



Department for International Trade

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Dear Angus,

UK TRADE NEGOTIATIONS ORAL EVIDENCE FOLLOW UP

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee on 27 October. I found it a useful opportunity to discuss the work of the Department. In the session, I committed to provide further information on two points that were raised in the session.

Trade and Agriculture Commission Scrutiny

Once the UK-Australia trade agreement has been signed, the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) will scrutinise the text and provide advice on whether the measures relating to trade in agricultural products are consistent with the maintenance of UK levels of statutory protection in relation to UK: animal and plant health standards; animal welfare standards; and environmental standards. The TAC will have a minimum of three months to prepare their advice, which will be presented to Parliament and will inform the Government's own report under S42 of the Agriculture Act 2020.

In acknowledgement of the International Trade Committee and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's request to reflect the TAC's advice in their own reports, I have instructed my officials to work with the relevant Committee Clerks to ensure that you have sight of the TAC advice for a reasonable period prior to CRAG commencing. The Government will itself need appropriate time to reflect the TAC's advice in its S42 report, so I believe there is scope to reach a good place on this.

Access to Pre-Publication Information

You asked about access to information prior to publication. I appreciate that information has not always been shared with your Committee to the timeframes you would like, despite our best endeavours. This reflects not a lack of commitment on our part, but rather the fast-paced and sometimes unpredictable nature of international negotiations. I would like to reiterate our commitment to making Chief Negotiators and relevant senior officials available to brief your Committee in private after negotiation rounds, and sharing information in advance of publication where practical. We are learning the lessons from our engagement

on New Zealand and Australia, our first new, full Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). As we move into negotiations with new partners, we will have the opportunity to reflect and discuss further to ensure a timetable that meets your needs and is deliverable within the constraints of an international negotiation.

I am happy to restate the Government's commitment to ensure the Committee has sufficient time to complete its important scrutiny work on new FTAs prior to ratification. As recently outlined by the Secretary of State, when the Australia and New Zealand free trade agreements are signed and published in due course, they will be accompanied by an independently scrutinised impact assessment and explanatory memorandum. We remain committed to confidentially sharing these with the Committee before publication, where time allows. After signature there will be ample time for scrutiny of the finalised agreements. I would also remind the Committee that any legislation required to implement the agreement must be passed by Parliament in the usual way before ratification of an agreement can take place. This provides another opportunity, beyond CRaG, for Parliament to scrutinise the exact domestic legal changes required to bring an agreement into force.

I hope that this address your interests and I look forward to further engagement with your committee in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "PM Mordaunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

THE RT HON PENNY MORDAUNT MP
Minister of State for Trade Policy
Department for International Trade