



Scottish Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [The future of Scottish agriculture post-Brexit, HC 1637](#)

Wednesday 5 June 2019

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Members present: Pete Wishart (Chair); Deidre Brock; David Duguid; Hugh Gaffney; Christine Jardine; John Lamont; Paul Masterton; Ross Thomson.

Questions 567 - 650

Witnesses

I: Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Guy Horsington, Deputy Director for Future Farming Policy and the Agriculture Bill, Defra

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]



Examination of witnesses

Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
Guy Horsington, Deputy Director for Future Farming Policy and the Agriculture
Bill, Defra

Q567 **Chair:** We are very grateful to you, Secretary of State, for joining us this afternoon. We know that you are really busy. Could you just for the record say who you are—though I think that all of us here know you—introduce your colleague to your right, and say anything by way of a short introductory statement?

Michael Gove: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I am here in my role as the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but I have had the opportunity during my nearly two years in this post to visit Scotland on many occasions in order to understand the impact of UK policy specifically on Scottish farmers, landowners, crofters, fishermen and food producers. I am here with Guy Horsington, who is the brilliant official at DEFRA who has been leading on our agriculture Bill and related measures.

The first thing I want to say is that I appreciate how important agriculture and food production is to Scotland's economy. Growing up in the north-east, I realise in particular how critical it is that we maintain a strong export footprint so that Scotland's superb produce can continue to earn for Scottish companies and Scottish citizens a healthy return. I recognise that at a time of change as we leave the European Union there are big questions about what the future of agriculture might involve, but I believe that outside the one-size-fits-all straitjacket of the common agricultural policy, each of the Administrations—the devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and, of course, in England—can better fashion a new agricultural policy, which will combine both an emphasis on improved food production and greater commercial energy in selling our products but also a thoughtful maintenance of landscapes and improved care for our environment. I should say that I believe that those aspirations are shared by colleagues in the Scottish Government, with whom I have had an enjoyable and cordial working relationship.

Q568 **Chair:** I am grateful; thank you for that. Thank you for your kind remarks.

Perhaps just to get things started you could tell us exactly where we are with the agriculture Bill. It has been several weeks now since its Second Reading. When should we expect to see it back in the House of Commons for Report and Third Reading? I know that you have been busy today so I do not know if you have had an opportunity to look at the National Audit Office report on your proposed environmental land management payments, which it concluded are hopelessly ill thought out, unprepared and premature. I wonder if that is a sentiment that you share. When will we see the agriculture Bill and what is your response to the NAO report?



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Michael Gove: We want to get the agriculture Bill back for Report and Third Reading as quickly as possible, but it is dependent on the progress of the Withdrawal Agreement. Obviously, we want to make sure that we get parliamentary support for exiting the European Union and we can then bring in the farming Bill, which allows us to make the most of those opportunities.

The National Audit Office report is one that I welcome because I always believe that the challenge that the NAO provides is useful. It provided challenge to us in our preparations for a no-deal exit. We rose to that challenge. I should thank my officials for doing that so brilliantly. The environmental land management scheme I believe will help to transform the way in which we reward farmers for the public good they provide, which at the moment they are inadequately rewarded for.

Q569 **Chair:** The NAO report raises questions about whether the pilot will be sufficiently robust to inform further development of this programme. It notes—you could perhaps comment on this—that the take-up has now reduced from 5,000 to 1,250. Why has the pilot been reduced?

Michael Gove: There has been a huge amount of interest in working with us to pilot the environmental land management scheme, but we want to make sure that those pilots are value for money and that we can learn from them quickly and ensure that when the ELM scheme comes in, after a seven-year transition period, we will have a system that is robust and fit for purpose.

Q570 **Chair:** There has been comment, obviously, by the Public Accounts Committee where the Chair notes, “DEFRA must urgently review its plans to make sure they are realistic”. This is a real issue—being realistic about whether this is deliverable. I hope that you are taking this seriously, Secretary of State, because I have read the report fully and it is not good news at all. Hasn’t Scotland missed a bullet by not having anything to do with this particular Bill given the condition it is in, given that you cannot tell us when it is going to be coming back, and given that we do not know how long it will take to implement?

Michael Gove: There are several very important points that you raise. Is it important to respond positively to the NAO report? Absolutely. I am a great advocate of the NAO’s work. Sir Amyas Morse has done a brilliant job in leading it and, as I mentioned, the work that he did with constructive criticism of our preparation for no deal enabled us to meet and exceed the expectations that he set.

More broadly, far from missing a bullet, my fear is that the Scottish Government may have missed the boat because we have offered to—

Chair: The boat to nowhere it looks like.

Michael Gove: No, I think that there you are waiting at the kirk when the boat is taking a voyage on the sea of opportunity.



Chair: It also looks like it is holed below the stern.

Michael Gove: No, absolutely not. The key thing is that we offered all the devolved Administrations the opportunity to add what they required to the Bill. The Welsh Labour Government and also the civil service in Northern Ireland took advantage of that. The Scottish Government did not and, as was exposed when the Cabinet Secretary appeared before you, there is no certainty on when the Scottish Government are going to bring forward any agricultural Bill. There is, therefore, no certainty, as Mr Lamont and others pointed out, about when Scottish farmers will receive payments in the future.

Q571 **Chair:** But there is no certainty about your Bill. We do not know when it is going to be or if it is going to be reintroduced.

Michael Gove: There absolutely is. We have a Bill that has gone through Committee. There is no Bill and no whisper of a Bill from the Scottish Government and that is why Jonnie Hall on behalf of NFU Scotland, as was pointed out at the last Committee, said that whatever one thinks of what is happening south of the border there is a clear vision and, sadly, that has been absent from the Scottish Government. I think that it is deeply worrying at this stage when so much has been done south of the border to invest money in developing new pilots and also to sketch out a plan, not just for the next five years but for the next seven years and beyond, that Scotland's farmers face a greater degree of uncertainty. I do not make it as a personal criticism of the Cabinet Secretary, for whom I have a high regard, but I do think that the Scottish Government are not putting Scotland's rural economy at the heart of their vision for the future in the way that they should.

Q572 **Chair:** I think that Scottish farmers will have to make their own conclusions when they read the NAO report and the condition of the pilots, and also the fact that you cannot tell us when the agriculture Bill will be coming back.

You mentioned Brexit. There is one thing that you could maybe clarify for us. We have heard rumours that if the Withdrawal Agreement is agreed to in this House there will be no provision for CAP payments in 2020-21, and that this will only continue up until December 2019. I do not know what you know about this, but this is deeply alarming. Is that what is in the withdrawal agreement Bill? Will there be a certainty that during any transition period CAP payments will continue?

Michael Gove: Absolutely.

Q573 **Chair:** There is no foundation to any of these rumours?

Michael Gove: No. We have a strong legal basis in the agriculture Bill and in the other legislation that we have passed to ensure that farmers can continue to be paid. As the Cabinet Secretary pointed out, or as was pointed out when the Cabinet Secretary appeared here, Scottish farmers are not on the same firm legal ground. We want to ensure that they are



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and I stand ready to work with the Scottish Government in order to ensure that they are.

Q574 **Chair:** Okay. Just one last thing from me. You said that the Scottish Government have been given what you say is their fair share. You said that the UK Government should be able to spend additional money on projects in Scotland that will strengthen the Union.

Michael Gove: Yes.

Q575 **Chair:** I am presuming, given that you are Secretary of State for DEFRA, that that would apply to some agriculture and land management issues. Can you tell us how that would work?

Michael Gove: Yes. There are all too many ways in which it could work. We could spend money on, for example, supporting Scotland's producers to export. We can spend money making sure that we more effectively market produce across the United Kingdom and particularly in Scotland. We can invest money in agritech and Catapult centres and in areas of excellence. We can ensure that the facilities are there logistically and otherwise in order to ensure that Scotland succeeds because it is part of the United Kingdom.

Q576 **Chair:** Is it your plan to spend this money in devolved responsibilities areas, which are devolved, quite rightly, to the Scottish Parliament, or is this money beyond devolved services? You can see the point that others would make—that this is another power grab where you are trying to ensure that we—

Michael Gove: I completely understand the point. In fact, one of the things about leaving the European Union is that more powers flow to the Scottish Parliament as well as to the UK Parliament. Far from it being a power grab it is a power surge. I also want to emphasise that the UK Government are determined to ensure that the strength of our United Kingdom, the institutions of the Union, the power of the Treasury, are used to provide support for Scotland's rural communities and, indeed, every Scot.

Q577 **Chair:** I am presuming, given you have announced this, that there are structured, strong plans that you are able to present to the Committee so that we can have a look at that.

Michael Gove: Yes, absolutely.

Q578 **Chair:** We can expect them in the next few days? Would that be okay? Yes, thank you.

Lastly, when are we likely to see the results of the Bew review?

Michael Gove: It is an independent review so it is up to Lord Bew and his fellow commissioners when to publish. We, I think like everyone, would like to see it published as soon as possible and we hope in the summer of this year.



Q579 **Chair:** George Eustice, when he came in front of the Committee when he was your farming Minister, said to us that he hoped the conclusions would be likely to endure beyond 2022. Will the principles we determine in this review apply to future funding?

Michael Gove: Yes, the whole point about the review is that it is there to look at a wide variety of factors. Of course, I cannot pre-empt the outcome of future spending reviews, but the whole point about asking this group of very distinguished people to look at the past and to take into account Scotland's unique geography, and also the interplay between Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom, is to make sure that we have an informed basis on which to make judgments in the future as well.

Q580 **John Lamont:** I wanted to ask you about the basis on which farm support is allocated under the CAP just now. Clearly, it is partly devolved but in England it has been criticised because of the use of historical bases of payments. I just wondered if you are going to use Brexit as an opportunity to reset that and to use a different base for funding allocations.

Michael Gove: I am open-minded. The key thing is that I want to look at the evidence and make judgments. Brexit, you are absolutely right, does provide us with flexibility but I do not believe in change for change's sake.

Q581 **John Lamont:** Clearly, the basis on which farmers in Scotland currently receive funding support is more generous than what would be applied if the Barnett formula was used. Can you confirm to my farmers and farmers across Scotland that there are no plans to Barnettise farming support?

Michael Gove: We certainly will not Barnettise. One of the things that I have said to the Department and, indeed, to the Treasury is that we need to recognise that Scotland, because of its particular geography, because a high proportion of agricultural land is in less favoured areas, because a high proportion of farming is livestock and upland farming, we do need to take specific account of that in thinking about funding in the future. Of course, we provide support not just in order to ensure that we have high quality food production; we also provide support because we recognise the critical role that farmers play in parts of Scotland's rural economy. We have to respect the social ecology as well as everything else.

Q582 **John Lamont:** You refereed to a previous evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary, Fergus Ewing. It was quite an extraordinary session in that I was seeking reassurance for my farmers and other farmers across Scotland that there was a legal mechanism in place to ensure that funding support continued after 2020. Previously, the Cabinet Secretary had said that he was going to rely on the continuity Bill, which has been challenged in the Supreme Court, or the Scottish Government were going to bring forward their own agriculture Bill. It is unclear where that



currently is. The Law Society gave evidence to suggest that a statutory instrument had been passed that was going to provide the legal certainty to farmers. Are you aware of what the legal position is from a Scottish perspective to ensure that farmers in Scotland are protected and their payments, more importantly, are protected?

Michael Gove: We have introduced secondary legislation to ensure that farmers across the United Kingdom can continue to be paid, but the Cabinet Secretary I think is understandably anxious to make the most of his own Bill. Until we see that Bill, we do not know how seaworthy it will be.

Q583 **Chair:** Just to clarify, there is no question whatsoever that Scottish farmers cannot get paid? We had the Law Society confirm that when they came before us.

Michael Gove: It is something that the UK Government have stepped in to assure, but as Mr Lamont pointed out, there was some uncertainty—I will put it no more highly than that—in the approach that the Scottish Government took to which mechanism they preferred.

Q584 **Chair:** On the CAP, does this mean that future funding will take greater consideration of Scotland's challenging topography, given that we have most of the less favoured area across the United Kingdom? I think that 80% of our land is—

Michael Gove: I do not want to pre-empt the Bew review, but one of the points that I made to Lord Bew is that it is specifically the topography of Scotland, and for that matter Wales, parts of England and, indeed, the specific importance of agriculture, particularly livestock farming in Northern Ireland, that all need to be part of the overall picture.

Q585 **Chair:** I know that there is an independent review, but do you have any indication about when this is likely to be delivered to your desk?

Michael Gove: As I say, my understanding is that in the summer of this year in an ideal world it would be before Parliament rises for the recess. All I have said to Lord Bew and his commissioners is that the faster they can work the better, but it is more important that they are rigorous.

Q586 **David Duguid:** This is a very simple question, Secretary of State. Do you believe that Brexit will allow for a more tailored and flexible agricultural policy in Scotland?

Michael Gove: Yes, I think it will. I think that there is great potential there. It is absolutely right that the Scottish Government should have the freedom and flexibility to allocate support as they think fit. I can understand in the stability and simplicity consultation why the Scottish Government want to use our exit from the CAP in order to remove some cumbersome bureaucracy and that will be helpful to Scotland's farmers. What has not yet emerged is a long-term view about how that additional flexibility can best be exercised, which is why I think NFU Scotland and others have spoken as they have. But there is that flexibility there.



Q587 **Ross Thomson:** Good afternoon, Secretary of State. Following disagreements that there have been over funding allocations in the past, would you consider establishing an independent oversight body to manage future disputes with the devolved Administrations over intra-UK farm funding?

Michael Gove: Again, I do not want to pre-empt anything that Lord Bew might say. Ultimately, I think that what we need to do is to make sure that everyone understands that we are allocating funding on an objective basis. As Mr Lamont pointed out, Scotland currently enjoys more than would be the case under the Barnett formula. We must ensure that Scotland continues to receive what it needs, which will always be more than Barnett would allow. Given the points that have been made by others, recognition of the specific needs of Scotland's farmers will be front and centre of our minds and I know the Chancellor's.

Q588 **Deidre Brock:** Secretary of State, the agriculture Bill, as the Chair has already mentioned, seems to have basically vanished and the parliamentary calendar suggests that it has no chance of completing its passage before 31 October. You have, of course, been busy pursuing your own political activities recently, too. The impacts on English agriculture are incalculable, really, and obviously aspects of the Bill will impact on Scotland as well. Can you tell me what emergency provisions are being put in place to guard against the disaster of a no-deal Brexit without legislation being in place?

Michael Gove: Yes. Again, we are prepared for every eventuality. One of the things that we in the UK Government want to do is to make sure that we secure a deal, and we welcome support from across the House to make sure that we reap the opportunities that Brexit can bring.

In the specific case of a no deal, yes, there would be challenges. I have explained—indeed, agreed with agriculture Ministers in the devolved Administrations—that those challenges will be more profound, particularly, for example, for sheep farmers given the scale of sheep meat that we export to the EU, particularly but not exclusively to France. I have said that we will put in place appropriate measures to ensure that the incomes of those farmers can be maintained in the event that there is a no-deal outcome. One of the things that the Cabinet Secretary has said to me in meetings is, “We in the Scottish Government do not have specified no-deal funding. Would the UK Government step in?” and I have said, “Absolutely, yes”. It seems to me at that point that the Cabinet Secretary was happily accepting the principle that the UK Government could use their heft to provide extra support for farmers and others who might be affected.

One of the things that I was able to discuss with fish processors when I was in Aberdeen last month was the provision of export health certification and other support for the export of their fantastic produce. Again, I said, “If we need to have extra personnel or extra resource, the UK Government stand ready to give it to the Scottish Government or to



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Scottish local government or to others in order to make it work". The Cabinet Secretary, to be fair to him, accepted that additional UK Government expenditure, were it required, would be welcome.

Q589 **Deidre Brock:** You are confident that in the event of a no-deal Brexit and no agriculture Bill being in place, emergency provisions are there ready to step in?

Michael Gove: Yes.

Q590 **Deidre Brock:** Account has been made of that in the budget for DEFRA?

Michael Gove: Yes.

Q591 **Deidre Brock:** Okay. When we were in Canada recently, we heard that dairy farmers were going to be given compensation for the expected impacts of the NAFTA 2.0 deal. We have also heard, of course, that the Irish Government have pledged a considerable amount of money for beef farmers after Brexit. Is that the extent of support that you envisage as well? You are talking about some extra support, some extra people, help with regulations, but this is hard, cold cash. Are you going to do that?

Michael Gove: Yes. There are two things I would say. The first is that with respect to Canada and NAFTA, there was a particular situation there, I think, wasn't there, where milk and dairy producers in American border states like Wisconsin and so on used their muscle. I think it is important, therefore, that we all of recognise that we should strengthen our trading muscles as well.

One of the reasons why I am very, very keen that we should secure a deal is that I want us to have a healthy trading relationship with the Republic of Ireland. It is clearly the case that in a no-deal scenario there would be particular challenges for the UK but there would also be very particular challenges for the Republic of Ireland. I want to do everything that I can to support the healthy agrifood sector across all of these islands.

Q592 **Deidre Brock:** That leads neatly into my next question, which will be about the meeting you had, I think today, with President Trump?

Michael Gove: I am afraid I didn't see him today.

Deidre Brock: Oh, you did not see him. What a shame.

Michael Gove: No. I saw him on Monday evening.

Chair: We were so looking forward to the details of that meeting, too.

Michael Gove: No, I saw him on Monday evening. Of course, every time he comes to Balmedie he is just up the road from my mum and dad, not that they know him. No, I had the opportunity to say a few words to the President on Monday night. As you may know, these occasions require people to wear evening dress and I had the opportunity to wear the kilt. It was very interesting that my wife was talking to the First Lady, who



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was very taken with that, and I think that the President may well be placing an order for a dress Gordon tartan. That is another example of a successful trading relationship between the UK and America that we have brokered.

Q593 Deidre Brock: You never know, do you? Did you make it clear or did you get an opportunity to make it clear about the major concerns that many of us have around chlorinated chicken, hormone-soaked beef, and ractopamine in pork? Are you making it clear that you are committed to insisting that food and drink standards for imported foods are exactly the same, if not stronger, as those that UK food and drink producers have to comply with?

Michael Gove: Absolutely. We have been in discussions with MPs across all parties in order to make sure that the agriculture Bill and other legislation as well reinforces the importance of safeguarding our animal welfare and environmental standards. I have made the point—

Q594 Deidre Brock: But that is our animal welfare and standards.

Michael Gove: Oh, absolutely.

Q595 Deidre Brock: The concerns that I certainly hear from producers are about imported food and drink—because they are not so strong on animal welfare and other regulations they are much cheaper and, therefore, will undercut local producers considerably, forcing many of them out of the market.

Michael Gove: It is a very fair point. I had the opportunity to talk to the US Agricultural Secretary on several occasions and also to his deputy about this. To be fair to the Americans, they think, “Is some of this conversation around chlorinated chicken an attempt to say that it is not safe to eat?” and I have been very clear with them that it is, as you quite rightly point out, an animal welfare issue. Because of the densities that they have for chicken production in some American states, they do require steps to be taken after the chickens are slaughtered to make them as safe as possible to eat.

Ultimately, those producers are benefiting from lower animal welfare standards than we have in the UK. Therefore, it undercuts our standards and we need to make sure that those UK farmers who adhere to very high animal welfare standards are not undercut as a result of precisely the practice that you and I share concerns about.

Q596 Deidre Brock: How will you do that?

Michael Gove: I think that it is perfectly possible for us to maintain restrictions on what comes into the UK market and there are a number of tools and mechanisms that we can use. Indeed, the agriculture Bill provides us with an opportunity to reinforce or strengthen depending on what Parliament concludes is the right approach.

Q597 Deidre Brock: Are you confident that trade negotiators will be able to



stand firm in the face of very aggressive, as I understand it, negotiating tactics from the US? When we were in Canada, we spoke to Quebec negotiators who spoke of that. We were told of 13 open trade disputes currently between Canada and the US. The day after we were speaking to those negotiators we heard about President Trump's threats to Mexico of imposing 5% tariffs, which of course is completely against WTO rules as I understand it. How confident are you that you could stand up and protect our food and drink producers in the face of what I understand to be extremely aggressive lobbying on behalf of those trade negotiators?

Michael Gove: Very.

Deidre Brock: Very? Okay. Thanks very much.

Q598 **Chair:** We were quite surprised by the response to the belligerence of the United States, particularly in redefining WTO rules, if we leave on a no-deal basis. It was almost like a warning to us to be very, very careful when we start to get into these trade negotiations.

Michael Gove: Of course, yes.

Q599 **Chair:** It was a very salutary lesson. Can I just ask a little bit more about no deal? You have produced your tariff schedule and guidelines for a no deal. Obviously, there were sectors that took real concern and anxiety about what they saw. This is quite a dangerous and alarming situation for a number of particularly hill farmers in my constituency, who depend upon lamb exports. What do you say to them if this is what they are going to have to look at as we go forward? We must now conclude, given your own leadership ambitions and that of other colleagues, that no deal looks like a pretty odds-on favourite for where we are going in terms of leaving the European Union.

Michael Gove: I am confident that we will be able to secure a deal that Parliament will be able to support. Of course, we have to be ready for every eventuality. We have to keep a no-deal option on the table. One of the things that I would say is that in those circumstances—and it is not, again, as good as getting a deal—there are steps that we can take. You mentioned the tariff schedule. That has been published in such a way as to recognise the specific needs of upland sheep farmers. It is also the case, as Deidre was discussing with me, that there are intervention mechanisms that we can use to help support the income of some of those who might be worst affected at least initially.

Q600 **Chair:** Most of the farmers in my constituency are concerned and alarmed about the prospect of a no-deal situation and the impact it would have on their businesses. Some of them are talking about it being unsustainable to continue to work on the land because of the fears and prospects that that would bring. I am not hearing anything that is reassuring to them that I could take back and tell them.

Michael Gove: I hope you can reassure them that the UK Government stand ready and will be able to step in and support the Scottish Government. It is an example of the strength of the Union that we have



the resources, the determination and the willingness to ensure that farmers in every part of the United Kingdom can be helped and supported whatever political situation arises.

Q601 David Duguid: Secretary of State, can you provide us with an update on the Shared Prosperity Fund and the extent to which it will replace EU structural funds, which have supported rural development in Scotland?

Michael Gove: Yes. We are working with the Treasury and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to make sure that we can have an approach that recognises the specific needs of those parts of our country—the whole United Kingdom—that for whatever reason have been less productive over periods. One of the points that I have made in discussion with Treasury is that the Shared Prosperity Fund must in particular take account of the needs of rural communities—improved access, for example, to broadband, 4G and, in due course, 5G connection will be critical—and coastal communities as well. The aim of the Shared Prosperity Fund would be to ensure that people from St Ives to Lerwick could benefit from the additional money that would come back from the EU.

Q602 David Duguid: That is a good update on what the aim of the Shared Prosperity Fund aims to do, but when do you think we will have more detail on when it will be decided?

Michael Gove: Again, a lot depends on the passage of the EU withdrawal legislation. If the EU withdrawal legislation is passed and an implementation period is there until 2020, then during that time we will be out of the EU but we will be, as we pursue the implementation period, settling our debts and managing the allocations of funding in accordance with EU rules. At the end of that implementation period, we can start operating outside the EU's particular conditions and strictures. We will be seeing more during the course of this year about how exactly we will use the additional freedoms that will be available after January 2021.

Q603 Chair: Going back to the WTO-related issue, if England does shift its farming support towards a system of payments for public good as outlined in your Bill, will the new funding allocation allow Scotland to continue its use of coupled payments and support based on land farming and food production?

Michael Gove: Yes.

Q604 Chair: How can you then offer the reassurance when the UK's share of the EU's amber box allowance has not been approved by WTO? Where are we in terms of the conversations about the amber box issue? Is there something that you could say to us that will allow us to continue with these coupled payments?

Michael Gove: The size of the box is such that there is absolutely no problem with Scotland continuing. We have agreed with the Welsh



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Government an approach that means that the UK Government, as the contracting party for treaties and international negotiations, can report on funding to the WTO and that will allow the Scottish Government to continue to do as they think appropriate. I think that there has been no more than a misunderstanding on the part of some in the Scottish Government about that clause, but it is designed simply to allow the UK Government to faithfully report and to continue to respect Scotland's devolved competence. I will ask Guy to say a little bit more about this because this is one of the many areas in which his expertise is peerless.

Guy Horsington: Thank you. Yes, absolutely, we do not envisage any circumstances where the freedoms that the Scottish Government have to continue the LFASS scheme would not continue. I think that it is actually even better news because, as I understand it, the voluntary coupled support is categorised and classified at the moment as blue box, which therefore does not fall within the amber box. As long as we classify it and as long as the WTO does not change its agreement on agriculture, we should continue to ensure that Scotland can direct its support on the basis of the topography and the farming requirements of Scotland.

Q605 **Chair:** What will be the total envelope of the money available for the amber box, then? You talk about the blue box. How does that impact on how all this is going to be shared and distributed?

Guy Horsington: As I understand it, I do not think there is a limit on the blue box. There is a limit on the amber box. As the Secretary of State says, that is already very generous and we do not envisage circumstances when we take our share as we become a sovereign member of the WTO that that should set those kind of limits under the current funding that Scotland has through its agriculture funding. I do not think that should be an issue and, as I say, if things are green boxed or blue boxed, then there is not necessarily a limit on them because they are not trade distorting and, therefore, are not of concern to the WTO, as long as we report on them openly and transparently.

Q606 **Chair:** Coupled payments is an illustration of the type of thing that the Scottish Government do differently to the UK Government. I think you have recognised that Scotland has enjoyed the flexibility to recognise its own particular terrain and topography and environmental concerns. What assurances could you give us that that will continue to be the case? Looking particularly at the common frameworks, will they allow Scotland to have the same type of flexibility in the future?

Michael Gove: Absolutely. Again, I just want to thank the Cabinet Secretary and Minister Mairi Gougeon for the work that they have done—as indeed the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland civil service have done—to make sure that the common frameworks are there to facilitate the strength of the UK's internal market. We must ensure that on questions like animal and plant health we are collaborating, but we must also recognise the successful exercise of devolved powers by the



Scottish Government to ensure that it can allocate money as it sees fit for the specific interests of Scottish farmers.

Q607 **Chair:** I think the general understanding is that most of the conversations about the common frameworks are in the process of being resolved and there do not seem to be the same sort of pressing issues and concerns that were kicked around about six months ago. Is that your view and understanding? Where are we entirely with common frameworks? Are there any in particular that you might be able to identify to the Committee that require a bit more attention and working out or is it your view that most of them are now at the point of being resolved?

Michael Gove: The approach that I have taken throughout—and I made this point to officials—is that we will do everything that we can to take account of the Scottish Government’s and other devolved Administrations’ concerns. I have to say that the work so far by officials in my Department and by officials in the devolved Administrations has been fantastic: many meetings, a constructive and pragmatic approach.

Q608 **Chair:** In the governance of the common frameworks, I know that a concern has been raised to you on several occasions by Scottish Government Ministers. Could you ever envisage the situation where the UK Government would use their position as the bigger player around the table to impose their will when it comes to new government—

Michael Gove: No, I can’t.

Q609 **Chair:** If not, how do you see these things being discussed and then concluded and arranged?

Michael Gove: I think that we can proceed by consensus. One of the things again that the Cabinet Secretary was kind enough to acknowledge is that Ministers from the devolved Administrations and the UK Government meet monthly. I try to attend those meetings whenever possible. I find them incredibly useful because they give us an opportunity to understand the precise circumstances and requirements for change. As I say and as the Cabinet Secretary was kind enough to acknowledge, we have courteous exchanges. He is a robust defender, of course, of his position, but we have managed to resolve a significant number of issues, notwithstanding obviously the different starting places from which we originate.

Q610 **Chair:** I am just looking again at our notes here. We are seeing that there are perhaps 60 areas in DEFRA that may require legislation when it comes to the common frameworks. Is that your understanding, too?

Michael Gove: Indeed, we have put forward statutory instruments and secondary legislation to do just that.

Q611 **Paul Masterton:** Secretary of State, I have a couple of questions following on from that. As the Chair said, my understanding is that only some of the common frameworks are likely to need some form of



legislation. How do you anticipate some of the other ones? What sort of mechanism structures are you anticipating for the non-legislative—

Michael Gove: We can have memorandums of understanding and agreements between Governments. In fact, I think that Guy may be able to say a little bit more about what we have done recently with the Welsh Government in this space.

Guy Horsington: Yes. We have been able to reach agreement with the Welsh Government in a series of areas, one in particular in relation to the Bill, the clause that relates to the WTO and the classification notification. In March of this year we published a bilateral agreement where we set out how we think that we could make that work, particularly how you bring forward the regulations under the powers in the Bill. As the Secretary of State says, we will always try to work on the basis of consensus and collaboration, and so far the discussions that we have had suggest that that would work.

If there were some scenarios where there was a disagreement or a dispute, then we have been able to agree with the Welsh Government a series of mechanisms through which we would try to reach an agreement. We hope that the Scottish Government will continue to discuss with us and at some point join in with that agreement. There are mechanisms that we are developing under the JMC principles where we can try to ensure that if there isn't agreement then there is a cordial means of reaching that agreement. That is clearly important for us in terms of the agriculture Bill because, as the UK sovereign state, we need to be able to meet our obligations. We see that as being a positive area.

We also have other work. In my area, we are thinking about having a framework for UK future agriculture support. There are strands under that in terms of marketing standards, cross-border holdings and data collection where we think that we can find administrative ways of reaching agreement so we do not need to legislate in those areas. Wherever possible, we will not legislate.

Michael Gove: We operate as a family of nations. It can sometimes be the case that the Scottish and Welsh Ministers will say to me that it is important that I take account of a particular position. Sometimes I and the Welsh Minister will have a particular point that Fergus or Mairi will accept. As I say, like all families we sometimes have disagreements but we manage to get along very well.

Chair: I was interested to see what you would say after "family of nations", but that is very endearing, I think, if that is a sentiment that exists right across these issues.

Q612 **Paul Masterton:** I have a couple of follow-ups to that. That was quite an interesting example in terms of agreement with the Welsh Government. Are you finding that on the whole you are further advanced in terms of agreements with the Welsh Government than you are with the Scottish



Government and, if so, why is that?

Michael Gove: I would say yes, and we have found, for example, that when we offered the opportunity for using the Bill as a vehicle to obviate the need for the Welsh Government to introduce their own Bill, they were happy to do so. The Scottish Government reserved their position and chose not to do so. It would be unfair of me in this Committee to say why I think that is because there is a different political complexion. Let me say no more than this: both the Welsh and Scottish Ministers are very good Ministers, but obviously the Welsh Administration is a Unionist Administration, a Labour Administration, and the Scottish Government not so much.

Q613 **Paul Masterton:** The last question I had was the small number of farmers that I have in East Renfrewshire—this has been picked up throughout the NFUS—who while accepting policy divergence between four different parts are slightly worried about this being completely unrestrained in terms of intra-UK trade. Is that a concern that you share and how are you going to deal with that within the framework process to ensure that there is still some kind of integrity of a UK internal market, while allowing the four different regions to be doing their own things?

Michael Gove: We are absolutely committed to making sure that the UK internal market works. That is why on things like animal and plant health we need to have a common understanding and a common framework. As the Committee has acknowledged, there is a different form of payment in Scotland. Coupled payments, some might argue, would provide some livestock farmers potentially with a competitive advantage in Scotland relative to other areas, but we accept that and it broadly works well. Indeed, one of the things that we have acknowledged as well is that there are ways in which the red meat levy works whereby Scottish livestock will be slaughtered and processed south of the border and the money will accrue south of the border. It needs to be repatriated to properly reflect the investment of Scottish farmers and we have come to an agreement and, indeed, an amendment to the Bill in order to recognise that.

Our approach throughout is to recognise that devolution inevitably sometimes leads to divergence, but what really matters is making sure that you can exercise that discretion within the context of a strong United Kingdom.

Q614 **John Lamont:** A number of Committee members have made reference to our recent trip to Canada. One of my takeaways from that trip was our meeting with the Chamber of Commerce. It highlighted that because of the differences in the different rules, red tape, and standards between the different provinces, it thinks the overall Canadian economy is losing between \$50 billion and \$130 billion each year. In my mind, that reinforces the need to get these common frameworks right. I wondered if you agree with that. For the overall prosperity of the UK economy, we need to ensure that the UK internal market is protected.



Michael Gove: I absolutely agree with that. Scottish beef and lamb as well as having a strong export market should have no impediment to finding its way on to English supermarket shelves. I absolutely respect the strength of the devolved competence exercised by the Scottish Government, but I think that it is of mutual benefit to producers and consumers on either side of the border that we do not see any new barriers of the kind that may exist between Alberta and Quebec erected.

Q615 **Deidre Brock:** I noticed, Secretary of State, that the Welsh Government are now going to campaign to remain in the European Union. The Brexit Minister told members it was clear there was no appetite in the Conservative Party at Westminster for the kind of Brexit deal that the Welsh Government might have found acceptable. I wondered how that is going to impact on common frameworks discussions.

Michael Gove: As I mentioned, whether we are in the European Union, as we are at the moment, or out under whatever circumstances, the cordial relationship between the family of Ministers that I described will continue. Of course, I can understand why politicians in Opposition parties will want to make particular comments, but I am sure it is the case that we will be able to secure agreement in the House of Commons. Given Wales as a country voted to leave the European Union, I am sure that all politicians in Wales will take account of that vote when they are thinking about what is best overall for the country.

Q616 **Deidre Brock:** Are you suggesting that these differences are just based on party politics?

Michael Gove: I cannot speak for other politicians in other parties and I would not wish to. I do not know what the Welsh Government's Brexit spokesman has said, but I am sure that after this Committee is over I will only benefit from reading their statement.

Q617 **Deidre Brock:** Can I ask one quick question just because we are talking about frameworks and so on? I wanted to ask about PGIs and your proposals around what will replace the current PGI system that we get protections from through Europe. Can you give us any further updates on what you are proposing around that?

Michael Gove: Yes. When we leave the European Union, under European Union law the EU will continue to recognise all our PGIs.

Q618 **Deidre Brock:** What about in future trade deals with other countries, like the US, for example, which I know favours a trade mark system rather than PGIs?

Michael Gove: We will robustly defend the interests of all of the Scottish producers who benefit from protected geographical indications. I know how important it is for everyone from dairy farmers in Orkney to the shellfish sector that we do everything we can in order to make sure PGIs are protected.



Q619 **Deidre Brock:** Finally, we had the impression from one of your Ministers when he came and gave evidence to us that those people who enjoy the protections of PGIs would have to specifically apply to the UK Government before any trade deal in order for that to be recognised in the trade deal. It would not be happening automatically for all of the more than a dozen PGIs that we currently have up in Scotland and more, of course, throughout the UK. Is that the case?

Michael Gove: I don't believe that that necessity need arise, no.

Q620 **Chair:** Could I just clarify? You said that the EU will accept all UK PGIs. Have they explicitly said that to you?

Michael Gove: It is, I understand, a matter of EU law, yes.

Q621 **Chair:** When we leave the European Union, even though we are not part of the EU, our PGIs will still be accepted and be treated very much the same as they are now?

Michael Gove: That will be the position under EU law.

Q622 **Chair:** Okay. We will maybe have to have a look at that, if that is okay, because in terms of the evidence that we have secured thus far nothing as clear as that has been expressed to the Committee. We will be taking a great deal of interest in PGIs as you know as you have been following the progress of this inquiry.

Michael Gove: Absolutely.

Q623 **Chair:** Can I come to workforce? We have been surprised at the interest there is—I suppose that it will come as no great surprise to you—among our farming community and some of the concerns they have raised about what they see as the figures included in the immigration Bill, and the Government's intention or desire to get immigration from the hundreds of thousands down to the tens of thousands and how this will impact on farm businesses. We both know, Secretary of State, that a number of farm businesses are dependent upon EU nationals. We will come to seasonal workers, so we will leave that aside just now. For example, Quality Meat Scotland says that 70% or 80% of all the trained vets are EU nationals and they are concerned about being able to meet this £30,000 cap that is set within the White Paper. Do you acknowledge and accept these concerns? What do you have to say to farm businesses that are dependent upon EU nationals in order to supply their workforce?

Michael Gove: It is a very good point very well made. There was an excellent article in *The Times* today by the MP for Angus making similar and related arguments as well.

The first thing to say is that the Migration Advisory Committee, as I understand it, thinking as economists often do of a particular cut-off point, said £30,000 would be the mark that distinguishes a skilled worker from one who is less skilled. I think that this Committee would accept, as I do, that you need to take a more sector-specific approach. You can



have people who are working in the meat trade who are skilled butchers who will be earning less than that. You can have some people who are official veterinarians, who are critical for making sure that animal health is upheld, who might be earning less than that. You might have some people involved in fish processing, who would be highly skilled, who might earn less than that. We do need to take account of that and I have made that point. Obviously, I cannot determine every aspect of Government immigration policy, but I think that the concerns that you have articulated and that I have echoed have been well understood.

Q624 Chair: It is not reflected yet on the face of the Bill that any of this will be identified. I know we have other stages. The immigration Bill, like the agriculture Bill, is held in Withdrawal Agreement purgatory so we are awaiting its return. Would this be something, if you were Prime Minister, that you would seek to ensure would be included on the face of the Bill?

Michael Gove: It is a very tempting way of putting the question. The view that I would take, as I mentioned earlier, is that as a Government we need to show sector-specific flexibility, yes.

Q625 Chair: Something that you said during the EU referendum—you probably know what I am going to say—was that there would be a case for the Scottish Parliament to have more powers over immigration. If the Scottish Parliament had these powers, that would obviously help to sort the situation for our position in Scotland.

Michael Gove: As I recall, I think that I was specifically referring to a particular freedom that—I am trying to remember the name of the First Minister and it has escaped me, the Labour First Minister after Henry McLeish.

Chair: Jack McConnell.

Michael Gove: Yes, Jack McConnell exercised, I believe, some flexibility during his time as First Minister, and it is always the case that I, as an individual, am personally happy to explore with devolved Administrations the specific needs of their economy. What I must not do is usurp the position of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister on this issue.

Q626 Chair: I know that a few of us have mentioned Canada and I will give another example of what we found there. The province of Quebec has responsibility over immigration, which seems to work perfectly well in terms of a pan-federal view across the whole of Canada. We were told that 60% of the responsibilities for immigration now rest at provincial level at Quebec. You will know, you are a Scot; you know our dependency ratio, the problems that we have with an ageing population, with a shrinking working-age population, and sectors like farming, agriculture and hospitality are caught up in all this. Surely you should take the advice of the Michael Gove during the referendum campaign and proceed and progress with this.



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Michael Gove: I would say two things. The first is during the referendum campaign I was reflecting on, as I say, the policy that Jack McConnell had followed. More broadly, I think that, as Mr Lamont pointed out, there are some aspects of the way in which Canada operates that we would not necessarily want to apply here but there are many, many other things that we would. I should say, of course, thinking of Canada, that a Canada-style free trade agreement with the European Union would be emphatically in our interests.

Chair: Thank you. We will come to seasonal workers now and the question will be posed by Mr Gaffney.

Q627 **Hugh Gaffney:** On the seasonal workers pilot, what are the Government's expectations of the new seasonal workers pilot and how will we be assessing it if a permanent scheme is needed post-2020?

Michael Gove: The point about the pilot is to assess how effectively it is working. At the moment, we still obviously have freedom of movement within the EU, so there will be some people who will be working as seasonal workers in our agricultural sector who will come from Romania, Bulgaria and other EU nations, but we wanted explicitly to cast our net wider than that. We will be looking very closely at the demand and at the effectiveness of the scheme. I think that the first workers will be arriving shortly. One of the things that I want to do is to take account in particular of the views of people in the soft fruit sector and make sure that whatever flexibility is required we can deliver.

Q628 **Hugh Gaffney:** How is the management of the pilot split now between DEFRA and the Home Office?

Michael Gove: We are working very effectively together and I think that a significant group of those who are available to work here under the scheme have been allocated to Scotland. I have not heard from any individual potential beneficiary of the scheme that there has been any particular problem so far. I know that there is a small problem in Moldova where I think the allocation of visas was slower than it should have been because the office was only open for one day a week. I think that that has been addressed, so we will obviously continue to work together to make sure it works.

Hugh Gaffney: I think that that is the next question coming up anyway.

Q629 **David Duguid:** Secretary of State, I think that you have just answered part of this question at least. The pilot operators Concordia and Pro-Force told us that there had been a delay in farms receiving workers due to a backlog of visa applications in Ukraine and Moldova. Are you aware of any additional resources to be made available to support the operators and streamline the process?

Michael Gove: If there is more that is needed, then we will, of course, do it. We want to make sure both that it works in itself and that people get the extra labour that they need this year but also that we can learn from the pilot so that if there are particular challenges either from our



friends in eastern Europe or faced by the consortia here we can deal with them.

Q630 **David Duguid:** Again, the pilot operators told us that the pilot was more expensive for workers than existing schemes in other countries as well. Have the Government to your knowledge studied these to ensure that this pilot attracts the workers that we need?

Michael Gove: At the moment, there have been more than enough applications for the number of places that we have from workers, but we will, of course, look to make sure that we can make the scheme as streamlined and as efficient as possible in everyone's interests.

Q631 **Chair:** We have been round the houses with this one, as you can probably expect, and we had Concordia and Pro-Force here in front of the Committee about the seasonal workers scheme. Some of the information and evidence they gave us was quite concerning about some of the bureaucracy that was put in place. You are right, I think, in that you identified the fact that there was an office open only for two days per week. There are still issues and we are still trying to resolve them. I have a letter here in front of me that came from Concordia. Some of the issues surrounding the visas have been addressed since the intervention of this Committee and the Home Office, but there are still problems about some of the fees. I think that everybody expects that there is a standard fee to be paid. Is that a Division?

Michael Gove: There was always a risk of a Division on one of the statutory instruments.

Chair: Are you able to join us, Secretary of State, after the Division?

Michael Gove: Yes, of course.

Chair: We are very grateful to you.

Michael Gove: Absolutely.

Chair: I do not think anybody expected this, so we will have to suspend for 15 minutes.

Michael Gove: Thank you very much.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Q632 **Chair:** Thank you for rejoining us, Secretary of State. Everybody is back and present. We were discussing the seasonal workers scheme and some of the difficulties that have been experienced by those who have been trying to make applications. I think that we concluded that things were



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better but there still seem to be issues.

Michael Gove: Yes, I think that is fair.

Q633 **Chair:** The growing season started and the finest berries in the UK are currently being produced in Perthshire as we speak. I think that there are still not sufficient boots on the ground. I am just wondering if there is anything that you may be able to do to try to ensure that we do get to a situation where they are coming seamlessly to the UK. On some of the costs that seem to be over and above, I think there is an expectation that a payment is going to be made for the visa, but there are added costs that seem to be creating some sort of disincentive, particularly in Moldova and Ukraine, to come to the UK.

Michael Gove: I think that is fair. We will look absolutely at what we can do in order to make sure that the scheme works as effectively as possible. There is only one thing with which I would take issue. I think that it is a moot point whether or not the finest berries grown in this country are grown in Perthshire or in Angus. Good people can disagree on that.

Q634 **Chair:** I will argue that out with Kirstene Hair when we come to these things. We also look at some of the international examples. Obviously, there is reliance right across Europe just now on seasonal workers. Even Poland now attracts seasonal workers from Russia and the Ukraine. They seem to be able to do this all seamlessly without fees, making it relatively easy for people to come to their country, but they do not have the UK Home Office, which has this historic culture of a hostile environment. Is there anything at the Home Office institutionally that is getting in the way of providing this seasonal workers pilot?

Michael Gove: I don't believe so and the Home Secretary has been very supportive and responsive. I am not aware. Whenever any new scheme is introduced, especially as it is a pilot, we want to learn from it, but I do not believe that there is any institutional barrier to making it work, no.

Chair: Okay, thank you. We are still exploring with the Home Office about what is going on and hopefully we will get a solution to this.

Q635 **Hugh Gaffney:** All the witnesses have agreed that 2,500 workers will not be enough to tackle Scotland's labour shortage this season. Would you consider increasing these numbers?

Michael Gove: Part of the point of the pilot is to form a judgment about what the right size of any seasonal agricultural workers scheme might be, yes.

Q636 **Hugh Gaffney:** They are also saying that the Government have limited the pilot to the edible horticulture sector. Would the Government consider also expanding that to other industries, like floral?



Michael Gove: We have no plans to at the moment, but again we will look at the evidence to see if there is any need to build on the existing scheme.

Q637 **Deidre Brock:** Secretary of State, why were the numbers that were arrived at so low? Everyone has said to us and everything we have heard suggests that this is just a fraction of what is required this year. We have already heard about crops rotting in the fields and the impact on various farms and so on within the sector. Do you know how that number was arrived at and why it is so low?

Michael Gove: It takes account of the fact that free movement still exists within the European Union. The Chairman fairly pointed out, of course, that there are some EU countries that as they become more wealthy, like Poland, are themselves attracting workers from outside the EU. But it is still the case that there are a significant number of people from the EU countries like Romania and Bulgaria who come and work in the agricultural and horticultural sector here. We are looking further afield, obviously, than just the EU, but it is there to balance the fact that we still have freedom of movement.

Q638 **Chair:** There is an issue about these numbers, though.

Michael Gove: Absolutely. It is a very fair point that, as Mr Gaffney said and as Deidre pointed out, we do need to keep these numbers under review.

Chair: In some of the evidence we have secured, Angus Growers has said 10,000 are required. Hugh Gaffney says—

Q639 **Hugh Gaffney:** Deidre has just reminded me of a question. The figures are low, but also this £30,000 mark, we asked other witnesses; where did that £30,000 cap come from?

Michael Gove: It was originally the Migration Advisory Committee's advice about what would seem to be an appropriate midpoint where you could be certain that people earning above that were skilled workers. I agree with you that it is clearly the case in a number of sectors, particularly in the food and drink sector, that there are people who are very skilled who will be earning below that at the moment. I do believe that we should try to take account of that.

Q640 **Chair:** Just on the numbers, we know that your former farming Minister agrees with Angus Growers when it said that 10,000 is going to be required. I know that you are going to assess the pilot and you will do whatever is required in order to see if this has worked and delivered. Even as it has been rolled out, clearly 2,500 is unsatisfactory. It seems to be very limited and very low. I have a couple of farms in my constituency where I think that Concordia is providing some of the people in this scheme. Would it be possible to have an early review to assess or even come to a conclusion that we do need more? Everybody is saying we need more.



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Michael Gove: We will see how the season proceeds, but yes, I do take your point. You are right that there is already a significant set of views from people who know what they are talking about on how things might need to expand in the future, yes.

Q641 **Chair:** We have a couple of last questions. Thank you for your attendance. I know we have to get you away at 3.45 pm, so we will get you away early, Secretary of State. I know that you are very busy just now and there are other activities that you need to be involved in.

Michael Gove: Well, my daughter's GCSEs maybe, but yes.

Q642 **Chair:** We have been looking at technology, too, and we had a very useful session at the James Hutton Institute in my constituency, which is doing some fantastic work when it comes to biological issues and food technology. It has an amazing integrated farming model, which I would invite you at any time to visit and take advantage of having a look at. At the Oxford Farming Conference you spoke of the agricultural sector being transformed by innovations in technology. Do you think that technology can be a viable alternative to overseas workers, for example, and where do you see this opportunity potentially spreading?

Michael Gove: It is certainly the case that in the future technology, automation, artificial intelligence and so on can potentially reduce the need for labour in some sectors, but again it is a matter of making sure that we invest in that technology but also recognising that there are different tasks that are more easily performed. There are some berries that it is easier to pick robotically than others.

Q643 **Chair:** Knowledge exchange partnerships between researchers and farmers was suggested to us as one way to encourage farmers to participate in the development of new technology and ensure it is tailored to their needs. Would the Government consider incentivising farms to partake in these programmes?

Michael Gove: Yes.

Q644 **Chair:** I went to one with AHDB, which is the Monitor Farms, which you are probably more than familiar with. Is that the sort of programme that you would encourage farms to become involved in much more?

Michael Gove: I will ask the team to have a look at that particular project, but yes, one of the things that we do want to do is to help individual farmers and groups of farmers working together to embrace the opportunities that new technology might provide. Again, I do not know that particular project but the more I know about it the keener I would be to come back to you with some thoughts.

Q645 **Chair:** We expected this inquiry to be reasonably peaceful and it has not been quite like that. It has been characterised by lots of disputes, counterclaims and all sorts of issues, which have been very difficult to get on top of. Are we getting there in terms of being able to get to a



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solution? You obviously have your agriculture Bill going through. The Scottish Government will have an agriculture Bill. Is there a possibility of peace breaking out when it comes to agriculture across the United Kingdom between both Governments?

Michael Gove: I certainly hope so, yes. As I say, I am very lucky in that the relationship that my Department has enjoyed with NFU Scotland and with others has been a very cordial one. I know that the office bearers and the others involved there want to be well served by both the Governments of the UK and Scotland and that is my aim and I am sure it is the aim of the Cabinet Secretary as well.

Q646 **Chair:** Lastly, will you be going to the Royal Highland Show?

Michael Gove: That is the plan.

Chair: We already have our place booked, so come and join us if you are going to be there, Secretary of State.

Michael Gove: I will look forward to it.

Q647 **David Duguid:** I just have a very quick question. It may require feedback from the officials later. It was specifically on the technology question. Which technologies, if any, do you believe or does the Department believe would be particularly promising for Scotland, almost exclusively to Scotland, that we might want to keep an eye on?

Michael Gove: There are so many. One of the things that the James Hutton Institute has done is it has looked, for example, at vertical farming, which is another way of making sure that we can have very effective use of land and that we can have fruit and vegetables grown in a way that minimises the impact on land use overall. It is also the case that there are potential breakthroughs in animal health and welfare sensors that can let us know if animals are in the right environment, being well fed, perhaps anticipating illness and so on, which can make sure that we can both maximise yield and the animals' own welfare.

There is a plethora and I do believe that the best way to exploit the opportunities that technology provides is by listening to those on the front line, farmers themselves who want to be entrepreneurial, and also backing scientists like those in the James Hutton Institute and elsewhere.

Chair: As always when winding up, hands go up. Deidre Brock wants to come in.

Q648 **Deidre Brock:** Sorry, Secretary of State, I know that you are anxious to get away, but since we have you here I wanted to ask about the import of fertiliser, animal feed and crop products in the event of a no-deal Brexit and what measures are in place to ensure that they can get through because clearly our farmers depend on those considerably.

Michael Gove: In the event of a no-deal exit, we will take a continuity approach, which ensures that all of the products that farmers, food



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producers and others need can come into the country with the maximum ease.

Q649 **Deidre Brock:** Lastly, you mentioned the Canada-style trade agreement that you seem to favour. Doesn't that only mean limited access to the EU market and doesn't it also then mean some sort of border in Ireland?

Michael Gove: No, I do not believe that it does. I think that what it does mean is an opportunity for the UK to take advantage of trading opportunities across the globe and at the same time to enjoy a fruitful relationship with our neighbours in the European Union that will work to our mutual advantage.

Q650 **Chair:** As Christine Jardine joins us, we have to come to the conclusion of this particular session. I know that there were a couple of bits of information you were going to provide to us.

Michael Gove: Yes, I will come back.

Chair: That would be very helpful. So, until the Royal Highland Show when we will see you there, yes.

Michael Gove: I look forward to it and thank you all very much.

Chair: Thank you, Secretary of State.