

**OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL  
TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT: PROTECT ANIMALS IN TRADE DEALS**

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London, SW1A 2AA

10<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Secretary of State Liz Truss and Secretary of State George Eustice,

**Food imports must meet UK food standards**

We, the undersigned, urge you to ensure, through both legislation and government policy, that food imported into the UK meets UK standards of food safety, animal welfare and environmental protection.

The commitment in the 2019 Conservative Manifesto, which stated that, “In all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards” was most welcome. However, without sufficient evidence of this principle being put into practice, we are concerned that such compromises may ultimately be made in pursuit of new trade deals.

Free trade agreements (FTAs) – whether new versions of existing agreements (rolled over from EU membership) or brand new agreements – must not undermine UK standards. When negotiating FTAs, the UK Government must be clear that it will not lower the country’s own animal welfare, food, farming and environmental standards, and will insist that products cannot be imported if they do not meet UK standards.

The UK is seeking new FTAs with many countries that have significantly lower animal welfare, environmental, and food safety standards. After the UK has left the EU, in order to prevent higher welfare farmers from being undercut, and consumers eating poor quality food, it should be a legal requirement that imported food products meet standards equivalent to the legal UK baseline. The Government must ensure that British farmers do not face unsustainable competitive disadvantage, and remain loyal to the demands of the British consumer.

Failure to protect UK animals, consumers and producers from imports produced to a lower quality of animal welfare, food safety or environmental protection may lead to pressure for the UK to lower its own standards and protections. The UK will never win in a race to the bottom – nor should it try.

Instead, the country should be engaging in a race to the top – the aim should be to be the global leader in the field. Ensuring that the UK does not permit the import of products below its legal standards, and enshrining this principle in law through primary legislation, would be an important first step in this direction.

We will observe progress closely in the coming months and hope that you will meet our expectations.

Yours sincerely,

**77,429 Compassion in World Farming supporters**

cc.

The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, Secretary of State for International Trade

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs