

Media Release



NPA press release

October 26

Key retailers commit to backing British pork

The vast majority of the UK's major retailers have committed to backing British pork, in response to an open letter from the NPA calling for their support.

All the big retailers have now responded to the letter sent by NPA chairman Rob Mutimer a few weeks ago urging them to prioritise British pork over EU product.

They have generally sought to reassure the pig sector that they are backing the industry, with continued commitments to British pork and ongoing efforts to address the labour shortage across the supply chain and to ease the pig backlog.

Mr. Mutimer called on retailers to help resolve the pig backlog by not turning to cheaper EU pork, particularly where it diverts essential butchery staff away from UK product.

“We are also aware that some previously supportive retailers are now considering moving over to EU pork because it is much cheaper,” Mr. Mutimer said.

Falling EU prices have made imported pork more attractive to retailers, and official Government trade data suggest UK pork import volumes have been increasing since the summer, after being well below 2020 levels in the first part of the year.

Describing the continuing impact of the backlog of pigs on farms and warning of the prospects of more welfare culling, Mr. Mutimer said: “I am therefore asking, on behalf of my members, for you to help us by prioritising British pork through the plants and diverting butchery staff back to British pigs so we can get the throughputs back to where they need to be and start reducing the backlog to a sustainable level.”

Key points from the responses we have received:

Aldi

As I am sure you are aware, Aldi has a long-standing commitment to supporting British farmers who are at the heart of our supply chain. We are fully committed to continuing to back British farming and British farmers all year round, despite ongoing cost challenges and increased price competitiveness within the market.

ASDA

ASDA is committed to assisting our pork supplier and their British farming suppliers in this difficult period for the sector. We have highlighted British pork product to help drive awareness and consumption with our customers.

We have a British Shoulder joint product on feature end which is the main purchasing point in store. We hope to encourage more customers to pick up British pork through this positioning.

We've increased our Extra Special range (which is British pork) by 50% for this September. The Extra Special products are selling over 10 tonnes per week. This will be added to with two new lines: Extra Special Ribeye Steaks with Mushroom and Madeira Sauce and Extra Special Pulled Hog Roast Joint.

Looking into the remainder of 2021 we have developed strong promotion plan and have specific activity with a targeted Christmas promotional plan.

Co-op

I would like to take the opportunity to reassure you that Co-op has a long standing, ongoing commitment to British farmers, farming & food, and in specific relation to the pig industry, ALL of the Co-op Pork supply chain is 100% British.

As we move towards Christmas, we will be looking to increase our British demand with seasonal lines – however, we do recognise that the biggest challenge is the labour shortages that our supplier & the industry is facing. Although to be clear, we will not deviate from our 100% British commitment for our own pork supply in order to deliver Christmas products for our customers.

Lidl

I would like to reassure you that at Lidl GB we are committed to investing in the British food and farming sector and championing British farmers, which is evident through our endorsement of the National Farmers Union Back British Farming Charter. We have strong commitments to back the British farming sector now and into the future, as such, we source our everyday listed fresh Pork from British farmers and currently have no plans to change this.

Morrisons

As you know, from a Morrisons' perspective we are 100% British on fresh pork and this will not change. We also would like to reassure you that all our abattoirs and boning halls only process and butcher British pigs / pork. We are doing everything we can at the moment to support the British pig industry.

M&S

You will be aware that, with the exception of our Continental Charcuterie ranges, all Pork sourced by M&S for the Food Group is British, with Outdoor Bred being our minimum sourcing standard.

We continue to work with our supply base to try and find innovative solutions to the current industry challenges.

Sainsbury's

Sainsburys are committed to supporting British pork, with 100% of our fresh pork being British, which we have upheld since 2013.

Sainsburys and our processors are working together to ensure we sell as much pork as possible, having frequent conversations to ensure we have the highest throughput of pigs achievable; these include but are not limited to: turning off slow labour intensive small volume processing lines to maximise output, removal of netting of some of our joints and running promotions where relevant.

Sainsburys will continue to work collaboratively with industry to support the British pig sector.

Tesco

Tesco is the biggest seller of British pig meat in the UK. Over the last 18 months we have worked closely alongside our suppliers to respond to significantly higher demand for bacon, pork, sausages and cooked meats, and our sales of British pork have never been higher. We are working closely with our suppliers to ensure that British product is being processed to the maximum capacity in the abattoirs. Currently, the lack of skilled butchery in the UK means that we cannot get any more material through the abattoirs. Tesco removing EU pigmeat from shelves will not result in more British pigs being processed to help clear the backlog on farms. Only the processors finding more butchers will achieve this.

Waitrose

Waitrose, which is generally a strong supporter of British pork, said it ‘appreciates the challenging situation the sector is in’ and has offered to speak to the NPA directly.

NPA comment

Mr Mutimer said: “We are pleased to see the retailers reaffirming their commitment to British pork and their desire to work with the industry to address labour shortages in the responses we have received.

“Despite the Government’s welcome support package for the pig sector, we are nowhere near to being out of the woods. In fact, we remain deep in crisis, with thousands of pigs backed up on farms and pig farmers still seeing no improvement.

“With farmers also facing an unprecedented financial crisis, the support of retailers the entire supply chain and of the British public will be critical to the survival of the British pig sector.

“We will continue to monitor the level of British pork in supermarkets closely to ensure the retailers keep to their commitments.”

Notes to editors

- NPA chairman Rob Mutimer sent an open letter to retailers on October 1. You can read the letter [HERE](#)
- The Government announced a support package for the industry on October 14. You can read more [HERE](#)

More information

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