantages and minimise the disadvantages.

Professor Lynn Frewer: I am professor of food and society at Newcastle University and I would like to present some evidence that basically aggregates and synthesises evidence on consumer attitudes and perceptions of animal welfare. There is a trend towards growing consumer concern associated with farm animal welfare standards in sustainable production systems in particular. Although there are differences in concern relating to age, gender, education and familiarity, naturalness and humane treatment are recognised by nearly all consumers as central to good welfare.

We know that some consumers are willing to pay for good farm animal welfare standards, but this varies in relation to a number of factors, in particular income. People are much more concerned about farm animal welfare in cattle and pig production systems and less so in fish production systems. They also associate high levels of welfare with other extrinsic product attributes, such as safety, health and quality. Promoting good farm animal welfare practice comes with a bundle of other perceptions, which in economic terms could be very beneficial to the producer.

We know that consumers in Scandinavian countries and the UK generally put higher levels of trust in regulatory systems associated with farm animal welfare and have a latent awareness about farming practices. This seems to reflect ongoing trust in existing regulatory practices, so I imagine that post Brexit this level of regulatory practice needs to be maintained.

The Chairman: Thank you, Lynn. Now we have Phil Stocker.

Phil Stocker: My name is Phil Stocker. I am the chief executive of the National Sheep Association. We are a membership organisation for sheep farmers in the UK. The UK is already renowned for its high levels of animal farm welfare. We have a strong and sound regulatory framework within which we work. We have an England and devolved nations' advisory farm animal welfare council, which provides informed opinion

and advice to government on animal welfare issues. We have codes of conduct for all species on animal welfare. We have a number of optional farm assurance platforms that farmers can use if they choose to—Red Tractor is one. We also have a number of high-level—or more niche, if you like—farm assurance standards that cater for farmers and the public who want to buy into higher levels of animal welfare. In addition, we have APHA inspections and the RPA and cross-compliance inspections on farms. I suggest that there are other ways of engaging farmers in improving the health—I raise the issue of health—and welfare of our farmed animals.

Talking about sheep specifically, we need to be wary of unintended consequences of stepping up regulations. I have a couple of potential examples. Within the sheep sector, the spotlight falls on the export of live animals, but from my knowledge of the industry I know that if we put an end to the export of live animals here in the UK, they may not go across to France but they would still travel within the UK, and the result would be poorer welfare with them travelling further, rather than improved welfare through them travelling shorter distances.

The Chairman: You have five seconds left.

Phil Stocker: We also have first-hand experience of welfare with non-stun slaughter. Two years ago, when everything was fairly quiet on the subject of non-stun slaughter, the levels of sheep that were being stunned before slaughter had risen to around 85%. When it was raised as a big public issue, the result was an increase in the number of animals that were non-stunned prior to slaughter. Those are two examples.

Dr Georgina Crayford: Good morning. I am senior policy adviser at the National Pig Association. We represent the interests of commercial pig producers which account for around 80% of the sow herd. Very much like the poultry sector, the pig sector is a largely unsubsidised industry. As a result, we are driven by the market. Our high welfare standards have come about in response to consumer demand and expectations, and Red Tractor is the vehicle through which we have driven forward those standards. Unfortunately, as demonstrated by the out-of-date welfare codes of recommendation that are statutory, which for pigs were issued in 2003 and are now some 14 years out of date, the Government are not able to keep up with the rate of progression that is required by agriculture for raising welfare standards.

The Chairman: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Joe Bailey: Good morning. I am Joe Bailey, RSPCA Assured head of agriculture. We are very much looking at the use of farm support payments to promote animal welfare, perhaps on a tiered system. The highest level would be reserved for funding producers who are within widely recognised higher-welfare assurance schemes and who deliver those standards. On a national basis, we would like to ensure that those farmers have the grants they need to improve structural factors and therefore increase their higher welfare. On an international level, we

would very much like to work with assurance bodies globally. Indeed, we have our first meetings in September about how we can gain trust and recognition globally.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Minette Batters: I am Minette Batters, deputy president of the National Farmers' Union, I farm in Wiltshire. We represent all sectors within the NFU and have 55,000 farmer and grower members. Welfare is something that we feel passionately about. Indeed, we have our own specialist animal health and welfare team, headed by Cat McLaughlin. Her team of four works at our Stoneleigh headquarters. We absolutely support the Government's ambition to maintain current welfare standards. Part of the reason why we have been lobbying so hard to retain our access to the European market is because it has been about shared standards and principles. We have huge concerns for welfare on the back of ending up with the WTO default position. We see the greatest threat to welfare coming from products coming on to this market that are produced to different standards and within a different regulatory framework.

The Chairman: Good. Thank you very much.

David Clarke: I am the chief executive of the Red Tractor scheme. This is an industry initiative, owned by trade bodies from the British Retail Consortium to the NFU but operating independently of them. Farm animal welfare is one of our core objectives. We have a wide reach after operating for about two decades, and about 80% of UK farm product comes from farms that are certified within our scheme. We operate in parallel with the regulatory arrangements and more recently in co-operation with them. We have documented standards of food safety, and indeed of animal health and welfare, which encompass all the animal welfare regulations, and more where we believe they are necessary. We have very frequent inspections, substantially more frequent than those of any regulatory body.

The Chairman: Good. Thank you.

Professor Richard Bennett: I am Richard Bennett. I am professor of agricultural economics at the University of Reading and I have a specialist research interest in the economics of animal health and welfare. I will make a few opening points. Evidence-based policy is going to be of increasing importance with Brexit for navigating new trade relations and relations with international organisations such as the WTO and the OIE. That policy needs to be based on good science, which in turn needs to be based on excellent scientific research. The UK academic community and research institutes have been really good, as you know, at winning EU research funding and doing really good research with that money. There will be a real funding gap post Brexit if we are not careful.

Also, in terms of that evidence-based policy, we are going more and more to need specialist advisory bodies such as the Farm Animal Welfare

Committee, which has a very important role in interpreting science for policy. So I see the likes of FAWC as being particularly important.

Farm assurance has been incredibly successful in this country. That, along with food retailers, will be of increasing importance in helping to bridge the gap between producers and consumers.

We know that there will be all sorts of changes to agricultural policy. There is a real opportunity for us to reconsider whether we have the right set of institutional arrangements to promote animal health and welfare in the way that we want to, going forward.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Peter Stevenson: Secretary of State the Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP has stressed the business case for improving welfare, saying that she will be promoting ever-increasing welfare standards as part of our selling pitch to the rest of the world to buy more UK-produced food. But the feasibility of improving welfare standards will depend on the Government's ability to protect UK farmers from low-welfare imports. Two factors will be pivotal in determining future levels of welfare. The first is trade issues, the second is post-CAP subsidies. Some of the improvements I would like to see include replacing farrowing crates with free-farrowing systems, the best of which can keep piglet mortality rates as low as those for piglets in crates. Dairy cows, of course, are housed indoors in winter, but now 20% of UK cows are zero-grazed—confined indoors all year round. We need to reverse that trend. Once the UK is no longer constrained by EU law, live exports for slaughter and fattening should be banned.

Improvements would best be made on a voluntary basis, although sometimes regulation may be needed. Improvements should be supported by the post-CAP farm support payments and by public procurement. Public bodies should be helping to augment the market for higher-welfare food. Case studies from Copenhagen and some US hospitals show that this can be done without increasing costs.

Consumers need to be helped to play a greater part in driving welfare improvements. That will mean labelling meat and dairy products with the farming methods, so that consumers can make informed choices. Thank you.

The Chairman: Good. Next we have Gudrun Ravetz.

Gudrun Ravetz: Thank you. I am president of the British Veterinary Association, which is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK. We have 16,000 members. I will talk unashamedly about the role of vets in assuring farm animal welfare, because it is important to note that any income that the UK derives from animals and animal products cannot be derived without vets—and this applies through all levels of the food chain. I know that we have a number of vets in

the room, and there will be vets working in every industry that is giving evidence today.

We think that minimum standards for animal health and welfare must not be below those that are currently held by members of the EU, no matter where the export market is.

We support a single minimum standard of welfare that allows recognition of excellence, but we would oppose any system that would introduce a tiering of minimum standards of production, processing or certification, because we would see in that a risk of increasing food fraud. It would compromise animal welfare and it would leave the UK unable to provide public health guarantees.

The UK had a strong voice in formulating the EU animal health law, and we feel that we should continue to implant that into domestic legislation. A particular element of interest was the mandatory animal health visits by a veterinary surgeon. We recognise that many farms have regular veterinary visits but not in all systems. As a minimum standard, any basic level should include a vet visit, because that is invaluable in supporting farmers and transferring knowledge. That will help to support our claim to be world-leading in animal health and welfare.

We have an opportunity now to augment and recognise the role of vets throughout the food chain to improve animal health and welfare and move further from disease treatment to disease prevention. Vets work with and support local farmers to meet standards, and official veterinarians, working in abattoirs in particular, play an essential role in maintaining animal health and welfare and making sure that animals are slaughtered humanely. We must maintain and hopefully augment the role of the OV in all abattoirs to help to safeguard animals' welfare at the point of slaughter.

The Government, we feel, should work with industry in its wider sense to actively consider a farm animal welfare stewardship programme. Such a scheme would use financial incentives for animal welfare and public good.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Gudrun, from the veterinary side.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: I am Siobhan Mullan, a veterinary surgeon conducting research into welfare assessment and welfare improvement at the Bristol vet school.

The Government's clear signalling of a desire to maintain high animal welfare standards is welcome and, as we have heard already, reflects the views of UK citizens, who consistently express high levels of concern for animal welfare. Brexit offers a great opportunity to reflect these societal concerns for animals to live in unrestricted environments, express natural behaviours, live healthy lives and have a humane death.

The most critical issue for maintaining high standards of farm animal welfare concerns the relationship between baseline legislation, private standards and public payments for higher animal welfare. We therefore

need to do three things: first, build a solid foundation of animal welfare legislation coupled with enforcement activities; secondly, trust our world-leading farm assurance schemes to continue to deliver welfare benefits; and, thirdly, intervene in a failed market for higher-welfare products.

The UK already has a world-leading farm assurance system. The University of Bristol has been working for over a decade with the Red Tractor, RPSA Assured and Soil Association schemes to enable them to use scientifically valid animal-based assessments of welfare. Independent analysis has demonstrated that this process can deliver large-scale nationwide improvements to animal welfare—a global first. Almost every UK pig and dairy herd and non-caged laying hen flock has assessments of its welfare on farms during the farm assurance audit, and similar assessments for other species are in development.

Going forward, assurance schemes and industry must not be complacent. Good schemes will have a system for continuous improvement built into their mode of operation, and there are further opportunities to identify and reward farmers who go beyond legislative and scheme requirements—farmers who deliver a good life for animals. Currently there is no mechanism for rewarding these farmers, and with the apparent market failure in welfare differentiation whereby consumers sometimes pay far above the true cost of welfare improvements for high-welfare products, thereby suppressing their uptake by farmers, there is a clear role for government to deliver this public good, for example through a welfare stewardship similar to the countryside stewardship approach.

The Chairman: Thank you, Siobhan. Now Chris Mallon.

Chris Mallon: I am Chris Mallon, chief executive of the National Beef Association, a members' organisation obviously representing beef farmers throughout the UK. Interestingly, no member of my association has approached me and said, "Oh, Chris, we need to reduce welfare standards post exit". Nobody has ever come up with that idea; people have supported what we are doing. When it comes down to it, their fear is what else will be allowed to come in through trade agreements. Specifically in the beef industry we have the Brazilian fiasco at the moment, which is a mixture of poor traceability, standards and so on. We do not wish to compete with that on our own shelves. We think that would be demoralising for farmers in Britain who have a high standard of welfare and care about their animals.

I feel that the EU is more at risk of lowering welfare without us there and that we are a very pro-welfare nation. The welfare legislation that was brought in in the early 19th century in relation to cattle was probably the first in the world and is an example of how we feel about our livestock. The big difference in welfare that I have found from my own experience of working abroad—I have worked in former Soviet Union countries—is the quality of our stockmanship, the people who carry out and look after those animals and their empathy, and I would not like us get to the point where people were frightened to enter this industry because they thought that the regulation would be too difficult, because we would lose that

quality, and replacing those people is difficult. If you want to replace buildings you can build them, and handling systems can be designed and imported, but it takes generations to build up the number of individuals with that empathy and knowledge of animals, and I would like those people to be protected as we go along.

The Chairman: That is another interesting aspect. Next we have Richard Griffiths.

Richard Griffiths: I am chief executive of the British Poultry Council. We represent the poultry meat producers in the UK, and we are currently at around the 1 billion bird mark per year. That is the scale that we are looking at.

My first statement is that UK welfare standards are good. They are powered by assurance schemes, by our retail customers, by our consumers. Welfare science is not static; we are on an ever-improving slope upwards. What we really debate in the UK is the rate of improvement.

One thing to say about government legislation, guidance and codes of practice is that they are well behind the practice in everyday farming life, and it will be interesting to see whether the government process can catch up with the current practice and stay with it as it develops.

The Chairman: That is a good, contentious area almost to finish on. Lastly, we have Dr Sophia Hepple.

Dr Sophia Hepple: I am a government veterinary adviser on farmed animal welfare at the Animal and Plant Health Agency. I ensure that welfare inspections are monitored, reported on and regulated on-farm, during transport, during killing on-farm and in markets, and I ensure that our inspectors work with other government regulators, including local government regulation, to enforce in a transparent, consistent and proportionate manner.

My role has two hats. One is policy-facing, where I provide direct specialist advice to Defra and to Ministers. The other is delivery-facing, where I ensure that these inspections are made every year, including cross-compliance with directives and all the other various bits of regulation associated with on-farm, including fish.

The Chairman: May I thank everyone very much for their introductory remarks and for keeping very much to the time allocated? I have noted a couple of the themes that have emerged, but the list has got too long for the page. We have had some really interesting comments on, for example, whether the EU regime will get worse on the other side of the Channel once we leave, the whole area of assurance schemes, food fraud, and consumers. Are consumers different from citizens? Citizens might like animal welfare, but do consumers like it as much? Do they wear two hats? We have had comments on voluntary schemes versus regulation, which is a very important area, and the WTO; if we crash out

and go over a cliff, the WTO is what we will have. We are looking for lots of trade agreements out there post-Brexit. What will that mean for our welfare standards? Also commented on are the issues of live transport and research funding, which we have not come across before, and many, many others.

I will just remind everyone of the theme: what are the critical issues that have to be addressed in relation to farm animal welfare regulations, compliance and enforcement to deliver the Government's intention to maintain high standards? Lord Rooker, would you like to start us off?

Q2 Lord Rooker: I am Jeff Rooker, a former Minister at MAFF and then at Defra. I apologise, as I will be attending the service at Westminster Abbey, so I will have to leave later. There are two quite distinct groups here, and listening to what is being said I have to ask why the taxpayer should have to subsidise areas that have been subsidised, and areas that have not been subsidised, for animal welfare—in other words, the euphemism of “support”. If we get this right and people are good at the market—as pigs and poultry have clearly shown they are—why should the public continue to subsidise, or be involved in subsidising, other areas? Why can those areas not lift themselves up, be efficient in the market and be world leaders? Obviously the protection against junk food coming in is quite clear, but there is an opportunity here to be more efficient. It is known that the most efficient parts of our agricultural system are those that have not been in receipt of subsidies in the past.

The Chairman: I want to keep this discussion to animal welfare in particular rather than the general CAP or any successor to the CAP. Peter, did you want to come back on that?

Peter Stevenson: The current subsidy system, in which a lot of subsidies are just income support or almost a subsidy for owning land, is clearly unacceptable, but subsidies—or farm support payments, as Defra now likes to call them—are important. This is about public money for public goods, to use that overworked phrase. To me, the term “public goods” is very specific; it means the things that we as a society want that the market cannot or can only partially deliver. That includes high animal welfare standards, as well as high environmental standards obviously. There is a perfectly proper case for helping farmers through subsidies to reach really high welfare standards.

I would like to see a two-tier system. The first tier would support farmers who are members of really high welfare schemes, such as RSPCA Assured. The second tier would support farmers going even further than those requirements. For example, pig farmers who get their pigs through to slaughter without either tail biting or tail docking, have done wonderfully well, and that should be supported.

The Chairman: Would anyone else like to come back just on that point?

Chris Mallon: I would like to ask a question back from the beef industry. When you are choosing beef, would you rather have something that had a growth promoter or not? A growth promoter would make us more

efficient. It is not necessarily going to be what a consumer wants, but it would give us efficiency so we can compete. Our farmers are saying, "We don't want to do that. We want to produce a quality product". We are not asking for the subsidy for that; we are asking for it for the environment, which is a different thing. We are told to control our use of antibiotics. We in the beef industry are working on that, and we are definitely reducing it. We are doing things that other people are not doing, and we are already at that standard. This is about maintaining standards. If you want us to compete economically with those countries, you are going to have to say that you will reduce those standards. No farmer in my association wants to reduce our standards just to compete with world trade.

The Chairman: Gudrun, may I come back to you on this? In your introduction, you talked about tiered levels, or the risk of them. Could you explain that a little more? This perhaps comes back to Peter's point about having different levels of help. Are you saying that we should avoid that altogether?

Gudrun Ravetz: We would be very worried about any two-tier system, particularly with abattoirs. At the moment we have OV's in all abattoirs, which is an EU Regulation. We would be very concerned if we had, say, a different domestic market that allowed for no OV's in an abattoir when export to the EU did not. That would be an example of a two-tier system with different levels. We would be very worried about that. Another example would be where there are different systems for export and our minimum standards are different depending on what trade organisation we end up with or where we export. We would be extremely worried by that, and we think that by no stretch of the imagination should we have a two-tier system, particularly for abattoirs; there have been calls for that before. That would reduce animal welfare and affect food security, and you would run the risk of food fraud.

If I may, I will come back on the subsidies or financial incentives. For us, there are two areas. There are the financial incentives, but we need to look more widely. Welfare is obviously vital—it is a public good that should be supported—but there are other consequences that can be very positive that perhaps we cannot quantify, such as subsidies in relation to animal health and welfare, that play into surveillance and disease, which can save money later on. That includes vet visits, confidence and assurance. There are also non-financial incentives, which can include knowledge transfer, where again vets play a large part and a big role, such as helping to navigate planning systems so we can have better infrastructure systems and therefore better husbandry and better welfare, and reduce other problems such as antimicrobial resistance.

The Chairman: I will bring in Dr Crayford and then bring in some of our other members.

Dr Georgina Crayford: Coming back to the point about tiered systems, we already have this in the pig sector to some extent: 92% of pigs are covered by Red Tractor, 40% of pigs are covered by RSPCA Assured, and we have labelling for outdoor bred, outdoor reared, free range, organic.

Consumers already have a choice available to them, but it has to be driven by the market. If you are talking about incentivising farmers to change to a certain system, if the market is not there for that system or for that type of production, you are effectively just subsidising inefficient farms.

The Chairman: Thank you, Georgina. Lord Cunningham.

Q3 **Lord Cunningham of Felling:** I would like to ask Professor Bennett, who said, among other things, interestingly, that he anticipated a significant funding gap in support for research into animal welfare issues in the UK after we leave the European Union. Can you quantify that in any way: the size of the gap, the amounts involved? How much do we get from Europe at the moment in grants across the UK for this kind of work, and how much are we going to need to replace?

Professor Richard Bennett: I apologise, as I do not have the figures to hand, but I think we all know that we are talking about substantial amounts of money that UK researchers win from the EU, from various pots such as Horizon 2020, to do world-leading research not only with other researchers across Europe but internationally—so outside Europe as well. Unless we make some other arrangements for that research to be funded post Brexit, there will be a real science information gap and the sorts of information that we need to inform policy will just not be there. That is a real danger. We are already seeing with Brexit that our partners in Europe are more and more reluctant to collaborate with us, and certainly to have us leading European projects. The universities and research institutions are already feeling the effects of Brexit, and there is a real concern in the research community.

The Chairman: Richard, if you could come back to us with those numbers in written evidence after this meeting, we would find that very useful. You have made an important point that has been taken up by Lord Cunningham. Dr Mullan, I think you wanted to come in on this or on one of the other questions.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: First, on the issue of public payments and whether markets are currently doing their job, we have been running a very small investigation into market prices and farm gate prices as compared to supermarket shelf prices, and it is very clear that the market is not working properly. For some products, consumers are seriously overcharged for the welfare benefit. Consumers who are willing to pay are in effect overcharged, while those who are not yet able to pay the extra are unable to access the higher-welfare products that they may, with their citizen hat on, prefer to buy. Then there is the suppression of uptake of higher welfare systems by farmers, because the market is reduced unnecessarily. For me, there is a clear market failure.

There are other, more complex, issues around, for example with products that have multiple components to them. There is no clear correlation between the welfare provenance of the meat in a sausage and the price of those sausages on the shelves. So, again, the market is not really

delivering that differential. There could be other ways to fix the market—I am certainly not an economist, who would know how to do that—but I do feel that intervention is required by government, because the market is not working.

The Chairman: Do you want a quick word on the science research side?

Dr Siobhan Mullan: I will just corroborate what has been said. My European partners and I are working on one big European project at the moment. We had a chance to go in on another and the partners said, “We do not think the UK is going to be useful in this”. This was a few months ago. These are very uncertain times and they felt that having a UK partner would not be useful to the project as a whole. One of our great strengths has been delivering benefits direct to industry. I know that that is government policy now, through the agri-tech centres, which are probably going to work well, but we really must maintain both the research and the close links with industry.

The Chairman: Thank you. Lord Krebs.

Q4 **Lord Krebs:** I declare an interest as a member of the Department of Zoology at Oxford, where quite a lot of animal welfare research is conducted—not by me, but by my colleagues. I have three short questions. One is directed to Lynn Frewer, who talked about consumer demand. You mentioned, Lynn, that demand for high welfare standards is traded off against price, but I wondered about demand for high welfare standards in meals that are consumed in the catered sector and in ready meals, where the origin of the ingredients is much less clear.

My second question is for Gudrun and Sophia and is about enforcement and inspection. Post Brexit, will there be a problem with the supply of vets? I know that we rely a lot on vets from Spain in particular. How do you envisage that gap being filled if there are no Spanish vets?

My third question is linked to something that Chris Mallon said in response to an earlier question about the link between welfare and productivity. Do high welfare standards generally lead to higher productivity, and it is therefore a win-win, or do you sacrifice productivity for high welfare standards?

The Chairman: That fills up the next hour.

Lord Krebs: Sorry.

The Chairman: Not at all. It is useful to be directed. Lynn Frewer, would you like to take on that first question? We tend to think of the labelling of food and so on in this area, but a huge amount of food is processed and sold in a different manner.

Professor Lynn Frewer: I think that consumers are totally overwhelmed by the variety of the labels that appear to be promulgated across a range of products. Without trust in the labels and simplifying the system I doubt whether that transmission of information will necessarily signal some of the high welfare issues that they were intended to do.

On the catering sector, I am afraid there is rather a gap in current knowledge. There is information on menus, but most of the emphasis at the moment is on calorific intake and nutrition and how consumers understand that information. There is less information and understanding about animal welfare when it comes to an organic label, for example. That label might not necessarily indicate high welfare. There is a bit of evidence to suggest that those two issues are confused in the mind of the consumer.

The bottom line is that an enormous and increasing amount of information is associated with different labels and that there is a gap in consumers' understanding of what those labels mean, including in relation to animal welfare. The system needs to be simplified. There also needs to be a link between retail products and products sold in catering outlets, so that the system is simplified.

The Chairman: Are those systems trusted by consumers?

Professor Lynn Frewer: Not necessarily, because they do not understand the underlying regulations.

The Chairman: That is a bigger subject. Let us hear our veterinary representatives on Lord Krebs' question.

Gudrun Ravetz: The workforce is a big concern for us, absolutely. Around 42% of veterinary surgeons who register with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as new each year are non-UK EU 27 veterinary surgeons. Of those, around 30% are working within our practices—in farm animal practices and companion animal practices—so they are working out in the fields with farm animals and on disease surveillance, animal health and welfare. Many—over 20%—are working in research and over 20% are working in government, although Sophia will have a better idea of the number. A staggering figure is that over 90% of our official veterinarians are non-UK EU 27 citizens. That is a concerning number, because these are people who are working for our animal health and welfare, particularly in our abattoirs, and this has a knock-on effect for food safety and hygiene.

We need to be aware that whatever trade deals we have, we could well be a third country with the EU, so the level of vet certification that we will need will increase alarmingly. We need to be very aware of that and prepare for it, because vets, with all their knowledge of both the holistic systems of animal health and welfare and of disease surveillance, play a vital role. Certification is a serious concern among the workforce concerns that we have for the veterinary profession.

Dr Sophia Hepple: I do not have the exact figures, but I think that the figure is slightly more than 20% for the Animal and Plant Health Agency now. However, you are quite right that, for the Food Standards Agency and the FSS in Scotland, the majority of OV's come from outside the UK. Having said that, the provision of farm veterinary support in the UK generally, including for private vet work, has been a long-standing issue

for the sector. The majority coming through our vet schools are now going into small animal practice and staying there. There are a number of issues that contribute to concerns about expertise in farmed animal welfare.

The Chairman: On the productivity side, Chris Mallon, the automatic reaction is that higher animal welfare may be less productive, but does that depend on how you measure productivity?

Chris Mallon: A healthy animal will definitely be more productive than an animal that is not healthy. This is a basic thing for any animal, so it matters. Welfare and health definitely go together, but there are different systems of production. There are some that we in the beef industry, for example, would not find acceptable. New low-cost, low-welfare types of system, where the cattle are free-range, brought in once in a while and just randomly selected, would not work here; we do not have the acreage for that. We do not want intensive systems where we give cattle growth promoters and a lot of antibiotics to create health that way. We want to create it through the welfare of the animal.

A low-cost system could still be profitable for the farmer, but it might have low welfare, but that is a different system from the one we are running. We mainly have high welfare systems with high animal health, and we create productivity through that.

The Chairman: Thank you. Peter, you can have one sentence, as we need to move on.

Peter Stevenson: Sometimes, good welfare will lead to better health and therefore better productivity, but in a number of cases high productivity, such as the high milk yields of modern dairy cows and the fast growth rates of today's broiler chickens, can lead to very serious welfare problems.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Q5 **Baroness Sheehan:** I want to go back to the question that we explored earlier about the dropping-off in EU funding and its possible impact on scientific evidence. I want to refer to the written evidence from the RSPCA, which says that the scientific expertise given to the Government, in the scenario where we are trading under WTO rules, is really important when adjudicating any complaint made about measures introduced by that Government—something that the UK Government will then be open to—and that a body such as EFSA, once we leave the EU, will no longer exist in the UK, because the Farm Animal Welfare Committee is not mandated by the Government to produce reports on animal welfare in the same way as EFSA is. A body that has the same status as EFSA will need to be created. I want to get some views about that. It sounds as though that will be very important if we are in a WTO situation.

Professor Richard Bennett: Yes. That is really what I was alluding to when I talked about the increasing importance of bodies such as FAWC in a post-Brexit world.

The activities of the Farm Animal Welfare Council as it was, and now the Farm Animal Welfare Committee, in many ways have been downgraded by government, and this needs to be reversed. Its advice is very valuable. It is well respected internationally. It is, I think, well respected by most stakeholders around this table, if not by all stakeholders. It has a very important role to play, and it has played a very important role. Its work, particularly in helping to interpret scientific research, will need to be enhanced. However, FAWC does not undertake research itself, so that fundamental research still needs to be funded and still needs to be done. The UK has been a world leader in animal welfare research and animal health research, and we will lose that if we lose the funding.

The Chairman: I need to bring in Joe Bailey of the RSPCA.

Joe Bailey: I am actually from RSPCA Assured, not the RSPCA, but I have been briefed by the RSPCA on this. I fully agree with Professor Bennett that for a number of years FAWC has done an absolutely sterling job, but its powers have been diminished recently. I used to attend Professor Bennett's open meetings and discussions where representatives from industry and from across the board could come and suggest papers and projects to look at. That was stopped because of funding.

We desperately need to give FAWC more powers, if we can, to produce reports in the way EFSA does and to take those forward. In fact, it is vital for the WTO to be able to do that.

The Chairman: Mark Williams, do you have a comment on this area?

Mark Williams: I would certainly welcome making a comment on this, and on something that Siobhan said earlier, if I may.

First, I totally agree with what Richard Bennett has said. My sector is a supporter of FAWC and always has been. FAWC challenges the sectors. There is nothing wrong with being challenged; we welcome that. We are able to respond to that both in our responses to the reports and of course to the actions or recommendations, so we would welcome FAWC being strong.

Coming back to what Siobhan said, clearly I cannot comment on behalf of other agricultural sectors, but I can say that there has been no market failure in the egg sector, and I would not want the Members to go away thinking that there has been. Both the shell of the eggs and the egg pack are marked, and in our Lion quality assurance scheme in the UK industry, which is 90% of production, we state very clearly that there can be no misleading terms or pictures on packaging so that consumers can clearly see. I agree with Lynn that that relates to the visible products in stores, and that the invisible products in caterers' can be where problems can arise and where more work needs to be done.

The Chairman: Minette, did you want to come in here? We will then move on to Lord Curry's question.

Minette Batters: I just want to say that I really hope that out of today's session we can send a very strong recommendation for strengthening FAWC in the future. I think that everybody here would fully support that.

The Chairman: I will not take a vote at this particular moment, but we can try to at the end. It is an important subject; I in no way underestimate that.

Q6 **Lord Curry of Kirkharle:** I have two questions, but first I declare that I farm in Northumberland, have sheep and cattle and three donkeys, and was heavily involved in the establishment of the Red Tractor standards, as David knows.

The balance between voluntary standards, the promotion of voluntary schemes and legislation is an interesting area that we need to explore in the light of Brexit, and to some extent Minette's last comment is helpful in this respect. David, we know that the Red Tractor standards are very important, and important to the market, and a lot has been done to promote them to the consumer, even if their understanding is not as clear as it should be. However, it does not cover the whole market. We still have gaps and producers who are not participating in voluntary schemes such as Red Tractor, Freedom Foods or Soil Association. So the back-stop is legislation, and we assume that our legislation will be transferred through the Great Repeal Bill, but we will need stronger measures in place to replace those that currently exist at EU level. Minette and David, do you have view on this?

My second question is about live exports, which both Peter and Phil mentioned. I am very interested in what will happen to live exports post Brexit. I could expand on that a lot more, but I will leave the question hanging at the moment.

David Clarke: I agree with Lord Curry's point that we will claim to cover the majority of production. We certainly do not cover all farms, so if we accept that we play a role in the regulation we have to accept that it is not universal. At the end of the day I am a voluntary scheme. I do not have powers of access to farms that do not sign up to the scheme. As I said at a BEIS meeting only the other day, that is a loophole in the current system of earned recognition. I do not cover everybody, so there has to be regulation of farms that are not members of the scheme.

In the Cabinet Office's January paper, *Regulatory Futures*, which I referred to in my note, there is a lot of discussion about direct charging for regulatory inspections. I would certainly not advocate that in front of Minette, but if those recommendations are pursued—the paper says that direct charging for regulatory inspections should be implemented as quickly as possible—that will change the dynamic. If farms find it more convenient to be a member of the scheme, our penetration will increase. That is not a market dynamic that I need to pursue for our own selfish goals, but it is a dynamic that might well happen.

Minette Batters: I support everything that David said, but you are talking about a minority. With the vast majority of milk and grain it is

very difficult to sell non-assured product. I will just come back to the points about research and link them into this. I absolutely agree about the challenges that universities will have potentially by not having access to European Union funding, but there are also opportunities in all this. I was with FERA yesterday, which is obviously now operating in the private-public sector, and it sees this as an opportunity. It is not saying that science as a whole, research as a whole, will fall off a cliff. Some people are very worried, the universities in particular, but the likes of FERA and the public-private sector see this as an opportunity.

This was made very clear to us yesterday at FERA, which worked with Red Tractor on the back of the Elliott report and horsegate. They said categorically that the UK should be very proud: we have the safest food system in the world. We start from a great point of strength with our farm assurance. As you know, we brought it about and worked with Red Tractor on the back of a farming crisis, and we are now in a position of enormous strength. The Red Tractor scheme is very robust, if not understood, as you say; it is a challenge for us all to communicate, and to communicate to government, the role of farm assurance, because I do not believe that government has really embraced it, understood it, championed it, and it now has that opportunity.

We see it as a great platform to start the process of life outside the EU. We absolutely believe that it should not be hijacked for other reasons. It is about food safety and high standards of welfare and environmental protection, but we believe that it should remain voluntary. With any future domestic policy, that is how you should keep a level of compliance.

One final thought on that is that we have cheaper food than we have ever had in our entire lifetimes, so you can say that one great advantage from the EU in supporting agriculture is that we have very safe food, and food has never been cheaper. It is 12% of annual income.

Q7 The Chairman: Thank you very much for that. It is good to have some positivity as well. Let us come back to the question about live exports that Lord Curry mentioned. Perhaps you could talk to us about this, Phil Stocker.

Phil Stocker: In the sheep sector in particular, the welfare improvements and productivity improvements link together very closely. We have a system that is perceived as having very good basic welfare standards generally, but we could make improvements in the areas of health and disease control. Of course, if you can raise standards in those areas you will raise productivity as well as improve the welfare of the animals.

One of the few areas where the spotlight falls on us when it comes to welfare conditions in the sheep industry is live exports. If you think about it logically, there is no doubt that some of our sheep farmers in the south-east quartile of the country—Kent, Sussex and Surrey—are closer to abattoirs across the water and into northern France and Belgium than those in west Wales or up into Yorkshire, were they to choose to sell their

animals there. The transport distances over water can be less. When I talk to people about this, the main concerns generally are more about adherence to legislation when the animals get across into another country; it is more about the implementation of the Regulations than about going across the water.

The research that we have had access to shows that the stress for animals in transport is at the point of loading and unloading, and that during transit the stress levels are very low. Going across the water, as long as the seas are not too rough the stress is not high either. This is all about adherence to regulation. We have talked to the ferry companies over the last couple of years about whether we should approach the subject of assured routes for stock going across for slaughter. When we know where the sheep have come from and where they are going to, we assure those routes to ensure good compliance with the legislation.

The Chairman: Peter, did you want to come in on this? Then I will bring in Lord Trees on the subject.

Peter Stevenson: We export about 37,000 sheep a year for slaughter abroad—to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany. Slaughter standards in France are so poor, and have been exposed as so poor so many times, that the French Parliament is now conducting an investigation into them. EU slaughter welfare rules are simply broken regularly. We send about 20,000 calves a year from Northern Ireland all the way to Spain, despite a lot of science showing that young calves just cannot cope with those kinds of long journey. The level of live exports has come down hugely from 20 years ago, which is great, but there are still some 50,000 a year. The level is so low, though, that I do not believe that ending the trade would really have a detrimental impact on farmers' livelihoods.

Nor do I believe that a ban on live exports would be a WTO problem. If I am anything I am a trade lawyer, and WTO case law has made it very clear that trade restrictions can be justified on the grounds of what it calls public morals, and it has ruled that animal welfare is an issue of public morals in the European Union, including obviously the UK. There is no trade reason to not stop live exports and no farmer-livelihood reason to not stop the trade. What our supporters and the wider public who are concerned about animal welfare hoped Brexit would deliver probably more than anything else was a ban on live animal exports; once we are free of EU rules, we could end this trade.

The Chairman: Lord Trees, do you have a specific question on this? I can bring you in again later on. I think Phil wants a right of reply as well.

Lord Trees: I want to support Phil a bit. What is really critical is minimising the distance between the point of rearing and the point of slaughter, as well as ensuring the slaughter is done to our standards. There is movement in the UK, as we saw in the food and mouth outbreak, which spread so far because people were trading sheep between Cornwall and northern Scotland—700 or 800 miles. That is a welfare issue as well

as a biosecurity issue. It is about the distance travelled from rearing to slaughter as much as the fact that it may involve a short sea crossing.

The Chairman: Phil, did you want to come back very briefly? Then I will bring Lord Curry in.

Phil Stocker: I want to relate this back to the other point that was made about the reliance on foreign vets coming in to work. I cannot remember the actual figures, but I think we were talking about 40% or so of vets coming in who were of foreign descent. That figure is even higher in the abattoir sector, as I think was suggested. The work that we have done shows that something in the region of 75% of our abattoir workers are migrant workers, and the sector relies on those levels of workers. If we have a real shortage of those people coming to the UK, they are simply not the sort of jobs that UK workers would take on. We rely on these people, and if we do not have them anymore and if that stock could not be processed in this country we could end up relying on our export trade even more, which would push the adding of value to our sheep overseas, prevent us adding value here on our home shores and increase the interest in that trade. We rely very heavily on migrants.

The Chairman: Certainly, labour issues are very high up in our broader agricultural inquiry. Richard Griffiths, did you want to say something in this area briefly? Then I will bring Lord Curry back in to sum up on this.

Richard Griffiths: Another aspect of the live animal trade, certainly in the poultry industry, is that the UK is major hub for breeding stock. Millions of chicks are exported from the UK very successfully every year, which is worth hundreds of millions of pounds to the UK economy. There are multiple facets to the discussion about transport.

Lord Curry of Kirkharle: I believe that this will be a really controversial issue, because under current EU rules the free movement of goods is a principle, and this is a justification for moving animals. Although I appreciate the emotional concerns, I have always found it difficult to understand. The fact that animals cross 20 miles of water is a small matter, in my view, as they can move across boundaries in the rest of Europe. It is about the standards and the destinations of the animals beyond that. We need to reassure ourselves that they are going to be in place.

The Chairman: Baroness Wilcox, you wanted to bring up the issue of consumers and citizens.

Q8

Baroness Wilcox: I just want a bit of information really. A while ago, for seven years, I was chairman of the National Consumer Council. Everybody here has mentioned the word "consumer" over and over again. The chairman even asked, quite rightly, when we know whether we are a citizens or a consumer, and I thought I could just clarify that. A consumer is someone who buys or uses services, whether publicly or privately provided. In other words, we are a consumer at a particular point in our day. At another point in our day, we are a citizen—that is, if

we pay our tax, if we vote or if we want a policeman. We are both a citizen and a consumer, but today we are talking about what a consumer wants, not what a citizen wants, although you can confuse that if you wish.

As for the things that a consumer looks for, first and foremost, if it is food, the thought in their head is what their family has told them. When they come out to buy food, at the back of their minds is what the family always thought: "My mother believed that too much sugar was bad for you, which was not fashionable in those days", and that sort of thing. It does not matter whether it is high or low, the family will think about what they have always had traditionally in the family. That should be remembered.

The next thing that happens is that in the shop they will look at what the label says. Labelling is enormously important. We still have an awful lot of people who cannot read and a lot of people who spend hours standing in front of a bean to see whether it has come from South America or from here, because they worry about that sort of thing. The third thing that happens of course is that they will ask the staff in shops questions. If they go into a butcher, and it is a proper butcher, they will get the information that they want to the questions, "Where has this come from?", "Where is it going?", and that sort of thing.

No doubt we will want to ask to see some of the Citizens Advice groups, people from the National Consumer Federation et cetera. A consumer wants access to something. It is no good looking in the window if the shop is shut and you cannot get in there. It is access, and after that choice; people want to make a choice. After that, it is information on which to base that choice: do they have any information and what information have you given them? Then, is it safe? Safety is an element that people do not think about very much, because they expect you to do it for them. They want safety, equity and, at the end of the day, redress. Can they come back and say that it did not work? I know that that is a bit of a lecture but, quite frankly, there is a difference between the two.

People are very confused about what is going to happen with us and the European Union. They have in their back of their minds that we are still going to be fed, because we grow a lot of food in this country and we can get a lot of food. At the moment people are concerned about whether food will cost them more than it does now, and if food comes in from abroad that is much cheaper than the food that we grow here, will they have access to it?

The Chairman: Can I refine that in terms of the welfare issue? I want to come back to your point, which was well made, about citizens and consumers. They are different, but I think that we are both at the same time.

Baroness Wilcox: We are.

The Chairman: The challenge is that we might sometimes say that we want high welfare standards, but when we go to purchase something it has to fit our family budget. Do people feel that that is a gap? How do we

get round that? Perhaps you can each give a sentence.

Professor Lynn Frewer: It is an important distinction. We are all citizens and consumers at the same time, but sometimes the citizen needs to be able to trust institutions and regulators to be getting the welfare right. The caveat here is that nobody really thinks about animal production systems when they are purchasing or eating food. They use the labels as a heuristic to make decisions. If they do not trust those labels, they are worthless.

Phil Stocker: I think we have a huge problem in this area and a contradiction, too. I hear members of the Cabinet often suggesting that we in the sheep industry need to raise our welfare standards, add value, have a more expensive product, build our export markets, and at the same time give British consumers access to cheaper imported sheep meat. We have a major problem if we are building our industry on exports and feeding our consumers with imported, cheaper products. That is absolutely crazy.

The Chairman: There is a certain double-think that will have to be resolved at a certain point. Who else wants to speak on this issue?

Joe Bailey: A very quick statement. You are absolutely right that, when it comes to it, a lot of the time consumers will just look at the cheapest to buy. We have a part to play in education and in looking at retailers' placing of items. It is well worth remembering that a Mars bar, pound for pound, is more expensive than an RSCPA Assured chicken.

The Chairman: Well, there we are.

Lord Rooker: It has more calories in it as well—300 a bar.

The Chairman: Does it help you work, rest and play—for those of us brought up in the 1950s?

Minette Batters: On that note, as I have not drunk enough water, my bottle was £1.90 on the train.

The Chairman: Outrageous. We will note that.

Minette Batters: We face a real ethical challenge in all this. We have the cheap food brigade, who had better remain nameless, but you will know who they are: "Brexit is going to be great, because we will have cheaper food on the back of it". Food potentially becomes the victim in all this, which is why we have to champion what we have at the moment, because we start from a very sound place. We could be opened up to other nations, and this is not just about standards but the whole regulatory framework that underpins them. New Zealand, for instance, has access to our market but has completely different levels of regulation and welfare. We have individual on-farm inspections that they do not have. We have to be very mindful of that as we go forward, and we need to expose the cheap-food political commentators, whose laptops are their

farmyard, for what they are. That is the greatest threat to welfare in this country. It is an argument that needs to be exposed, not championed.

Professor Richard Bennett: I agree that we are both consumers and citizens. Professor Frewer and I have done loads of surveys of one sort or another. It is interesting: if you ask the question in the supermarket you get one answer, but if you ask it in people's homes you get a different answer, because they are answering more as a citizen and less as a consumer.

I also support the comments about the confusion that the consumer feels in the supermarket. It is really difficult to get information on welfare and the provenance associated with products. As a consumer you have to guess what free range means in relation to welfare. This is not a new issue; this has been recognised for a long time. Indeed, the 2006 labelling report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council raised this issue and recommended mandatory labelling to help the consumer to make informed choices.

Peter Stevenson: We are being too pessimistic about consumers. The mandatory labelling of egg packs has played a part in the shift from cage eggs to free range. We are not letting consumers play a part. This is most obvious in the case of milk, butter and cheese. You go into a supermarket and unless you can afford organic you do not have the slightest way of knowing what kind of herd the milk comes from. You do not know whether you are supporting a pasture-based herd or a zero-grazed herd. We have to give consumers more information. Some will just go for the cheapest, but some will play their part in driving welfare improvements.

Gudrun Ravetz: I agree with a lot of what Minette said. We need to be aware of welfare standards, certainly when we are importing. On the consumer side, we would support a mandatory method of production labelling that is welfare outcome-based, so that we are using knowledge of welfare science as it moves forward and have the welfare outcome-based safeguards that are based on evidence and evolving welfare science. Then you can include everybody, so they can be retailer-led, they can be consumer-driven, and there may be a role for regulation in understanding exactly what phrases mean, with all parties in industry—I use the word “industry” in a wider sense—involved in that production labelling.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: Thinking about the labelling, I can give a few figures from some research into sausages that we have been looking at. We looked at 229 different types of sausage from all the major retailers. Of those 229, 194 were labelled British in some way, 97 were labelled Red Tractor, 30 RSPCA Assured, six as organic, and 67 had some kind of system, such as outdoor bred or outdoor reared, on their label. There was no correlation with price. The labels are being used intermittently and in different ways by different retailers, which is confusing for consumers.

A final point on consumers and citizens is that we are always wise to maintain the citizen in our minds for two reasons. First, there is a great of chunk of citizens who are not consumers who feel very strongly about animal welfare—such as vegetarians, vegans and people who make other selective choices—and, secondly, consumers can only ever define the relative worth of goods. They are not able to define the intrinsic worth of something; I know this is getting a little more technical. Because they can only ever choose between what is on offer, they are not able to demonstrate their core values in certain circumstances.

Chris Mallon: My members are also citizens and have spent a long time rebuilding the integrity of the beef industry from a very low point. They will not thank decisions that are made to allow products to come in that are inferior to their products and be sold on the shelf without being correctly labelled and without being pointed out. We want that distinction to be kept. My members also eat beef, so they buy as well. They complain that when they go into a supermarket they cannot identify where a product comes from and what it is. They want to know that. It is very important to them. Beef sales have taken a long time to recover. We have built up the integrity, so we do not want anything here that will harm it, whether it is some guy putting horse into it or some Brazilian deciding to sell rotten beef.

The Chairman: That is a very direct method.

Richard Griffiths: Just on the point about consumers, we should not underestimate consumers and the choices they make. The first choice that consumers often make in this day and age is to place their trust in their retailers. I feel that to a certain extent welfare has become similar to food safety or food quality in that consumers trust that there is a foundational level in the products and the retailers that they trust.

The Chairman: That is an important point. I will bring in Lord Trees now, who had a more substantial question.

Q9 Lord Trees: I declare an interest as chairman of the Moredun Research Institute at Edinburgh, which is an animal health institute. Having learned from my esteemed colleagues Lord Krebs and Lord Curry, I will ask three questions, two short and one more general. I am learning a lot here.

First are the two short ones, to Chris Mallon. You said something interesting in your opening remarks, about stockmanship, the quality of which is hugely important in animal welfare. Why do you think the quality of stockmanship should be under any threat because of Brexit? Siobhan talked about using public money for welfare stewardship programmes, and I would be interested in us discussing that a little. What would you envisage, and would it be legal? That is quite a critical question.

The more general question that might be open to everybody is about the fact that we currently import a lot of food from outside the EU, so we have issues about differentials in welfare. How do we deal with those currently? Why are those solutions not adequate? Might they be perfectly adequate and fit for purpose going forward, or are they deficient? If so,

how are they deficient, and what should we do about it?

The Chairman: Perhaps I could ask Chris Mallon to come back on stockmanship.

Chris Mallon: Stockmanship is a very important part of welfare. It starts with the knowledge that comes from experience of cattle or sheep and is built up over time. It is not easily bought. If you have reducing incomes on farms, farmers will say to their children, "Do something better. What is the point of producing this when there is no market for it and when we are being told that a lesser product is worth more?" They will leave, and once those people leave, you will find it very difficult to replace them. My experience of working in some areas of the former Soviet Union was that they had big populations from which they could draw in people to work on the farms, but those people had no idea about cattle or other livestock and were just there more or less to monitor. They might have looked at a book.

If we are not careful, with reducing incomes many farmers will not want their children to go back into it. My family would not have wanted me to go back to our own farm at home just to farm, for the very simple reason that they did not think that I would have a good enough life. Stockmanship is very much tied into that. We need to ensure that the environment is such that people are encouraged to become farmers: that new entrants are encouraged, that people's sons are encouraged to be farmers and that it becomes—an awful thing to say—a sexy industry to be part of. People should be encouraged to be part of husbandry.

This comes right from the way government talks about farmers. I sometimes feel that we are discussed as if we are criminals: "Go out and catch them. They are doing something. They are like bank robbers. You will find a balaclava in the car". We are not. We want to do our best, but that environment of being told continually, "You could do better. You could do it this way", is just reducing the number of quality people who want to go into the industry. We need quality stockmen to maintain the level that we are at, a level that we are very proud of. The level that we are discussing here is there because the people are so good at it, but you have to ensure that they can encourage other people to enter it.

The Chairman: Phil Stocker, do you want to come in at all on this issue of stockmanship?

Phil Stocker: I agree that this is a very important aspect. It is all about trying to get people to raise their standards of livestock management, really. I want to raise a slightly different issue; it is not a totally different issue, but it is slightly different. Although this is a session on welfare, I always think it is wrong just to look at one of these issues in isolation. We should be trying to be more holistic in our thinking and consider the economic, environmental and social aspects of everything that we are doing. There is a risk here of looking at any of these things in isolation.

The Chairman: Indeed. That is a very useful contribution.

Duke of Montrose: I am a hill farmer from Scotland, but also the president of the National Sheep Association. An interesting question was raised by Lord Rooker when he asked why we as farmers should get any public money, and he said that we should increase our productivity. The simple thing with the sheep industry, which is about the greenest industry that you can think of in agricultural terms, is that we would regard a full-time shepherd looking after, say, 800 to 1,000 sheep as being at the right level. If you go to New Zealand, there is not just the issue of the inspection but the fact that one shepherd looks after 2,000 to 3,000 sheep, and the welfare standards are absolutely abysmal.

The Chairman: Thank you, Duke of Montrose. That is very useful. Siobhan, you have been challenged on the legality of welfare stewardship payments.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: Can I comment not on the legality but on the first part of your question, about how this might work? People have already mentioned making some kind of differentiation based on farm assurance. That is one thing, but as a general principle we have been working a lot on indicators and resources that demonstrate positive emotions in animals. We are very clear that all the animals we farm can experience positive emotions, and that even in some quite restrictive and perhaps behaviourally tough conditions for animals it is still possible for them to experience positive emotions if we provide them with certain resources. That could be one way that we think about producing these rewards or payments: taking farmers and animals from wherever they are to something a bit better, in whatever system they are currently in.

The Chairman: We are running out of time on this. Gudrun, did you want to make a quick point?

Gudrun Ravetz: Our understanding is that a welfare stewardship scheme would be acceptable under WTO rules because it comes under public morals. As long as it is the welfare that you are incentivising, and the financial incentive is for that, it is acceptable.

The Chairman: Peter, just one sentence.

Peter Stevenson: Any subsidies have to comply not just with the core WTO rules but with the Agreement on Agriculture, although there is a de minimis of 5%, so if you are not subsidising more than 5% of a sector there will be no problem, although I suspect the Treasury will not give that kind of money. But, yes, we will have to be very careful that any subsidies are compliant with the agreement on agriculture.

The Chairman: Lord Cunningham, I think you wanted to come in on this one.

Q10 **Lord Cunningham of Felling:** This is just a statement of the obvious, really. Hill farmers have the lowest incomes of any sector of agriculture. The idea that somehow we can move from the situation in the CAP to some kind of free-for-all just does not wash. We were given evidence

from farmers in Northern Ireland that 80% or so of their income comes from support. The industry in Northern Ireland would collapse without that support. I represented the Lake District for 35 years in the House of Commons. It had mainly hill farmers, with a very large and controversial nuclear plant in the middle of it all, which supported the whole of the economy. The hill farmers there, who were producing some hill beef but mainly farming sheep, had very low incomes. I knew this before I became Minister of Agriculture, but I was heavily reminded of it when I was at MAFF, as it was then called. We have to face up to the fact that if we want these people to survive and stay on their farms, as Mr Mallon said—and I totally agree with him on that point—we have to have a system that makes it viable and worthwhile for them. Of course, if it is not viable and worthwhile for them, you can forget about animal welfare standards.

The Chairman: I want to come now to the last point made by Lord Trees, which is really important. I will go round the table. The question is: we already import, so what is the big deal about the future? Why is it a challenge for the future, given that we do it now? Who would like to give the silver-bullet answer? Minette, I will start with you.

Minette Batters: Lord Trees, I believe you made the point that we import European product to our marketplace.

Lord Trees: Yes, but I am also thinking about non-EU produce, because in the future the EU will be in the same position as the current non-EU.

Minette Batters: But predominantly this is imports from the EU. We used to import more from South America, but then we interrogated the traceability and did not find it robust enough. We are at threat now from the Mercosur deal, which has been on the table for 15 years. It has three trading components to it, one of which is beef. There is all this talk about the WTO, but the only will that we have is consumer will that stays loyal to our assurance scheme. We cannot protect our market in any other way if we end up without access to the European market, which of course is about shared standards. We cannot do it; there is no mechanism for doing it. I do not know whether that answers your question.

Lord Trees: We import a lot of chickens from countries such as Thailand and Brazil, do we not? We import loads of broiler chickens, for example. How is that dealt with?

Minette Batters: We do.

Lord Trees: I am on your side; I am just asking the provocative question.

Minette Batters: Absolutely, but it is different being a member of the European Union. We have to abide by those rules. If you are producing chickens in Thailand, they have to be produced to the same standard if they are coming on to retail, which is incredibly transparent and you know what you are buying. As was said earlier, the catering sector is very different.

Joe Bailey: I have two quick points and I am trying to be positive. We are in the process of setting up an international group of higher welfare assurance bodies. We will meet annually or more regularly and hope to get some sort of government involvement, to make it more structured, so that we can regularly compare and contrast the animal welfare standards, the audit, the assessors and, importantly, traceability, to ensure trust going forward—or not, as the case may be.

Secondly, on the question of countries outside the EU from which we are importing and that perhaps do not have higher welfare assurance schemes, I recently came back from Bangkok, where I was asked to have a meeting with a large producer of poultry and pork. Yes, we import a lot of chicken in particular to the UK, to food service groups, which is actually quite positive because the producer is thinking about consumer demand, and the food services demand that the products should be higher welfare and meet our standards. We are now in the process of looking at how we can ensure that those standards are met and we are asking our assessors to audit to those standards. That is quite a positive.

Peter Stevenson: There are some real misconceptions about WTO rules. This assumption that we cannot have any import restrictions on animal welfare grounds is not true. It ignores WTO case law of the last 16 years. A number of cases have shown that a country can require imports to meet welfare standards equivalent to its own, provided that there is no element of discrimination favouring domestic producers. We have to start being a little more positive about what we can and cannot do under WTO rules.

Dr Georgina Crayford: The big concern, certainly in the pig industry, is the talk from some government members that we need to pursue a cheap food policy. There has been a lot of talk about setting up a free trade agreement with the US, for example, and you can bet that the US would want to export pork to the UK. To come back to the discussion on labelling, if that is to happen we need to clearly label the country of origin on those products. We already have that in the EU, but it needs to be extended to third countries, and the difference in production systems in those countries needs to be explained to consumers. Just indicating a country could be enough to signpost them to the right product.

Professor Lynn Frewer: As a general comment, I think that most consumers or citizens would be surprised at this discussion. The assumption is that the same standards are applied to imports from outside, whether from Europe or other parts of the world. Making transparent the fact that these different standards can be applied would be rather shocking to many consumers.

Duke of Montrose: Could the WTO cases that have been cited be put in written evidence?

The Chairman: I am told by the clerk that we have those. That is an important point.

Lord Curry of Kirkharle: In response to Lord Trees' question, the truth is that our current trade deals will lapse and the standards that apply to our imports will lapse. We have to replace them, as Peter said, with standards that we want to apply to our imports.

- Q11 **The Chairman:** Thank you. There is one thing that I always think about in relation to labelling and consumer understanding. My wife always asks where a product comes from when we go to a restaurant. Coming from Cornwall, we like to hear that it comes from Cornwall. There was an incident last year when we were eating in a restaurant in north London and she asked where the food on the plate came from. The waiter went away and after 10 minutes came back and said, "It comes from a cow, madam". We thought, "No, we've got that". It just shows that it is not just consumers who need to be educated; the food industry may need to be educated as well. That is by the way, but it is a true story.

We now move on to our second session. I am afraid that I cannot let you all go; the problem would be getting you all back again. I remind you that our second theme comes down to the actions that government needs to take for the UK to remain a world leader in farm animal welfare after Brexit. These are similar issues, but from a different point of view. I remind participants that when we write up the report from this session, it will be presented to the House and sent to the Government with recommendations, to which the Government have to respond. That does not always mean that the Government agree with them all or always implement the ones that they do agree with, but it is one of the ways in which we hold the Government to account as Parliament, particularly here in the House of Lords. Again, perhaps we could give our introductory thoughts in this area. I will do it in reverse order, just to shake it up a little. I will ask Sophia to start us off.

Dr Sophia Hepple: We have a key role in implementing current government policy on animal welfare, particularly for farmed animals during transport and at markets. We work with local authorities. I mentioned in my first statement the need to have a consistent and transparent approach to enforcement and the way in which we monitor welfare. It is a concern that, as a number of other stakeholders have mentioned, we do not necessarily have consistency across the board in the way in which enforcement is supported in a proportionate manner. Some local authorities put a lot of effort into supporting us with monitoring welfare and taking further enforcement action in the very small number of cases where that is appropriate. But it is not quite a level playing field, as I think everybody admits.

The Chairman: Thank you. Yes, indeed, local government has a very important role here as well.

Richard Griffiths: There is a world of difference between the enforcement of welfare standards and encouraging best practice; that is a useful debate to have. To a large extent, the Government have to trust industry—and when I say industry I do not just mean producers but the stakeholders we have around this table—and, as I said earlier, there is a

disconnect between government legislation and codes of practice and what is happening on the ground. I cite the example of the code of practice for turkeys and ducks, which was last reviewed in 1987. That is the extreme of the disconnect. I would love to see government catch up, in its thinking, its codes of practice, and its application, with the actual practice that is going on and the science and technology that is developing in welfare.

The Chairman: Good, thank you.

Chris Mallon: We feel that we need to maintain the welfare standards that we have. As I said before, we would not want any lessening of them. Interestingly, when I have spoken to members, they have said that the penalties on those who continually infringe upon welfare and who bring us into disrepute should be higher. When I ask if they are monitored enough, one beef farmer said to me, "Every time I sell an animal or it goes to an abattoir, it is inspected, and if there is anything wrong it will come back on me. I am monitored every time I trade". So it is very important to remember that we may have the farm inspection, but every time we trade we also have veterinary inspections and so on.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: To remain a world leader in animal welfare, the Government really need to focus on five main areas. First, they need to build on existing UK and EU legislation, raising standards where necessary to reflect the concern for animal welfare consistently expressed by citizens. Secondly, they need to intervene in failed markets for higher welfare products. Failed markets are bad and unfair for farmers, unfair for consumers, and unfair for animals, as they reduce the numbers that can live better or even good lives. Thirdly, they really need to resist trade pressure to accept lower welfare imports. A country's animal welfare status is reflected not only in its production systems but in its consumption patterns. If we are not careful, the floodgates could open, to the detriment of both UK citizens and farmers. Fourthly, they need to facilitate the promotion of UK animal products to both the domestic and external markets. We have a unique selling point: our differentiated range of high-welfare products, accredited by trusted farm assurance schemes. UK farmers will never be able to compete on price in many global markets—we have heard talk of that already—and people need a reason to buy British. We can ensure that welfare standards are high and that products are clearly labelled.

Finally, it is essential to maintain support for UK research into animal welfare and routes to quick implementation within industry. The University of Bristol, for example, was successful in reducing dairy cow lameness with its Healthy Feet project, which delivered results straight to industry and has now become the national standard. Without a strong UK research base and rollout funding, this type of initiative would not be possible.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Gudrun Ravetz: For us, the bottom line is that there should be no dilution of existing animal welfare standards and legislation, and we should seek opportunities to improve animal welfare. For example, in relation to the export of live animals, banning slaughter without evidence-based effective pre-stunning, mandatory CCTV and unrestricted access for vets would be a start. One step that has been mentioned would be updating the farm animal welfare codes, which are out of date and do not take into account current and evolving welfare science. This work needs to be done in an evidence-based manner and must be collaborative and consultative, so that we can ensure consumer and stakeholder confidence, which is vital. This could also include welfare codes for species where there are currently no EU minimum standards.

The maintenance of animal welfare standards should be absolutely integral to the negotiation of any new trade agreements. If we are going to have an expectation that UK farmers are working to a higher welfare standard, which is welfare outcome-based, it needs to be recognised, rewarded and protected so that it is not anti-competitive for our UK farmers. That would necessitate a level playing field on imports.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Peter Stevenson: If we want to remain world leaders, the Government have to be able to protect UK farmers from lower welfare imports. It means that when we are negotiating new trade agreements, the UK has to insist on the inclusion of a clause that allows it to require imports to meet UK welfare standards. The alternative approach is to press for the right to set differential tariffs, so that imports that do not conform to UK standards will be subject to a high tariff—sufficiently high to safeguard our farmers—whereas imports that meet UK welfare standards would benefit from low tariffs. In the cases where we do not have a new trade agreement, WTO rules will govern trade and, as I have said before about the misconceptions, the case law of WTO shows that we could require imports to meet welfare standards equivalent to our own, provided that there is no element of discrimination.

The other key factor is what kind of post-CAP subsidy scheme we will have in this country. On the two-tier scheme, I am not talking about two tiers of legislation but two tiers that would attract support. The first tier would be for farmers who are members of a really good scheme, such as RSPCA Assured, which would bring some support payment. There would then be an even higher tier for those farmers who say, "Yes, we are members of RSPCA Assured, but we are going to go even further". I gave earlier the example that the Farm Animal Welfare Committee has given of a really high standard, which is farmers who can get pigs through to slaughter with an intact tail. If the tail is neither bitten nor docked, you have run a very good scheme.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Professor Richard Bennett: I will try to restrict my comments so that I do not repeat what other people have said. Previously, I have said that

Brexit is an opportunity for us to reconsider institutional arrangements; I mentioned the Farm Animal Welfare Committee, and several people have mentioned the animal health and welfare stewardship programme. I should make it clear that I do not represent FAWC. I was on the committee for 10 years but I am no longer on it. FAWC put forward the idea of an animal health and welfare stewardship programme some while ago, in its Economics report back in 2011. Calls for that programme were reiterated in the BVA's Veterinary Development Council report in 2012, and FAWC reiterated its call in 2014 to senior members of the Government at the time. I have taken the liberty of providing a slightly edited version of FAWC's concept note for that stewardship programme—to put it more into a Brexit context—which goes through the objectives of the programme, its principles, possible vehicles for funding, and funding practicalities and considerations. I would say that such a programme could fit within the 'green box' of permitted support measures alongside environmental protection, so it could be WTO compatible.

There is one other thing that I ought to say about the welfare codes that have been mentioned. It was recommended by FAWC that FAWC worked with industry to update the codes and put in place new codes. It was just a matter of resource, and not a lot of resource, that it did not happen.

The Chairman: Thank you, Richard.

David Clarke: I would say that we should remember the European Commission's own welfare strategy from four or five years ago, which recognised that it did not really matter what the Regulations or the standards said if you were not confident that they were being applied. What matters is what actually happens on farms. It is about visiting farms and making sure that standards are being applied, which I think is the role that we have always set out to play, not with a small group of producers at a niche level but across the board with the majority of the industry. We have successfully taken that forward over the years.

To respond to points that Gudrun made, it is not just what we see on the day but the way the business is run day to day. We have increasingly encouraged, and in some cases mandated, the farmer to have involvement with his vet, to take advice from his vet and to plan health and welfare with his vet. As Lord Curry mentioned, there are some gaps that we do not cover that need to be thought about.

The final point I would make is that we could probably co-operate more closely with the regulator, and the regulator could make more use of what we are doing than is currently the case in animal welfare. We do a lot of inspections and have a lot of information. We have a very well-developed and highly formalised relationship with the Food Standards Agency when it comes to sharing information on inspections and earned recognition. It is not so well developed on animal welfare.

Minette Batters: The NFU feels that the greatest risk is that the UK livestock sector will be pushed to ever-higher levels of animal welfare based on aspirational needs. There is a popular line of debate that

consumers will pay more for animal products from small, extensive, pasture-based systems. We do not recognise that. We absolutely support maintaining the current levels of welfare, but we have seen our pig industry decimated by having a higher welfare code—something that I am sure Dr Crayford will come on to. We are the only country in the world that can have outdoor pigs as we do at the moment; no other country can. We have driven the free-range egg and chicken agenda, I have regular conversations with the Chief Vet, and we have climatic challenges now with avian flu. We absolutely have to have future welfare underpinned by sound science. We have to make sure that this is truly welfare-friendly for the animal and not humanise the argument. We have been in great danger of thinking about what we would like for animals: for example, to be on a nice, warm, fluffy straw bed. My cattle would certainly rather be out 24/7, but that does not apply to all animals. It is important that this is underpinned by science at every level.

I do not want to end up in a public spat with Peter, but you are not the Government. Government policy is for full trade liberalisation. Our Prime Minister has set out her stall and said that she wants to be a global leader of the free market. She has completely the opposite opinion to everything that you are saying, and that is current government policy. Under WTO rules, we could not protect our marketplace. It is something to be mindful of. This is not about not being optimistic but about the reality of the situations that we face.

Finally, I will just mention the retail price war that we have, which is driving a whole new code of practice with the rise of the discounters but also the transfer of costs from the public to the private sector: business rates, the national living wage. We have seen the loss of British sugar from many of the retailers. That is being driven purely by commercial reasons. We must absolutely make sure that, with what we have at present, we do not in effect chuck the baby out with the bathwater.

Joe Bailey: Having been a trading standards and an animal health and welfare inspector as recently as five years ago, I can certainly tell you there is a great need to increase the number of inspectors in the country. The consistency of those inspectors is also hugely important. I left for many reasons, but one of them was because I was no longer able to focus on welfare in the area that I was in, although that does differ around the country. We were having to use excuses of health, or of missing tags or disease, to get in there and to be able to look at the welfare side of it, which is not the way it should be.

That leads on to the second point, about earned recognition, which we have been talking about for the last decade. Hopefully, something will finally be done about that. RSPCA Assured is the only higher welfare farm assurance and labelling scheme in the UK, and we want to stay independent—of course we do, as we feel it is in the best interest of farm animal welfare and of our customers and our members. However, we need to share more information with the Government, and earned recognition is the way to do that. Obviously we need membership

agreement on that, but if it meant that they were getting reduced government inspections, I think most of our members would be very happy about it. We need that level of trust.

As for the welfare codes in particular, this was a huge passion of mine a few years ago. They desperately need to be updated. I went out to New Zealand and helped the Government there to update, modernise and simplify their codes and to make them more attractive to farmers. The last thing you want to do is spend money on renewing them and the farmers then just put them in a drawer. That is no use to anybody. They need local knowledge, local input, signposting to where they can get help, legislation, advice, guidance, and even their farm assurance details. We have talked about labelling. That would be a huge step towards helping consumers in this country. We need to know method of production and method of slaughter, whether that is stunning or non-stunning. We are constantly asked why that cannot be put on labels.

Dr Georgina Crayford: I do not wish to be rude, but I must admit that I was slightly disappointed when I saw the questions that were previously circulated, and the hint of an expectation that there was going to be the potential for lowering of welfare standards as we come out of Europe. I must make it clear that this is not what UK farmers want. We want a level playing field, yes, but we want to level up rather than down. The single biggest threat to British farmers is being undercut by cheap, lower-welfare imports. Minette mentioned the example from the pig sector, and we only have to look to history to see what can happen. The UK pig headcount was halved in 1999 when the unilateral sow stall ban was brought in: we went down from 800,000 sows to 400,000. We need to be cautious about raising standards so high that we end up exporting production abroad. We need to make sure that we have a sensible policy so that farm businesses can be profitable and sustainable.

Phil Stocker: Obviously my focus is sheep, and I just want to make the case that for sheep welfare to be maintained and raised in the future it is absolutely paramount that we maintain our markets and the viability of the sector. If the Government can do one positive thing for us it is to make sure that we have ongoing trade deals and tariff-free trade access to the EU post Brexit. Currently, 35% of our total sheep meat production is exported, and 96% of that goes into the EU. If we suddenly crash out of the EU without a trade agreement, it will decimate our markets, and that will have a very bad impact on the way sheep farmers value and look after the welfare and the health of their sheep. So I would say that the number one thing the Government need to do is to make sure that our markets are viable and allow farmers to maintain viability and profitability in the future.

The second thing in relation to the future of farm support is that there are ways in which the Government could work in partnership with the industry to provide incentives and rewards for improving health management and disease control management on sheep farms. That will be about incentives to encourage farmers to work more closely with their

sheep vets, possibly to take up more analytics and understand the disease pressures on their farms, and to do more in the way of testing, as well as some level of capital investment support to allow infrastructure investment into our farms. That could be in the form of buildings or investment for biosecurity—a whole range of things. Capital investment would improve health and welfare.

Professor Lynn Frewer: From the evidence that we have, we know that the Government are viewed by the public as having the most responsibility for ensuring that farm animal welfare is met. That is what they are thinking. Having said that, the evidence also shows a preference for a combination of market and government-based policy solutions, assuming that the policy solutions accommodate the de minimis standards that people can use to ensure that farm animal welfare standards are applied.

The second point is that the public—citizens, consumers—do not have static opinions. As more scientific evidence is generated, that becomes transparent and influences the debate, whether in social media or more official institutions. The legislation needs to take account of those changing preferences and how people are responding to the changes in what animal welfare is.

The third point is that, post Brexit, we will be living in a much more complex food system. There will be more uncertainties and, I suspect, more possibilities for food fraud. We need to make sure—not necessarily through legislation, although it could be—that traceability systems accommodate farm animal welfare issues and that that is taken into account from farm to fork as part of the entirety of the food system, and that we can identify uncertainties as they arise within that food system and make sure that they can be dealt with in order to reassure the public and citizens that farm animal welfare is a priority.

Mark Williams: Not to repeat what others have said already, but it is clear that the egg industry wishes to maintain our current standards. What we must avoid at all costs, though, is gold-plating for the sake of it. That reduces our competitiveness, and as the Government has said we are moving into this 'brave new world' of free trade, that is something we need to be aware of.

We are a net importer of eggs and egg products here in the United Kingdom. People have made the point that lower-welfare imports should not be allowed to come in, and I can offer the Committee some sort of insight into how we have sought to quantify that. When battery cages were banned, the cost of egg production went up automatically. This was when the WTO Doha round of negotiations were progressing, to give you some idea of timescale here. We asked for an economic report to be produced by Wageningen University in The Netherlands, which showed the average EU cost of production. We used Ukraine, the USA, Argentina and India—the latter three being the major exporters to the European Union at the time—and it showed very clearly that none of those countries had any national legislation dealing with laying-hen welfare.

From that, we had a perfect moral argument, of course, and we lobbied the Commission and the European Parliament to make sure that eggs and egg products were treated as sensitive in any trade negotiations. I am not worried about the shell egg industry here in the United Kingdom—the Lion Quality scheme gives assurance and protection to consumers and to our customers, the retailers—but for egg products it is a different story. We will produce a similar report but for the UK only, which will then be used hopefully to convince our own Government of the importance of maintaining standards of imports coming into the United Kingdom in future.

The Chairman: Good, thank you everybody. There are a number of issues there. Local government is important in this, as is the fact that it is no good having rules if you do not enforce them, and that to enforce them you have to have a sufficient number of people to do it. In particular there is the farm welfare codes update, which, perhaps because of resources, has not happened before. Then there is keeping free trade with the EU and capital assistance, which we have not talked about before, and food fraud and traceability. There are all those issues. There are quite a number there, and it is a good list to start putting into the report. Again, I will open this out to questions. Lord Krebs, would you like to start?

Q12 **Lord Krebs:** I would like to pick up on one of the points you just referred to, which is compliance and enforcement. We have heard from Joe about the need to ensure that there is adequate enforcement provision in the UK in order to ensure that there is compliance. Could the expert witnesses tell us a bit about how compliance is enforced in overseas, third-country providers of imported meat and meat products? We have heard various assertions that standards are lower, even at the moment, in other countries that we import from, such as New Zealand and maybe east Asia. Is the role of ensuring compliance one for industry? If Marks & Spencer is selling meat that comes from New Zealand, is it up to it to ensure that New Zealand complies with welfare standards, or is that a role for government?

The Chairman: And indeed, will the UK, post Brexit, have to replace the EU system, which is quite strong in overseas inspection? Will we have to replicate that? Minette, would you like to come in on this?

Minette Batters: I recognise that this is confusing, but on standards New Zealand is absolutely compliant. It would not be able to sell into the European market if it was not. The point about New Zealand, and potentially Australia, is that their legislation and regulatory framework are completely different from ours, and of course they can compete on scale as they are very large countries with smaller populations. The Regulation is different. Their consumer power is also very different, so the regulatory framework is liable to remain much lower than it is within the EU. But on standards, New Zealand lamb performs to the same standards, which is why it has access to this market and to the European market. You cannot get into the European market unless you adhere to those standards.

The Chairman: Does it work properly so that that actually happens?

Minette Batters: I think there are challenges with New Zealand in that it has a Government who are absolutely focused on agriculture as a key component of their economy, whereas we do not have that luxury. They have a very enabling environment and a Government who champion New Zealand lamb, wherever it is in the world. It is just a very different country. We are the largest exporters, as Phil said, of lamb to the European Union. Bizarrely, we are also the biggest importers of lamb from the European Union, which is New Zealand lamb. There is probably a moral maze there: if we did not import as much, we could be self-sufficient in lamb, but that is a whole restructuring conversation for the industry to have.

Joe Bailey: Just as a brief comment, I worked briefly in New Zealand and in eastern Europe, travelling around while doing a scholarship. I went on quite a few farm inspections in Poland, Estonia and New Zealand. It is the vets who do those inspections, and because of their limited resources they can only target between 7% and 10% of farms. At that time, in 2012, they could only visit up to 7% to 10%. They were the real high-risk farms, so other farms were not getting regular visits. They were not even getting annual visits. Even with New Zealand, everyone thinks that they have these higher standards, and our supermarkets are buying their lamb, but the farms might never be inspected.

Phil Stocker: Just to mention New Zealand again, I am not sure about the level of inspections. From a relatively recent visit to New Zealand, I have a few indications of where the Regulations or standards are really quite different. One, as Minette said, is that we are very different countries. We are a highly populated country, while they have a low population of people. We have a lot of watching eyes over what we do, and a high level of interest in animal welfare. The ways in which they dispose of casualty animals in the field in New Zealand would not be acceptable here in the UK. We would not be allowed to employ some of the environmental practices such as continuing to reseed and to improve pastures in really quite vulnerable upland areas that are subject to a lot of soil erosion—

The Chairman: Can I just stop you there? I think I have Lord Krebs's question right when I say that it is more that it is up to them what they do over there, if you like—or to a degree. The issue is with what comes here to the EU. Does that tend to conform with EU standards, and therefore are they on an even playing field with EU producers? That is the question, I think. I do not want to look only at New Zealand.

Phil Stocker: I could not tell you whether they comply with standards or legislation, but I can tell you that they would not meet the expectations of our consumers, if it was properly explained.

The Chairman: Okay. Anybody else? David, I think you wanted to come in here.

David Clarke: Part of Lord Krebs's question was whether it was the Government's responsibility or the industry's, and I think the answer is that it is both. I slightly disagree with what Lynn Frewer said in the introduction to this part of the session. If you ask consumers whose responsibility it is, they say the Government's. They probably would say that, but that is not the way the dialogue plays out in the press. There is probably a story about a food incident or a farming incident once a week in the press, and it never says, "Consumers let down by Wiltshire trading standards" or "by animal health". It says "Problems with Tesco burgers", or, "Problems with Morrison's pig producers". The big brands and their reputation are put in the frame, and they have a significant infrastructure of controls to protect their brands, of which Mark's Lion egg scheme and my scheme is a part. RSPCA Assured is a small part. Both Regulation and industry have a part to play. The point I made in my introduction to this section is that they could be a bit more joined-up.

Professor Lynn Frewer: I think it is a little more nuanced than that. I apologise if I made this seem too black and white in my introductory statement. The way the debate plays out in the media, and more latterly in social media, is very contingent on trust in the information source and the way different parties force polarised views about what is and is not acceptable. I spent many years living in the Netherlands, which has the saying, "Trust arrives on foot and leaves on horseback", so if something goes wrong, if any label, any source, any brand is contaminated—whether it is horsegate or some other farm animal problem and whether it is related to welfare or food safety—it is absolutely no good trying to do any communication at all.

What I think I was suggesting is that the Government are perceived to be responsible for ensuring the transparency, reliability and accuracy of information and that it is made available to consumers and reflects the situation as it is and as it changes. In the future there will be frequent crises, as part of a complex food system. Farm animal welfare could be basis for one of those crises and it would come into public view—the citizen's view—in a spectacular way, and in that case it is absolutely essential that effective traceability systems are put into place and that an understanding of what the public want from farm animal welfare aligns with the legislative base. That is what I was trying to say earlier, and I am sorry that I did not express it quite in that way.

The Chairman: Thank you, Lynn. Lord Selkirk, I think you have a comment or a question.

Q13 **Lord Selkirk of Douglas:** I will briefly mention a possible interest in that I am chairman of a small family company that has a number of fields for rough grazing. I have a question about research that follows on from Professor Lynn Frewer's point. It seems to me that there is a general awareness and commitment from those at the sharp end in Britain basically to engage in best practice and the pursuit of excellence. Research can point the way to solutions. From my days as a Minister, I was aware that a lot of research evidence came up with facts that we

were not aware existed.

My question is: is there sufficient research, and is the vast bulk of the research done by the Government or the private sector? What improvements should be made? Do you have any comments on that subject?

The Chairman: Richard, would you like to start us off on that? I know that Minette talked about research rather more positively, so perhaps I can also bring you in on that. We are talking again about recommendations specifically to government in this session, so this is with that focus.

Professor Richard Bennett: Specifically on the issue of research?

The Chairman: Yes.

Professor Richard Bennett: One of the benefits of much EU-funded research is that it can be of an applied nature. A whole load of alternative funding streams for research, from research councils for example, tend to want more fundamental science, and assessors tend to look down their noses a little at the more applied work. That is one reason why animal welfare research is very difficult to get funded through the RCUK. As I have said before, research plays an enormously important role in supporting policy. Despite the comments earlier, I would like to be optimistic, as FERA was, but I do not think there will be alternative sources of funding when European funding goes unless the Government take steps to make sure that the funding is there. Obviously we pay into the EU pot at the moment, and one would like to think that we could continue funding joint research with the European Union after we have left. But it would be good to know that at least the funds that we currently put in would be made available to UK researchers.

The Chairman: I think it is open to third countries to contribute to Horizon 2020 and certain programmes like that. You are saying that we should keep that in mind, in that it is an area of practical scientific research.

Professor Richard Bennett: Yes.

The Chairman: Okay, that is useful. Minette, would you like to come in?

Minette Batters: I am always an optimist and will keep reiterating that I think we are in a very sound place at the moment. The greatest threat to research is the Government deciding that we do not need a food and farming sector in this country. We have to be needed. We have to have profitable, progressive, competitive businesses in order to go forward, and the Government have to believe in that importance in order to continue investing in research and encouraging a private sector. What I heard at FERA yesterday really did show how well the public and private sectors can work together for the benefit of research. Anybody who wants to know more about it can look at the work of the Elliott report on the back of horsegate. To be a global leader in food safety, traceability and

animal welfare, as we are at present, is a great strength for government. This, I think, is the greatest threat to future research: does food security matter to this country?

The Chairman: Okay. Siobhan.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: I have a couple of points. First, in response to the question of who is funding and who should fund it, historically Defra and its predecessors funded the majority of farming and industry-focused welfare and health research, but that has absolutely disappeared now. There have been a couple of ways in which to try to fill the gap. EU funding pots have become more accessible, although they are basically going now. It is right that BBSRC is currently not really tuned into this type of research, which is very much the fundamental biology type of research in this area, and the applied research that can have direct benefits to industry is not really being covered at the moment. There are big moves to try to bring industry and government together on both the research needs and research funding. We are yet to see whether that is really going to play out in industry being able to fund significant research. It is certainly doing some projects—we have projects with members here—but to ask it to fill the whole gap will be really difficult.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Gudrun Ravetz: I echo the point about applied research. We must not pocket research out into institution and on-farm. As a statistic, we estimate that the UK contributes about €5.4 billion to EU research budgets, but British researchers won back about €9 billion in collaborative research systems, so there is a big pot of money out there. Welfare science in particular is evolving, and everything that we do must be evidence-led. Research is extremely important for gaining the confidence of both consumers and retailers. We must see that these things are all linked. Health and welfare are linked, but they are also linked to surveillance and to the big picture that we are seeing on antimicrobial resistance. We must not pocket out these pots of money when we are looking at government enabling a lot of this research.

It is important to see the vet linked to all this, and I do. The vet is the conduit on the ground who assures transfer knowledge with the farmers, with the APHA, and with local authorities. Vets will often take this research and apply it with farmers on the ground, so we must make sure that this is collaborative and that we are not pocketing people and different segments that all interplay.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you. The Duke of Montrose.

- Q14 **Duke of Montrose:** In the briefing that you provided, you drew attention to the fact that we do not necessarily comply with maximum journey times. You mentioned where Britain falls short. This is a difficult issue to raise at the moment. Some of it might apply to Cornwall, but I know that in the Scottish context it is not always possible to comply. If you spend an hour or two gathering animals in South Uist, you have a four-hour

boat journey to Oban. If you want to go to Aberdeen, that is six hours on the road. There are problems with journey times.

The Chairman: We sometimes tend to forget in particular about inter-island issues north of the border, absolutely.

Phil Stocker: I have a quick point relating to research, which may be a little controversial. I was just saying that in our industry a lot more work still needs to be done to see the take-up of research that has already been done. I am not saying that we do not need more research to be done, but there is a severe absence of uptake of best practice and research that has already been completed.

The Chairman: Can you give us an example?

Phil Stocker: One example is the rate of sheep deaths in submissions that would have gone to APHA. The highest number of sheep deaths in those VIC submissions would be from parasitic gastroenteritis through stomach worms, and we know the answers. The solutions and the answers are there; it is about disseminating that information and getting the uptake of best practice on farms. As for the role of government, you could look at the way that the old experimental husbandry farms used to work, and the farm networks. Delivering information in ways that is palatable for farmers is really important.

The Chairman: Lynn did you want to comment on this? Then I want to move the subject on, if I can.

Professor Lynn Frewer: Sorry, this is about research again. My own research shows that there is a gap between the evidence that is being produced for policy questions and the questions that are being asked by policymakers, and we probably need to develop new ways to bridge that gap. We are seeing in farm animal welfare, for example, that a lot of the research that is needed encompasses simultaneously analysis of economics, consumer perceptions and biological markers of welfare. At the moment, I am not really seeing this being put together into a single system. That is the first step to generating evidence that can be directly translated into policy. To me, that is a gap in knowledge, and whether it is funded by RCUK, Innovate UK or the European Commission is open to question.

Gudrun Ravetz: I just wanted to come back on what Phil said, because I think he is absolutely right. We are talking about funding research, but actually we need to fund the application of that research, for example to parasitic and anthelmintic control. We started the conversation about the possibility of there not being enough vets out there, and we are seeing that the veterinary input into some sheep farming is just not profitable, either for the vet or for the sheep farmer. We are potentially missing that knowledge transfer, that link and that evidence-based practice, which not only will improve our animal health and welfare in the sheep sector but can help to tackle anthelmintic resistance. It might need some government help to kick-start it, but you will get outcomes at the end.

There is no point having the research if we do not have the evidence base and the science-led professionals to help implement it.

The Chairman: That is a very good point. Thank you both for bringing that up. Lord Trees, and then Viscount Hanworth.

- Q15 **Lord Trees:** I just have a quick point about the research. What used to be the RAE in university systems, and is now the REF, does actually take account of knowledge transfer now, which is important and a useful contribution to that issue. We are talking in this session about what government can do. I have two questions, which are linked, on labelling and enforcement. We have talked a lot about labelling. It is very easy for us all to say, "We need more labelling. Labelling is the solution", and the non-stun issue is dear to my heart. However, the EU did a report on labelling with regard to stun and non-stun slaughter and rejected it for one reason and another, so I would like to ask our guests: should government legislate with regard to labelling, and is more research needed to ensure consistency and comprehensibility for the consumer? The consumer has an awful lot to read already on labels, and terms such as "non-stun" may not mean much to many people.

That is connected, of course, a bit with enforcement. Enforcement is not a problem that we have just with regard to Brexit. I am looking at Joe in particular here. Is this an opportunity to press the Government for a statutory responsibility for enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act to be directed somewhere? Currently, nobody has that statutory requirement. Trading standards and local government do it if they can, but they are not required to do it, as I understand it, and do not have budgets to do it. It is a gaping hole. We have good legislation, but if we do not enforce it, it is worthless.

The Chairman: Shall we leave enforcement for the second time round, because it is a key issue? With labelling, one of things I am struck by is the huge numbers of different schemes. Exactly as you say Lord Trees, we have mentioned certain bits here that have been left out of that. Does government take control of this, or can we sort ourselves out? How do we move forward? Who would like to take that? Peter first and then Siobhan.

Peter Stevenson: It does need government to come in. This is what happened with the shell egg sector, where EU law has for many years now required both the egg, and rather more importantly the egg pack, to be labelled with the farming method. That includes the term, "Eggs from caged hens". That draws the consumer's attention to the fact that they may not want to buy those eggs, although some consumers will of course say, "Yes, I just want to go with what is cheapest". As I have said before, it has to be a very simple term, but we need a similar labelling scheme for meat and dairy products. Of course there are the high-welfare labels—labelling that you are free range or whatever—but it is about getting the standard, intensive products labelled so that consumers can make informed choices. At the moment, consumers, particularly with milk, are in the dark. You pick up a litre of milk in the supermarket and you do not have the slightest way of knowing what kind of herd you are supporting.

For all the complexity of labelling—yes, there are too many labels—we need it, and it probably does now need to be a government scheme.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: I was just going to concur with that. The government role, if not actually to define the terms, as with eggs, is to facilitate industry-recognised terms. We already have a system for labelling pork, which is a voluntary industry code, but government has that role of facilitating or ensuring it.

The Chairman: I would also be interested in a sectoral view on this. Chris, do you have view?

Chris Mallon: The beef sector is very pro-labelling. Again, that comes from bad experiences, and a wish to improve what we are doing and give confidence to the consumer. It is very important that food security is always brought to mind. The more trade we have to deal with, the more we reduce the security. When a meat product is traded more after it has been sold, it should be identified as having come from numerous countries on its way here. We should not play this down by saying that people will not look at a label. People are educated enough now to take the time and do it. Some obviously will not, but the majority will look at the label. They definitely matter for the beef sector.

The Chairman: Should government do that, or can we sort it out ourselves?

Chris Mallon: If you do not do it, I do not know who is going to. Retailing, and especially the catering side in some respects, will sell the product at the highest margin possible. That is the reality of it, and I would like to see a label that encourages the buyer or the consumer, or the person out to dinner, to be able to make an informed choice. They can then say, "Yes, I support this", or, "I do not support that".

The Chairman: Georgina, perhaps I could bring you in from the pig sector.

Dr Georgina Crayford: Some caution should be shown with putting something as simple as "intensive" on a label. Who is going to define intensive? If you are going to do something like this, you need to be really clear about what you actually mean. Onus should be placed on the retailers and food service companies to make sure that their communications to customers, maybe not about their labelling but about their sourcing policies, are clear and to make sure that they source their products responsibly and in line with UK standards. We have good labelling already—Red Tractor and RSPCA Assured—for people who care about that and want to look for it. Adding even more to packets will just be confusing.

The Chairman: So retailers and the current schemes should sort it out and the Government should take a back seat on it. Is that what you are saying?

Dr Georgina Crayford: Yes, I think we have good things in place.

The Chairman: That is fine. Minette, I will bring you in on this in due course, as I can see that you are anxious to come in. Phil.

Phil Stocker: The Government have a role in labelling. Accuracy and clarity of labelling are important. I want to draw a distinction with regard to what the public feel that they are interested in. There has already been discussion about the labelling of dairy products and whether they are from cows that graze outside or cows that are housed 365 days of the year. There are systems and welfare reviews, and within those systems you can still get good welfare outcomes. We need to draw that distinction. With sheep, thankfully, we are not too cluttered by those sorts of systems or welfare accusations, if you like. However, if you start to look at some of the aspects that affect us—I am just thinking of unintended consequences again—you can imagine someone starting to label lamb that was not castrated, for instance, which some consumers might think would be great, but then no one would look at the number of unintended pregnancies in the ewe lambs that ended up going through the slaughter chain. These are very complex issues, and at the moment the discussion is about welfare systems, not necessarily welfare outcomes.

The Chairman: Before others come in on this, perhaps Richard Griffiths can come in from the poultry sector.

Richard Griffiths: The members of across-the-board assurance schemes are very proud of what they do and want to tell people—consumers—what they are doing and to give consumers access to information, should they want it. All assurance schemes do a very good job at that. Government involvement could come in where there is no label. What can consumers expect from a product that does not have a label on it? Where is their trust then?

The Chairman: Thank you. Now Richard Bennett, please.

Professor Richard Bennett: Just as an observation, labelling is often used as a generic title for all sorts of information that is delivered to the consumer in all sorts of different ways. It is not just the information on a physical label, because you cannot fit the amount of information that consumers might want on the physical label.

On the issue of who should do it and whose responsibility it is, like most things it requires a partnership approach and needs the Government working with industry and others to make sure that one comes up with a system that makes sense, that the consumer can rely on, and that actually works. Some sort of mandatory system imposed on industry would be absolutely disastrous.

A final point on labelling, which has already been said, is that ideally it should relate to welfare outcomes. I have real concerns about labelling according to system of production, because that is not the same as high welfare.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you. Minette.

Minette Batters: I totally agree with that. First, on end of life, we do not support labelling on end-of-life product. We absolutely support Red Tractor for showing that product has been stunned. We do not support labelling that says that it is not stunned. I do not know how else to do it, but our line has always been to stick very solidly behind Red Tractor as a method of labelling. We have never changed that position and we will not change that position. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We have Red Tractor and great assurance schemes, many of which are represented around this table. If you want to know that a product has been produced in Britain and packed in Britain, you look for Red Tractor on the shelf. That is how it is traceable from farm to fork. We need government at all levels to really get behind that and to champion that. That is the only mechanism that we have for export, and we have it here. This is about the Government getting behind what exists. They do not need to invest in something new. I am sure David will have much more to add on that.

The Chairman: I will ask David to come in at the end, perhaps, on this one.

Professor Lynn Frewer: You asked about research with respect to labelling. A lot of the discussion so far has not necessarily been based on the evolving evidence base. It is a really good time, and an opportune moment, to find out what labelling the public—both citizens and consumers—would like to see, possibly using some kind of harmonised system for different supply chains, and through different sectors such as the catering sector and retail sector. At the moment, though, a lot of this is speculation. Without that research, it might be quite difficult to translate that into an effective regulatory base, whether it is voluntary or by government.

The Chairman: Thank you. Georgina, you wanted to come back, briefly.

Dr Georgina Crayford: Yes, I have just a short additional comment. Britishness is commensurate with higher welfare, so country of origin labelling is really important. We have that at the moment on fresh meat products, but I would like to see it extended to processed products, too. All sorts of value-added products and products in ready meals currently have no labelling for origin. It would be good to see that.

The Chairman: I will bring in Joe, then Peter quickly and David to sum up on this. Then I want to move on, because Viscount Hanworth wants to ask a question.

Joe Bailey: I apologise if I am going over anything anyone else said. I am afraid that I had pop out very briefly, so I missed your initial questions, Lord Trees, and perhaps a few of the answers that had already been given. On research, I believe that more needs to be done on what our consumers are looking for on a label. We recently rebranded and have—thank goodness—noticed a huge jump in the level of people's

association with our brand. We are now up to 50% recognition, when previously with Freedom Food we had only 24%. Hopefully, the people who buy our products know what it is all about and that it is welfare-related. A recent Eurobarometer report from 2016 said that 62% of the British public felt that animal welfare did not receive enough importance in the country's food policy; 55% would look for an animal welfare label when shopping; and 72% would be willing to pay to buy products from animal welfare-friendly production systems. So there has been work done on this.

The Chairman: Thank you. Peter, please keep it fairly short, if you can.

Peter Stevenson: We have had research done that I can submit and which shows that British consumers want method of production labelling. They want to know how the animal lived and how it was kept. I agree with those who said that it also needs to be backed up by welfare outcomes. It is no good if an animal was kept in what is theoretically a good system if in practice it had a bad life. We need to blend the two. The Government really do have a role. It was government, through the European Commission, that made the labelling of egg packs mandatory. They tried a voluntary scheme before, but when they introduced the law they said that the voluntary scheme had not worked. I have every respect for Red Tractor, but it is not a high-welfare scheme; it is trying in the main to make sure that legislation is complied with. I am talking from the welfare point of view. If we want a high-welfare scheme, we cannot just say Britishness. Again, that is not good enough. The only thing we have at the moment is RSPCA Assured, which is a great scheme. I really think that we need to bring consumers more into the picture, which means giving them information about how the animal was kept.

The Chairman: Okay. Siobhan, just one sentence please, then David.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: Having spent more than a decade working on welfare outcomes I do not want to dismiss them, but the reality is that they are really difficult to communicate to consumers. Method of production is easier. I completely take the point that there is often overlap, but welfare in different systems is a really tricky issue.

The Chairman: David, and then we have to move on to enforcement.

David Clarke: I do not have much to say other than just to clarify Minette's point about slaughter. The point Minette was making was that we would not allow our logo to go on a product made from an animal that had not been stunned before slaughter. We have always said that and been transparent about it. It is an existing indication of the method of slaughter.

Simply, on systems, I agree that labelling systems are not ideal and not the answer, but it is where we always end up. I am not sure what people are asking government to do here. As Georgina mentioned, there is a system in the pig industry, which agreed some terminology with the RSPCA probably 10 years ago now. That has been tested by legislation.

There is consumer information legislation that says that what you say cannot be misleading and must be supported by the facts. One example of advertising using that labelling system was referred to the Advertising Standards Authority and was found on that occasion to be being used incorrectly. The industry has not placed that sort of advertising since. There are government regulatory structures to control the use of this terminology that has been developed. The dairy industry is now developing logos for pasture-fed, grazing cows, and that will be tested similarly. If someone applies that label to milk that comes from cows that have not been pasture-fed, it will be illegal. It will be tested. In my view, the system is working. It is driven and tested by the market, and it survives and thrives if the market wants it but disappears if the market does not want it.

The Chairman: Viscount Hanworth, did you want to come in on this, or with a separate question?

- Q16 **Viscount Hanworth:** What stimulated my question was Phil Stocker's mention of intestinal worms in sheep, which raises the issue of disease control. Are our agencies for controlling disease in livestock adequate? Will they be prejudiced in consequence of Brexit—I am thinking here of the supply of veterinary officers? Do the Government fully recognise their responsibility in this respect? Finally, if it is not asking too much, might I have an opinion from you on the future role of antibiotics in this connection?

The Chairman: Viscount Hanworth, we have not dealt with the second part of Lord Trees's question yet and we have to finish that. We will deal with your question next when we have dealt with enforcement.

Viscount Hanworth: Will you want me to reiterate the question?

The Chairman: Yes, please. I am sorry, I just want to keep things in order for the moment. On enforcement, perhaps we can hear from Joe. I think this was something that you particularly mentioned.

Joe Bailey: I did not hear the full question, so I would not mind it being repeated.

Lord Trees: I was looking at you when I asked the question.

The Chairman: I will also bring Sophie in again, as she mentioned local government. I think that would be useful. Please ask the question again, if you could.

Lord Trees: This applies, of course, to the UK, whether or not Brexit has happened, but is Brexit an opportunity to revisit the lack-of-enforcement problem that we have with animal welfare? The EFRA Committee recently majored on this as a conclusion. Nobody has a statutory responsibility to enforce the Animal Welfare Act, although local government tries to do it when it can, through trading standards and so on, and the RSPCA does a certain amount. Is it appropriate and timely now to push for a body that is charged with the statutory responsibility and is resourced

appropriately?

The Chairman: Can we just hear from Joe and Sophie on this, and then we will move on to Viscount Hanworth's question?

Joe Bailey: I cannot speak on behalf of the RSPCA, because as you know I work for RSPCA Assured. I used to be an RSPCA inspector before I was a trading standards officer, and I dealt with a number of prosecutions over that time in my capacity as an inspector without any powers whatever. There was the Protection of Animals Act, as it was then, and then the Animal Welfare Act. Would I at that time have quite liked some increased powers? Yes, of course. I cannot talk for the RSPCA now—I think it probably has mixed views on this—but I believe that trading standards, which have the powers, should have more resources. As I have said previously, they just do not have the resources or the time to concentrate on animal welfare, particularly in livestock. They are wearing many hats and covering many different things. A lot of the time they are passing complaints of farming cruelty on to the police, who do not deal with them because they do not have the knowledge, or on to the RSPCA, which has the knowledge but does not have the resources for it.

Dr Sophia Hepple: We have a difficulty with the current drive to reduce inspections across farms, which is completely understandable for those that are fully compliant.

To go back to the research issues, we have had funding for two lots of research for evidence to develop our risk basis for inspections. The most recent one has clearly shown that with multiple membership of health, assurance and retailer schemes—the schemes a particular farm might be involved in—you see better likelihood of compliance. I am not saying that there is a cause and effect, but there is clearly more to be done on that.

From the point of view of the inspections that we do at the moment, although we have a statutory responsibility to do cross-compliance inspections, we also have an agreed responsibility to government to follow up complaints about animal welfare within 24 hours. Most of our inspections are based on complaints. Overall in our inspections, including those that come from complaints, a good 50% will be fully compliant, and 30% that are above the level of minimum legislation. Of those that we go out to inspect, in the high-risk categories we are only picking up 20% of farms, and in maybe only 1.5% to 3% will we find unnecessary suffering, and these are high-risk ones. The funding is at local government level to support any enforcement work that we start when we turn up on a farm or what we do together with local authorities.

Is prosecution in the public interest? Often, with quite a few of our really bad problem farms, which as my colleague here said bring the industry into disrepute, there are more problems going on than just animal welfare problems. There will also be social problems at home, and it is not in the public interest to take that further. It is better to try to get the animals off that farm, and in some ways that at least is what the Animal Welfare Act has done for us. We have been more able to get animals

removed from people who really cannot cope with them and get them sold.

That is all I can really say. We just have to balance this need to reduce inspections with being able to better target farms that we genuinely need to get out there and see.

The Chairman: Thank you. Viscount Hanworth, I am sorry, but I am going to ask you to repeat your question. Then we will finish.

Viscount Hanworth: I suppose these questions could be construed as questions about enforcement. Are our agencies for controlling disease in livestock adequate? Will they be prejudiced in consequence of Brexit? I am thinking here of the availability of veterinary officers. Do the Government fully recognise their responsibility in this respect? As a rider, what are the future prospects for the use of antibiotics in our farming system? The question of intestinal diseases in sheep was about extensive farming, but when it comes to antibiotics we are now talking about intensive farming, so there is quite a dichotomy here. Perhaps somebody can respond to some of those questions.

Dr Georgina Crayford: I can pick up on the antibiotics question. Obviously, pig and poultry are probably the most intensive sectors, where more antibiotic use goes on. However, what is most important is the responsible use of antibiotics. Animal welfare is reliant on being able to use antibiotics to treat disease where it is necessary, so vets need to be able to retain the full use of antibiotics where they are needed. Does that answer your question?

Viscount Hanworth: Yes, but responsible use has to be enforced, and I just wonder whether that is possible within our existing structures. But be that as it may.

Gudrun Ravetz: The veterinary profession is very involved in the responsible use of medicines. There is good enforcement through the assurance schemes that vets are involved in. It is part of the schemes that medicines are used responsibly, so that is one way in which we can use what is currently out there to make sure that good practice is happening alongside our vets.

We had a change in surveillance in 2014 and we have some robust measures that use veterinary surgeons. We need to remember that the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak was found by a veterinary surgeon in an abattoir, so the vets on the ground are seeing and picking up on these problems. It is vital that we maintain the role of the vet, particularly in the abattoir, as we mentioned, but there is concern about the numbers of vets able to do that. We also have concerns about the Government reducing the role and status of vets, and we would certainly want to make sure that that does not happen and that we can augment these roles and get more veterinary surgeons wanting to do it. Certainly, with surveillance, we need to make sure we have very robust, reciprocal surveillance data. As we can see with the avian flu that is flying over, no

amount of certification will stop the flying over, but surveillance data can mean that we are ready and prepared and that we have a scientific and evidence-based understanding of it. Risk-based analysis that is based on evidence is important. We must not succumb to fear. Our surveillance must be risk-based.

Coming back to your point on numbers, we need to be aware that with trade, when we look at the EU, there is the vet checks directive that says third-country animal products or animals will be vet checked, looking at disease status and welfare. Depending on what we become, there is that level of certification that may be needed for any imports that we have and potentially for any exports. We would see an explosion of the need for vets to do that certification, because that is one part of our control of an animal disease incursion. At the moment, I would have concerns that we do not have the number of vets to be able to do that robust certification, and they are absolutely the right people to be doing it.

Viscount Hanworth: Would it fair to say that you have rising anxieties? Are there other people with those anxieties?

Gudrun Ravetz: We are extremely concerned about the workforce issue for vets, because we recognise, and can show from other disease incursions, that vets are the right people to do that job. We have a concern that, depending on what we look to for our trade, we will not have enough vets for that certification.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Viscount Hanworth: Can I ask another one?

The Chairman: I have a speakers list on your question. I am not cutting you off.

Richard Griffiths: The antibiotic responsible use issue is, I feel, a professional issue that is firmly focused on vets and industry working together on professional use and the stewardship of that. As in human medicine, we are never going to get to zero use of antibiotics. That is not feasible, so we have to do as much as we can through a stewardship programme.

On the resources of vets, we need to look at the recent, ongoing efforts on bird flu. That is an excellent example of government, vets and officials and industry working in partnership and is a great example of a partnership approach that could be adopted more broadly. I also support the previous comment on the veterinary oversight of trade issues. It is crucial and is probably the area that needs the most attention paid to the numbers.

The Chairman: Okay, I am going to close the list. I have Peter, Phil and Minette.

Peter Stevenson: The O'Neill report, established by the Government, made it very clear that farm use of antibiotics is contributing to a problem

in human medicine. It said, as have many other reports, that this is coming mainly from the intensive pig and poultry sectors. I recognise that the pig sector in this country has made real efforts to reduce antibiotic use, but it is still higher—as it is in the poultry sector—than in a number of other EU countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands. It is no good just talking about responsible use; we need to define what we mean by that.

A recent joint scientific opinion by the European Medicines Agency and European Food Safety Authority—so from both the human and the animal sides—said that there has to be an end to routine preventive use, and it made it clear that that was for both prophylactic and metaphylactic use. We have had the Lancet Infectious Diseases Commission saying that we need to develop health-orientated systems for rearing animals—in other words, systems in which health is inherent, rather than propped up by routine antibiotic use. If we are serious about antibiotics—I am talking about the monogastric sector—we need a big rethink.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Phil Stocker: Ongoing surveillance as we come out of Europe will be crucial, as well maintaining government investment in APHA and our surveillance systems. We went through the review back in 2014, and to an extent that drove some efficiencies, but there is real risk now that the resources are cut so tightly that our ability to have a proper level of surveillance in the future will be undermined if we are not careful.

Moving on to antibiotics, I feel that what is going on through RUMA—the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture, a real industry initiative to get hold of this and try to reduce usage—has been really effective. As long as government keeps a watching eye over this and as long as we keep making progress, I think it will be enough. I do not personally feel that we need more government intervention when it is quite clear that the industry is really trying to get its head around this and to do something about it. In the sheep sector we are considered to be low users of antibiotics, but we have already got off our backsides, if you like, and gone out to start survey work to try to pick up on where antibiotics are used and to try to work with the industry and the veterinary community to reduce those areas.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Minette Batters: Just to back that up, I wanted to make the point about RUMA. It is another case where I think we forget what we already have. There has been massive investment in RUMA this year. David Cameron set out to be a global leader on the usage of antibiotics and AMR, and since then the industry has responded. Through all farm assurance schemes we now record antibiotic usage. RUMA represents the whole of the supply chain on responsible antibiotic usage. We are in a very strong place. Great stuff is already happening, and it will only improve, as we have shown through the recording of our exact usage.

Q17 **The Chairman:** Excellent. Thank you everybody. Lastly, can I just ask you, on the strict area of farm animal welfare and Brexit, to give one message that you want us to make clear in our report?

Dr Sophia Hepple: As long as you just ensure that animal welfare is there as incredibly important to the whole process, that is the key thing for us.

Richard Griffiths: Partnership working has to be the way to go.

Chris Mallon: Maintain the standards and ensure that they are standards that a farmer can still work under.

Dr Siobhan Mullan: Reflect citizens' high expectations of animal welfare, in both production and consumption.

Gudrun Ravetz: No dilution of standards, no two-tier system in Regulation, and remember the role of vets.

Peter Stevenson: When negotiating new trade agreements, insist on the inclusion of a clause that permits the UK to require imports to meet UK welfare standards.

Professor Richard Bennett: I would just like to remind the Committee of the animal health and welfare stewardship programme. It needs relooking at.

David Clarke: I have said it before, but remember that we have high standards, we need to maintain them, and partnership working will contribute to that.

Minette Batters: I absolutely agree. Currently the FAO carries out audit checks as a condition of non-EU countries wanting to trade. We will still have to comply with those, so you can ask: who do we replace that with?

Joe Bailey: We need to see Brexit in a more positive light and not just look at the negativity of it. It is a way, possibly, of increasing our welfare standards in this country and becoming a leader globally on higher welfare standards.

Dr Georgina Crayford: Whatever is implemented needs to be economically viable for agriculture. Profitability is so important in giving farmers the capacity to care for the animals in their care.

Phil Stocker: I would say trade and profitability: if farmers value their animals, they will invest in them.

Professor Lynn Frewer: Identify and maintain the minimum farm animal welfare standards that align with UK public priorities.

Mark Williams: No unnecessary ratcheting up of animal welfare standards without a sound science and evidence base behind it, but also, as Peter has just said, ensure that any import that comes into this country has to meet our standards.

The Chairman: Colleagues, I thank you very much indeed for your participation today. You have all worked hard and given my Committee members almost a day off, actually. We have been able to just ask the questions. I really appreciate that. I think that we have a very good report, which will obviously be freely available to you all. If there is anything that strikes you as important and which you have not been able to say today, please give Celia, our clerk, that additional evidence and we would be very pleased to include it. I thank you once again and end this meeting at this point. Thank you everybody.