



Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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From the Chair of the Committee

Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
2 Marsham Street
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3 March 2022

Secretary of State

Import Check Readiness

Thank you for attending the Committee's hearing on 1 March on Import Check Readiness. We welcome the assurances you gave the Committee that full Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) checks on EU imports to Great Britain would commence from 1 July 2022, especially in the light of the numerous past delays and postponements to their introduction on this side of the Channel. This should provide businesses in Great Britain and the EU with the certainty they need to prepare for the imposition of checks.

The Committee also welcomes your assurance that full import checks would also apply to all SPS imports from the Republic of Ireland at the same time that such checks are introduced for rest of the EU.

During the hearing, we raised the issue of the risk assessments by the Cabinet Office's Border and Protocol Delivery Group (BPDG). We would ask that the Government send us the BPDG's latest risk assessments – as a minimum this should state the risk level on the “red, amber, green” scale both overall and for each of the individual systems that the BPDG monitors. We would also ask that any changes in these assessments be included in Defra's monthly updates to the Committee on import check readiness.

As was highlighted during the hearing, there are a number of matters where further information is urgently needed for ports and the food and drink sector to prepare for 1 July and beyond, including

- the charging regime for the Government-run Inland Border Facilities which will act as Border Control Posts for some of our busiest ports for SPS products including Eurotunnel
- the operating times of Border Control Posts for SPS checks
- when live animal checks will all take place at the border, rather than at destination as currently occurs
- the introduction of e-certification in both directions.

We look forward to you sending the Committee information on these points and the others where you committed to writing.

During the evidence session you also said that you were creating a risk-based SPS check regime and that GB would therefore not be conducting the same intensity of checks on EU goods as the EU conducts on GB goods. While I understand your desire to create a proportionate SPS system, the Committee is concerned that this will remove any



incentive for the EU to take a more proportionate approach to the checks that GB traders are subjected to. We would therefore be grateful if you could provide us with further information on how you will engage with the EU to encourage them to take a similar risk-based approach to our SPS exports. We would also be grateful for an update on efforts to secure a veterinary agreement (or similar) with the EU.

Finally, we highlighted the issue of puppy smuggling and whether there would be sufficient staffing at ports at all times to tackle this abhorrent trade. We would welcome further information on this point, and also clarification on how soon the Government plans to introduce and bring into force regulations to implement the six-month age limit for the import of puppies, assuming that the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill receives Royal Assent. It is the Committee's view that, if properly enforced, this will be a significant step to stopping this trade.

I would ask that you reply to this letter by Friday 11 March given the pressing nature of the issues raised.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink, consisting of the name 'Neil' followed by a stylized, elongated flourish.

Neil Parish MP
Chair of the Committee