

# Media Release



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NPA PRESS RELEASE

## **NPA calls on Andrea Leadsom to ensure pig farmers get a fair Brexit deal**

A post-Brexit cheap food agenda must not be allowed to take priority over the need for the UK to build its self-sufficiency in food, the National Pig Association has told the Government.

The NPA has written to Defra Secretary of State Andrea Leadsom to set out its Brexit priorities and seek reassurances on the big issues for the sector, such as the potential threat to UK production posed by cheap, lower welfare imports.

The association has prepared a Brexit briefing document outlining its position, potential solutions and how Government can help on trade, future farm support, animal health and welfare and the availability of labour.

Top of the list of concerns is trade. Government Ministers, including International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, have spoken of their desire to develop new trading relationships across the globe characterised by free trade and lower tariffs.

While the NPA would welcome opportunities to further build UK export markets, it has warned Mrs Leadsom of the potential pitfalls associated with freer trade.

If EU tariffs, which currently add £45 per 100kg to the cost of imports of pig carcasses, were significantly reduced in new trade deals, this could open the doors to large volumes of lower standard, imported pigmeat.

NPA policy services manager Lizzie Wilson said: “Countries like the US, Canada and Brazil are able to produce pigmeat at a much lower cost because they have lower animal welfare and environmental standards.

“We are absolutely adamant that the Government must not put a desire for cheap food ahead of the need to shore up the UK’s self-sufficiency in food, which has already declined alarmingly over the last few decades.

“We do not want to see UK consumers exposed to pigmeat produced to lower standards and we certainly do not want our producers to face unfair import competition.”

The NPA is calling for equivalent standards of production, including animal welfare, to be negotiated into any new trade agreements and, if necessary, for UK pigmeat to be granted protected status to control the volume of tariff free imports allowed into the UK.

Mrs Wilson added: “We noted Farming Minister George Eustice’s comments about negotiating common standards into trade deals at the Conservative Party Conference but he knows as well as we do that bringing welfare into these deals will not be straightforward.

Responding to comments by Mrs Leadsom and Mr Eustice in Birmingham about incentivising producers to raise health and welfare standards under a new domestic farm policy to help differentiate UK pigmeat from the competition, she added:

“The pig industry is always striving to implement standards that deliver improved animal welfare, but we must be mindful not to make the industry uncompetitive and effectively export our production to countries where welfare is lower.”

The NPA is also calling for new post-Brexit agricultural policies to support pig farmers in delivering public goods such as reducing antibiotic usage by improving animal health.

Mrs Wilson said: “We would like to see grant funding and some sort of tax relief available to help with reinvestment in new buildings, equipment and infrastructure.”

Other key messages to the Government in the NPA’s Brexit strategy include:

- Ensuring Defra dedicates the same resource and effort into keeping animal disease out as extending export markets, as ultimately the two are intrinsically linked
- Ensuring EU citizens wanting to work in the UK pig sector are not prevented from doing so because of complicated application processes or delays to visa processing
- Strengthening checks at major ports and increasing penalties for illegally imported products
- Ensuring the pig sector is included in any discussions on future welfare standards.

Mrs Wilson said: “The UK pig industry is worth £1.2bn at the farmgate and £7.5bn in total.

“It is a vital sector of the UK economy with good stories to tell in terms of growing export volumes and animal welfare standards.

“We welcome steps taken so far by Defra to include NPA in preliminary talks and look forward to this relationship continuing as we continue to make the case for a fair Brexit deal for the pig industry.”

#### **Notes to editors:**

- The NPA’s comprehensive Brexit briefing covering trade, farm support, animal health and disease, animal welfare and labour can be viewed [here](#).
- The NPA formulated its briefing document after its chairman Richard Lister attended a [Defra Brexit stakeholder meeting on September 8](#).
- More details on comments by Defra Secretary Andrea Leadsom and Farming Ministers George Eustice about post-Brexit trade and raising animal welfare standards can be seen [here](#).
- The UK pig industry is worth £1.2 billion at the farm-gate and over £7.5 billion in total, including retail, foodservice and other external sales and exports .

- The growing UK export market is worth £350 million a year. Last year the UK produced 899,000 tonnes of pigmeat, of which just over 25 percent was exported.

**ENDS**

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