

Emily Unell
Second Clerk
International Trade Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
(Via email)

9th November 2020
Our Ref.: EC252/20

Dear Emily

Re: Inquiry into the UK-Japan Trade Agreement

1. Further to your email of 26th October, at its meeting on 4th November 2020, the Committee for the Economy discussed the above inquiry, which is being carried out by the House of Commons International Trade Committee, and that Committee's Call for Evidence regarding the inquiry. The Committee agreed that I should respond on Members' behalf, reflecting on the briefings received by the Committee touching on this issue.
2. While the Economy Committee has not undertaken specific evidence sessions regarding the UK-Japan Trade Agreement, it has been discussed in some of the sessions regarding the UK's exit from the European Union.
3. Departmental officials highlighted to the Committee that, under the terms of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol as they stand, Northern Ireland may not be able to benefit from the terms of a UK-Japan Trade Agreement where these are not mirrored by the EU-Japan Trade Agreement. It was suggested to Members that, for example, goods included in the UK-Japan TA, which were not included in the EU-Japan TA, would not be permitted to be imported into NI under the terms of the Protocol.
4. Obviously, the Committee is concerned that NI consumers should not be disadvantaged relative to their GB counterparts. Additionally, Members expressed some concern that this issue where occur where TAs with non-EU countries made by the UK were not identical to those between those countries and the EU.
5. Of course, the wider issue then becomes, will NI be able to benefit fully from TAs made by the UK going forward with respect to goods, if these TAs are not the same as those of the EU with that country? And, by extension, where there is no TA between a third country and the EU, but the UK makes a TA, does that mean that NI cannot benefit at all from the TA with respect to goods?

6. The Committee is keen that there should be a resolution to this issue, which allows NI to benefit fully from TAs made by the UK, as well as those made by the EU.

I am happy to discuss further if that is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Hall
Clerk to the Committee for the Economy