



Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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From the Chair of the Committee

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
Department for International Trade
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14 September 2021

Secretary of State

Trade and Agriculture Commission

Thank you for your letter of 30 July, which the Committee considered at its first meeting following the parliamentary recess.

The Committee is disappointed that the new statutory Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) has yet to be established, over four months after the Trade Act 2021 received Royal Assent. In your letter of 9 July, you assured the Committee that the new TAC would be established in sufficient time to scrutinise the planned Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Australia. You will therefore appreciate our alarm around recent press reports that the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement does not currently include explicit reference to the temperature goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. We are concerned that the Government is deliberately running down the clock on establishing the TAC to allow difficult concessions to be made without the statutory oversight mechanisms contained within the Trade Act.

As we have previously discussed, the new Commission will play a vital role in both influencing FTA negotiations and informing Parliament about FTAs. It is essential that you prioritise resolving your legislative considerations around remuneration and establish the statutory body as a matter of urgency. While we note your reassurance that the non-statutory body's status will not undermine or change its role, it remains vital that the statutory TAC is established as soon as possible.

Your letter of 30 July stated that expressions of interest for the non-statutory Commission closed on 4 July and that you "expect to make an announcement on the Chair and the membership in the coming weeks." Over six weeks have passed without an announcement. We are concerned by this lack of urgency and call on you to announce the Commission's Chair and membership as soon as possible. We are further concerned that in your letter of 9 July you did not inform us that the Government had already taken the decision to defer the establishment of the TAC and that the application process for the non-statutory TAC had "opened on Monday 7 June".

Finally, it is a matter of continuing concern for the Committee that the Government has yet to publish its response to the previous TAC's report of March 2021. As I noted in my letter



of 15 June, the Government appears to be pushing ahead with finalising FTAs with major implications for its future strategy on agri-food trade without demonstrating that it has considered the TAC's recommendations. Six months have now passed since the TAC published its report, and the lack of a Government response could be interpreted as signalling indifference to the concerns of agricultural and animal welfare stakeholders.

On the aforementioned UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement's reported lack of explicit reference to the temperature goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, I would be grateful if you could take this opportunity to confirm that the final version of this and all future FTAs will explicitly include all of our international environmental commitments.

Given the urgency of the matters discussed above, we would be grateful for your response by 21 September.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil'.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Parish'.

Neil Parish MP
Chair of the Committee