



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Victoria Prentis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

The Earl of Kinnoull
Chairman
Select Committee on the European Union
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

13 November 2020

Dear Lord Kinnoull,

EM COM (2020) 483 FINAL: PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2018/848 ON ORGANIC PRODUCTION AS REGARDS ITS DATE OF APPLICATION AND CERTAIN OTHER DATES REFERRED TO IN THAT REGULATION

Thank you for your letter of 4 November 2020.

The Government proposed an organics equivalence agreement in its Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) proposals. Equivalence agreements for organic products, such as the UK has proposed, are a common tool in international trade. Organics is currently included in the UK's proposed CFTA legal text as a technical annex and the negotiations are ongoing.

As you know the six UK control bodies have also applied to the EU for recognition as equivalent for the purpose of trade. We understand that these applications by the individual organic control bodies are progressing, with some control bodies providing additional information to the EU recently (Mid-October).

Unfortunately, as the control bodies are private bodies, we are unable to discuss their applications directly with the European Commission. However, we are continuing to monitor the progress of these applications via regular discussions with the control bodies.

The decision to recognise the UK control bodies lies solely with the EU and Member States. However, Defra is continuing to engage with the Commission and it remains our objective to negotiate a durable, long-term organics equivalence agreement with the EU.

As we have recently informed the EU that we will recognise the EU as equivalent for the purpose of trade in organics until 31 December 2021; we are confident that the EU will take the appropriate actions to recognise the UK control bodies for the export of organic products to the EU.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee. I am also copying this letter to the Clerks of the Commons and Lords Committees,

Jessica Mulley and Chris Johnson respectively; Les Saunders, Cabinet Office; and Steve Wigham, Defra Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Prentis

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