

International Trade Select Committee Inquiry - UK trade negotiations: Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council
Submission by Compassion in World Farming

1. Compassion in World Farming (Compassion) specialises in animal welfare - specifically related to farmed animals. We also cover issues relating to the environment associated with animal farming, addressing both climate change and animal welfare aspects. We have a rapidly growing audience of more than a million voices.
 2. Our submission focuses on the issue of farm animal welfare standards. In particular, on ensuring that imports into the UK meet existing domestic legislation, do not undermine UK farming and food production standards and allow for further improvements to UK standards – including those set out in the Government’s Action Plan for Animal Welfare.
 3. While we welcome the prospect of mutually beneficial trade agreements, we share the public reservations about the prospects for this one¹ and hope that the Department will address our concerns in the negotiations.
 4. You ask for comments on specific aspects, so our response is structured to address certain of these points separately.
- **The chapters or content the Government should seek to include in a free trade agreement with the GCC, and the considerations which should be given to each.**
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5. If the UK is going to agree an FTA with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) then we should like it to promote higher standards of animal welfare in the Gulf. This could be done by specifically linking access to British markets to improvements in standards and thereby giving Gulf exporters an incentive to improve standards. We are however very concerned that the reverse will happen, and an agreement will be reached that will undermine British standards and fail to improve farm animal welfare in either the UK or the Gulf.
 6. In particular the deal must not facilitate the live export of breeding animals to the Gulf, due to their appalling slaughter conditions. To do so would fly in the face of the improvements Defra is trying to make to farm animal welfare, via the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill.
 7. Unless our concerns are addressed, we believe that a trade agreement with the GCC will damage British farming and standards and undermine stated Government policy.
- **The extent to which a free trade agreement with the GCC could further the Government’s climate and environment goals.**
8. This consultation on proposed negotiations with the GCC illustrates a worrying disconnect between the UK’s climate ambition and its new trade policy. On the former, the UK claims to be a world-leader in the fight against climate change. Just last year it took on the presidency of COP26, which aimed to reduce GHG emissions, and was the first major economy to set a net zero target of 2050. On the latter, all six GCC members follow fossil fuel-based economic

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/oct/20/less-than-a-third-of-uk-public-would-support-a-saudi-arabia-trade-deal>

models that rely heavily on fossil fuels for their domestic energy needs as well as export and investment.

- **Considerations the Government should give to the red lines it should seek to establish, privately or publicly, to frame the bounds of negotiations.**
9. The UK must insist that animal welfare standards are part of the deal. Given the low standards of animal welfare in the Gulf²³, particularly at the time of slaughter, the UK should offer technical assistance in helping ME slaughterhouses meet OIE standards.
 10. Furthermore, the UK must ensure that any imports of animal-derived products meet UK standards. The UK Government, in responding to questions about this issue in the Australia deal, repeatedly make the point that ‘food standard rules’ will be maintained. It is important to note that this is not the same as ‘animal welfare standards’. The former fall under SPS (normally dealt with in a separate chapter), the latter under an animal welfare chapter. In light of the conditions in which farm animals are reared, transported and slaughtered in the Gulf, the UK should ideally exclude agri-food from the deal. Failing that, it should not, under any circumstances, allow tariff- or quota-free access for any products that do not meet UK standards on farm, during transport or at slaughter – this should be a red line, and robustly enforced.
 11. In addition, it should be made clear in any agreement that it is not intended to facilitate the export, from the UK, of meat from non-stun slaughter. The exemption in law permitting non-stun slaughter was drawn up specifically to assist religious communities in Britain and should not be allowed to extend through mission creep to facilitate exports based on non-stun slaughter. We note that New Zealand has reportedly successfully exported meat derived from stunned slaughter to Saudi Arabia without giving rise to objections.
 12. Additionally, the UK Government must ensure that any recommendations made by the TAC, specifically on the issue of agri-food imports, are reflected in any final deal. In the likely event that the TAC highlight areas of concern, the Government must renegotiate those protections before ratification.
 13. Finally, whilst an animal welfare chapter would be welcome in a deal (as opposed to the issue not being addressed), any bodies and cooperation committees that the deal establishes must be more than tokenism – they should, at a minimum, ensure that UK standards of ‘animal welfare’ and ‘food safety’ are not undermined by low quality imports and, ideally improve welfare in the GCC nations (see earlier point re UK expertise to reach OIE standards, at a minimum).

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² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/23/how-the-middle-east-water-shortage-drives-demand-for-live-animal-imports>

³ <https://gulfnews.com/uae/peta-calls-for-ban-on-export-of-sheep-to-mideast-1.236198>