

Single market exit heralds disaster for family farms, warns Green MEP



23 January 2017

The Green MEP for the South West, Molly Scott Cato, has warned that family farms could disappear from our countryside if the UK leaves the Single Market. Dr Scott Cato, who sits on the Agricultural Committee in the European Parliament, believes that in the absence of a new trade deal with Europe outside the Single Market, the UK would revert to WTO trade rules which could prove disastrous for farmers.

Under WTO trading rules, tariffs would be imposed on around 90% by value of the UK's exports to the EU [1]; the EU accounts for around 65% of total agricultural exports from the UK, while around 70% of the UK's imports originate from other EU countries [2]. Tariffs on both exports and imports would make UK farmers less competitive and increase both food prices for consumers and supply chain costs for food producers. Molly Scott Cato said:

"The decision by Theresa May to opt for a hard Brexit will strike our family farmers and small scale food producers particularly hard. They are the cornerstone of agriculture across many parts of the UK, so any tariff or non-tariff barriers could seriously weaken regional economies and devastate rural communities.

"The government has no plan on replacing the agricultural support and direct payments farmers receive through the Common Agriculture Policy; it wants to end free movement making it impossible to take on seasonal migrant labour from EU countries and exit the single market risking tariffs on exports and imports. This is a triple whammy few family farms could withstand."

Dr Scott Cato argues that Brexit does throw up opportunities for a new approach to farming, but doesn't believe the government have shown any willingness to support such an approach:

"Brexit could be used as an opportunity to move towards a diverse and ecologically sustainable farming system; one which focuses on relocating food production and boosting rural economies [3]. But so far all we have heard from the Defra secretary, Andrea Leadsom, are plans to shred EU legislation, dismissing it as red tape [4]. But many of these measures are aimed at safeguarding our soils, protecting habitats, guaranteeing animal welfare and utilizing farmland for capturing and storing carbon to help in the fight against climate change.

"This government seems hell-bent on pushing large scale industrialised farming post-Brexit, and letting our family farms and small scale producers flounder. Such an approach will leave the 71% of our land currently used as farmland less protected and further damaged; less beneficial to protecting

soils, biodiversity and animal welfare and less able to tackle climate change.”

Molly Scott Cato will launch a new report in the Spring on farming policy after Brexit which will identify opportunities on how farming can create environmental, social and economic benefits.

Notes

[1] http://www.cbi.org.uk/global-future/case_study06_wto.html

[2] <http://www.nfuonline.com/assets/61142>

[3]

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2016/09/14/green-meps-agricultural-support-post-brexit/>

[4]

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2017/01/04/defra-secretary-is-environmentally-irresponsible/>

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[Greens call on Defra to improve air pollution alerts](#)



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Jenny Jones, Green member of the House of Lords, has responded to the latest air pollution episode which saw some areas of the country hit Defra's highest warning level [1].

The London Mayor issued a health warning to millions of Londoners – but the government continues to do nothing to alert people except tweet from its specialist @DefraUKAir account.

The official Defra alert page says that there are no alerts at this time, despite pollution being high or very high in the south and east of the country.

Jenny Jones said:

“The Mayor of London clearly cares about the health impacts of bad air on people living and working in the capital, but this government is letting everyone else suffer without any warning what’s so ever. When air pollution episodes are capable of triggering an extra 300 deaths as well as hundreds of emergency admissions to hospitals around the country, I think that we have to consider emergency measures to discourage driving, encourage a switch away from diesel and promote less polluting alternatives.

“The government’s sole aim is to downplay the whole thing. No press release. It doesn’t even make the main DEFRA twitter feed, or use the NHS to reach out to vulnerable people. They want to tick the smallest of boxes by putting out the minimum of information. It is then up to those who are vulnerable to respiratory diseases and heart conditions to find that information. It is criminal neglect by a government that has lost two court cases over its inadequate plans.”

Notes:

1. <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/latest/>

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Press release: Waste site operation to protect workers and the environment

The Environment Agency has joined forces with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) in the North East to carry out combined visits to check waste sites aren’t flouting important legislation.

This ongoing multi-agency approach aims to improve working practices on regulated sites.

During the last series of visits at the back end of 2016, staff attended 13 sites across the region, with more visits proposed for the early part of the New Year.

To date the joint initiative has focused on sites that recycle, process or store waste metal, such as scrap vehicles and general waste metal. Operators use a variety of processes and equipment to strip, cut and burn waste to extract the key metal and components, work which has the potential to expose workers to risks to health and safety.

The aim of these visits is two-fold; to make sure the sites are operating

within the conditions of their Environmental Permit to protect the environment and community, while ensuring the health and safety of workers isn't put at risk.

The Environment Agency's Ruth Tyson, Waste Team Leader, said:

We manage our permitted sites every single day to ensure they are operating within the law, to protect the environment and to minimise impact on the local community.

Health and safety is paramount when our officers are visiting sites and officers regularly contact HSE if they feel a site is unsafe.

These joint operations are a really good opportunity to share knowledge with other agencies and mean we look at the site from different perspectives, ensuring any issues impacting on the environment and community can be looked at together with site safety.

Inspector Victoria Wise from the Health and Safety Executive added:

An average of 7 people are killed each year in the waste industry, this includes members of the public. The main causes of death are people being run over or struck by a moving vehicle or something unstable collapsing on them.

A high number of workers in this industry are also exposed to processes that cause irreversible ill health conditions. During the last joint initiative HSE found 8 sites visited to be in significant contravention of health and safety law with 7 Enforcement Notices served.

Joint operations such as this mean we can work alongside the Environment Agency to make sure those responsible for the sites are not exposing workers, members of the public and the environment to harm from the operations they undertake.

Steering the economy through the turbulent times ahead is going to require the Government to be much

bolder – Clive Lewis

Clive

Lewis MP, Labour's Shadow Business Secretary, commenting on the launch of the Government's new industrial strategy, said:

"We welcome the Prime Minister's talk of government taking a 'new, active' role in backing businesses, but what we've heard today is full of rhetoric and thin on detail.

"From business rates to Brexit, many of businesses' most pressing concerns are currently going unanswered. Unless the Government puts a lot of flesh on these bones this will be a strategy of spin rather than substance.

"All the signs so far are that the Government is not prepared to put its money where its mouth is. The money offered for skills falls far short of reversing the cuts to adult education since 2010, for example, while the "cash boost" for the North is a fraction of the budgets of Labour's RDAs.

"For all the fanfare, reversing the economic damage done by the Tories and steering the economy through the turbulent times ahead is going to require the Government to be much bolder."

News story: Chief of the Defence Staff strengthens UK – Romania Defence ties

He today welcomed to London General Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă, Chief of the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces, to discuss mutual interests and strengthen Defence ties. This follows Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon's [announcement](#) last year that the UK will send RAF Typhoon aircraft to Romania in support of the NATO Southern Air Policing mission.

General Ciucă and the Chief of the Defence Staff discussed the UK and Romania's partnership as members of NATO, UK deployments to Romania this year, and possible trade opportunities.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

The UK shares an important Defence relationship with Romania, both bilaterally, and as part of our membership of NATO.

I was pleased to welcome General Ciucă to the UK, and continue to recognise the key role Romania plays within the Alliance, including their commitment to increase defence spending to meet the 2% of GDP target this year.

To enable the UK's contribution to NATO Southern Air Policing, RAF Typhoons from RAF Coningsby will be based at Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase for up to four months in 2017, the Defence Secretary said at the end of last year.

Additionally, as part of multinational NATO exercises, British land forces will deploy to Romania for various exercises this summer, demonstrating the Alliance's commitments on the south-eastern flank. Defence Engagement in 2017 will also include a Royal Navy Type 45 Destroyer visit to a Romanian port.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach added:

Our deployments this year by land, in the air, and at sea, underline the UK's commitment to working within NATO alongside our Romanian friends.

The UK-Romania relationship was further strengthened by a [visit](#) last year by then Romanian Minister of National Defence Mihnea Motoc, who was hosted by the Defence Secretary.

During his visit General Ciucă is also due to visit the Northwood Headquarters, where he will meet senior UK military personnel from the Joint Forces Command and speak to Romanian officers based at the NATO Allied Maritime Command.