

Lord Redesdale
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

22 June 2023

Dear Lord Redesdale,

Thank you for your letter regarding the forthcoming meeting of the Horticulture Committee and for your important work in this area. We wanted to provide some relevant information on our initiatives at Sainsbury's aimed at developing horticulture.

We are currently engaging in several select committee inquiries, including those of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Business and Trade select committees. In addition, we are speaking directly with Government on a wide range of issues relating to food security and will be inputting into Defra's upcoming review of the horticulture sector in the Autumn. As a result, we sadly do not have sufficient resource to provide evidence at this moment in time, but we hope the information contained in this letter is helpful.

Our relationship with British farmers and growers

We are proud of the longstanding relationships we have with so many of our suppliers and we are deeply committed to these partnerships. Each year we source over £2bn worth of British food and drink. Over the last 12 months, our suppliers have navigated significant cost inflation and we know it has been very challenging for many of them. To reflect these pressures, we have prioritised additional financial support for many key food supply chains, giving £66.4 million of additional support to British meat, dairy and produce farmers over the last year.

Among our suppliers are our celebrated British growers in horticulture crops such as vining peas and our Taste the Difference Petit Pois. These are grown in Yorkshire and are selected varieties for their sweetness and agronomic performance to be more resilient against pests, diseases and inclement weather. We also work closely with our growers to source British produce all year round and extend British seasons. Examples where we have worked together to deliver strong British sourcing include Bramley apples, Taste the Difference carrots, parsnips, mushrooms, potatoes and onions.

We also have a longstanding partnership with the Woodland Trust, planting over 4.8 million native trees in the UK and over 1 million of these native trees have been planted on UK farms. We recognise that the best tree planting and management advice for growers is key to ensure that those trees deliver both for farmers and the environment, which is why we have funded advice for over 400 UK farmers to date.

Investing in supply chains through our farmer and grower development groups

In addition to this support, we have invested in our longstanding farmer and grower Development Groups, which cover our main agriculture and horticulture value chains, to enable us to work with suppliers to help them become more resilient, sustainable and profitable, to overcome not only the current cost pressures they face but also future environmental challenges. In our horticulture supply chains we have over 30 different groups covering different types of crops where we meet with growers to understand their challenges and work together to find solutions.

Our dedicated crops team within our agriculture team have BASIS qualifications, which we believe is important to ensure we have strong agriculture expertise to work with our growers. Through this team we are supporting our growers on a range of projects, including:

- Working with a group of our UK berry growers and industry experts on biological control systems to promote Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and supporting the group with data insight to support decision making.
- Funding PhDs at Cranfield University researching soil health and crop quality and focussing on improving post-harvest storage to reduce losses. We believe that funding this research allows us to share learnings with our crop supply chains, building resilience in the long-term.
- Working closely with eight growers in Jersey who supply our Jersey Royals on long term sustainability.

Since the first round of our Agriculture Research and Development grant was launched in December 2012, we have invested £18 million into research projects across our crop and livestock agricultural value chains and continue to work in collaboration with scientific experts and our suppliers. In the face of geopolitical and economic challenges, this work is vital in securing our domestic food supply and establishing resilient value chains.

We are currently supporting several of our horticulture and arable crop suppliers to trial Ccm Technologies' sustainable fertiliser. We recognise the importance of investing in innovation to support the future resilience of our supply chains. The new fertiliser technology has both sustainability benefits for growers but also a potential alternative that is not heavily reliant on natural gas which has driven a lot of cost volatility for growers.

Mitigating the impact of climate change

Sainsbury's was the principal supermarket partner at COP26, where we signed up to the WWF's Retailers' Commitment for Nature, a collaborative approach to halve the environmental impact of UK shopping baskets by 2030. We have also made a 1.5-degree climate commitment across all scopes and timeframes. We are ahead of this commitment on Scope 1 & 2, with a target of being Net Zero by 2035. For Scope 3 our targets are aligned to limiting climate change to a 1.5-degree trajectory by halving our emissions by 2030 and achieving Net Zero by 2050.

As part of our work towards a nature positive future, we have piloted the use of a supply chain environment risk tool to assess nature-related risks and opportunities across our supply chain. This year we funded a collaboration between the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Land App to help empower farmers and land managers to make the best decisions on habitat creation based on their location and local nature priorities.

I hope you are reassured that we are committed to supporting British growers, who are critical to the UK food system. We will keep pushing ourselves to do all we can to support them navigate the current economic environment and future environmental challenges, helping to maintain a resilient British horticulture sector.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Roberts', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Simon Roberts
Chief Executive, Sainsbury's