



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Toby Perkins MP
Environmental Audit Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 May 2026

Dear Mr Toby Perkins,

Update on preparations for a future Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement with the European Union.

I am writing further to my letter of 9 March 2026 to update you on Government steps to support business preparedness ahead of a future Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement with the European Union. This includes progress on business preparation, our programme of engagement with stakeholders, and the publication of further sector-specific information to support readiness.

A future SPS Agreement with the EU is a priority for this Government and the benefits it can bring to businesses and consumers across the agri-food and related sectors, including producers, manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, hauliers and logistics providers. Current arrangements continue to present challenges, including unnecessary costs, administrative burdens and delays at the border. The agreement intends to address this, making it easier, cheaper and quicker to move food, plants, animals and related goods across our borders, while maintaining the UK's high standards in animal health, plant health and food safety. It will facilitate the smooth flow of agrifood goods, including plants, from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, protecting the UK's internal market.

We are acting on what we have clearly heard from businesses that they want practical information early, and we are committed to being transparent about what is known, what is not yet agreed, and when further clarity can be provided.

We are now publishing further business-facing guidance on GOV.UK to help agrifood sectors prepare for the changes ahead. This guidance is action-focused and sector-specific, setting out practical steps businesses can take now, such as reviewing supply chains, preparing systems and records, signing up for updates, and considering the legislation likely to fall within scope and the broad nature of any changes. It has been informed by engagement across the agrifood system, including producers, processors, retailers, wholesalers, hauliers, logistics providers, port operators and professional service providers.

We have a new SPS Readiness Business Advisory Council with 13 UK businesses and trade bodies with whom we will regularly consult. We are analysing 489 responses to the Call for Information launched in March to help co-design support and guidance through to mid-2027.

We recognise the Committee's interest in ensuring that major policy changes of this kind are delivered transparently, proportionately and with due regard for the impacts on businesses across the affected sectors. The information published at this stage is intended as a proportionate interim step to provide reassurance and direction in response to stakeholder demand for early clarity. Negotiations with the European Union continue and are expected to conclude summer 2026. This guidance does not prejudice the outcome of negotiations, nor does it constitute final regulatory guidance.

Depending on the final negotiated outcome, some businesses may need to consider changes in areas including production and processing requirements, certification, labelling, IT systems and wider compliance activity. We will continue to work with those businesses that may need longer to adjust in to support a smooth transition.

Any changes requiring legislation will be subject to the usual parliamentary scrutiny.

We will continue to build on this guidance in phases as negotiations progress and implementation planning develops, and I will continue to keep you updated as further milestones are reached, including the conclusion of negotiations and the publication of further information for businesses once the final detail is settled.

I appreciate the Committee's continued interest in this work and its role in scrutinising how changes of this scale are communicated and delivered.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suella Brabman', written in a cursive style.

BARONESS HAYMAN OF ULLOCK
MINISTER FOR ANIMAL WELFARE AND BIOSECURITY