



HOUSE OF LORDS

Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee

House of Lords

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The Rt Hon Chloe Smith MP
Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

Dear Chloe,

Parliamentary scrutiny of common frameworks

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee, which was recently appointed by the House of Lords to scrutinise and consider matters relating to common frameworks. As the minister responsible for the common frameworks programme in the UK Government, we look forward to working closely with you over the coming months.

In your letter to the Liaison Committee on 1 June 2020, you outlined the process for the parliamentary scrutiny of common frameworks by the UK Parliament. This noted that, as a first stage, the UK Government department responsible for a particular framework will share a Framework Summary with the UK Parliament to “help inform preparation for future parliamentary scrutiny when the policy content of the agreement is more comprehensively developed.”

We have some observations from our early experience of considering these Framework Summaries. First, we would like to see more detail in the Framework Summaries on how the framework would work in practice, particularly the dispute settlement processes, wherever this is possible. Second, we would like to have a clearer explanation of the legislation that is related to a particular framework. For example, while the Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene (FFSH) Framework Summary provided a helpful overview of the related EU and secondary legislation, it is unclear what primary legislation may be required. Third, we would like to have more information on the stakeholder engagement, including the geographical balance and types of stakeholders that have been consulted.

You noted in your letter that “Committee members may choose to write to policy Ministers on the content of these summaries, which policy Ministers should be prepared for.” However, drawing on our experience of the Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards (NLCS) framework, we would like to underline the importance of receiving answers to our questions on these summaries *before* receiving the Provisional Framework. We consider this to be essential for our preparation and informing our work for the formal scrutiny period that begins once a Provisional Framework has been laid in Parliament. This is

all the more important given the extremely tight timetable of 21 sitting days for considering the Provisional Frameworks.

We understand that each framework is policy-specific and therefore being led by different UK Government departments. However, we ask you, in your role as the coordinator of the common frameworks programme, to draw these views to the attention of your colleagues across the UK Government.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Andrews
Chair of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee