



Department for
International Trade



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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14th October 2021

Dear Peter,

**Update on plans for United Kingdom-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade
Agreement:
Public consultation launch**

On Friday we launched a public consultation on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which will be open for 14 weeks until 14 January 2022.

The Gulf Cooperation Council is an intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The bloc is already an important trading partner in a region that is vital for our national strategic interests, with £22 billion of UK exports and bilateral trade worth over £30 billion in 2020. An advanced trade deal would take our relationship to the next level in industries of the future that deliver higher-paying jobs across the country.

British business could seize new opportunities in areas like renewable energy, becoming the partner of choice for a region that wants to move away from its reliance on oil. UK financial and digital services companies along with education and healthcare providers already thrive in the region. A trade agreement would allow them to further build their footprint given the high record for UK expertise enjoyed in the area.

This trade agreement would also provide new opportunities for British farmers and agri-food producers. The UK already exports £597.5 million in food and drink to Gulf Cooperation Council countries, including lamb, biscuits, and chocolate and would benefit from greater access to a region that imports virtually all its food and has huge demand for top-quality British produce.

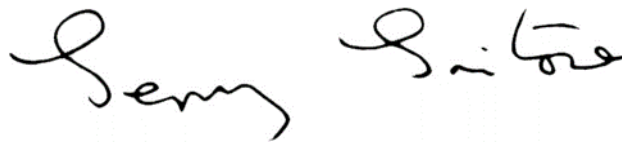
The Government will ensure that the trade agreement will protect the NHS and uphold the UK's high environment, production, and labour standards and we will work with our GCC partners to further our co-operation in these areas.

The public consultation is comprised of a questionnaire and accompanying information note accessible on GOV.UK. During this process, we will encourage contributions from across business, civil society, public sector bodies, local government and the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to gather a broad range of views on current and future trading arrangements with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

This feedback will inform our mandate setting process ahead of negotiations. The anonymised results and HM Government's response will be published together with our negotiating objectives and an economic scoping assessment (our preliminary assessment of the potential economic impacts of a trade agreement) in 2022 in accordance with our commitment to make sure that Parliamentarians, British citizens and businesses have access to information on our trade negotiations before they begin.

The Secretary of State and I look forward to working with you and your committee as we progress our work towards a future free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Best wishes,

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

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt
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