



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

Tuesday, 13 January 2026

Simon Hoare MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
By email

Subject: EFRA committee scrutiny of the Paymaster General

Dear Simon,

Reaching a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the European Union is a key Government priority and one of the most significant developments that we are likely to see this Parliament for farmers and the wider agri-food sector.

Any SPS agreement will be implemented by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and therefore it is the role of the EFRA Committee to scrutinise aspects of the UK-EU reset relating to the SPS agreement and its implementation. However, the negotiations themselves are being led by the Paymaster General, and as such so the EFRA Committee invited him to give evidence to the Committee on 9 December.

We issued an invitation on 17 September; after four reminders, we eventually received an email on 13 November indicating that the Paymaster General was "content to decline the kind invitation to give evidence on this occasion." This was despite having spoken to numerous other committees across both houses, in addition to your own. Upon declining our invitation, we were assured that in his stead a detailed written briefing would be provided to the Minister for Biosecurity who accepted our invitation, however by her own admission during the hearing this briefing was not provided.

I am therefore writing to you in advance of your hearing with the Paymaster General to seek your support in clarifying various aspects of the SPS agreement that the EFRA Committee has not had the opportunity to properly scrutinise. I have copied our outstanding questions for the Paymaster General below for your information.

Yours sincerely,
Alistair

Rt Hon Mr Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Questions for the Paymaster General

1. How soon will the scope of the SPS negotiations be known and published?
2. While the Government has widely communicated the benefits of an SPS agreement with the EU, dynamic alignment poses significant political challenges for third countries. How does the Government intend to communicate to the wider public, not just the trade and agri-food sector, the full extent and implications of dynamic alignment with the EU?
3. Despite calls from port health authorities, the agri-chemical industry, and the food and drink sector for between one and three years to prepare for a new system, there are reports that the Prime Minister does not want any transition period. What assurance can the Minister give that businesses and producers will have adequate time to adjust to new regulations?
4. What limitations or barriers currently restrict the UK Government's ability to engage proactively with EU legislative development on new genomic technologies or animal welfare reforms prior to the completion of SPS negotiations?
5. Will Great Britain be required to comply with EU regulations on plant protection products (pesticides and herbicides) or mycotoxin levels that have been devised without considering GB scientific evidence or unique climatic conditions, and therefore may be inappropriate for GB production systems?

