

Media Release



DATE: MARCH 29, 2017
NPA PRESS RELEASE

NPA vows to fight to protect post-Brexit UK welfare standards

The National Pig Association (NPA) has insisted the UK's high animal welfare standards must not be lowered in pursuit of new trade deals and a post-Brexit cheap food agenda.

As Prime Minister Theresa May triggers Article 50, the NPA is calling for steps to protect pig producers and consumers, including equivalent standards for meat imports and, if necessary, tariffs and quotas where standards fall short.

The association also wants to see strict labelling laws put in place to provide clarity for consumers over differences in production standards.

The NPA's top three Brexit priorities for the pig sector are:

- Retaining free access to the Single Market
- Ensuring the UK pig industry is not undermined by lower standard imports
- Retaining access to permanent EU labour – skilled and 'unskilled'.

The UK pig industry exported more than 206,000 tonnes of pigmeat, worth £252 million, in 2017, nearly 60% of which went to or via the EU.

NPA chairman Richard Lister said: "A free trade deal with the EU is absolutely vital for the pig sector. Tariffs on pork exports, for example, of 45p/kg on carcasses or 131p/kg for processed hams, would cripple our export trade, slash profitability and export production overseas, particularly if equivalent tariffs were not levied on imports into the UK.

"If we leave without a trade deal, sensible transitional arrangements must be put in place."

An even greater concern for the NPA is the prospect of new trade deals that would expose UK consumers and producers to cheaper pork imports from the likes of the US, Canada and Brazil, where health and welfare standards are often considerably lower than ours.

Mr Lister added: "The recent Brazilian meat scandal has highlighted the inherent dangers in any potential new trade deals.

“We don’t want imported meat produced to lower hygiene, welfare and traceability standards posing a threat to consumers and undercutting UK producers. We don’t want pork from the US, for example, from pigs reared using the growth promoter rac-topamine or from sows reared in stall systems outlawed in the UK since the late-1990s.”

The NPA has welcomed comments by the Prime Minister and Defra Ministers confirming they have no intention of allowing UK standards to be compromised in future trade deals. However, Farming Minister George Eustice has acknowledged that WTO rules, as they stand, make it difficult to include welfare standards as a condition of trade.

Mr Lister, who farms in Yorkshire, said: “We are proud of our high animal welfare standards in the UK. We want future trade deals to specify equivalent standards when it comes to meat imports. If that is not possible, pork must be granted protected status, with tariffs and quotas imposed on lower standard imports.

“We will also insist on an extension of country of origin labelling laws to clearly specify when meat has been produced to lower standards.”

The NPA’s other major concern is the availability of EU labour after we leave the EU.

Mr Lister said: “Any talk of trade deals will be rendered almost irrelevant if we lose access to the EU labour force. There would simply not be a British pig industry as we know it today.

“A survey of our members has highlighted the extent to which we rely on permanent, skilled and unskilled EU labour (by ‘unskilled’ we mean not educated to degree level), rather than short-term seasonal workers.”

Mr Lister concluded: “Brexit will provide opportunities and threats in equal measures and we will continue to bang the drum for the best possible deal for the pig sector.”

Notes to editors

- 1) The EU has imposed a partial ban on products from the 21 processing plants under investigation in Brazil, following a scandal over meat hygiene standards. [Click here to read more](#)
- 2) An NPA survey on the pig industry’s reliance on EU labour showed:
 - 58% of businesses across the supply chain employed at least one migrant worker
 - Nearly 20% employed between 11 and 50
 - More than 90% of migrant workers were employed on a full-time basis
 - 20% said their businesses would not survive without migrant labour.
- 3) Other NPA Brexit priorities include:
 - Ensuring protection from exotic disease is maintained
 - Grants for building and infrastructure improvements that promote animal health and welfare standards under a new domestic agricultural policy

- Ensuring the pig sector is fully involved in any moves to drive up health and welfare standards under a new farm policy.

More information

For more information, contact Zoe Davies

Mobile: 07814 448956 Email: zoe.davies@npanet.org.uk