

[News story: Further restrictions on neonicotinoids agreed](#)

Further restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides have been approved following a vote by EU member states today.

The UK voted in favour of the proposals that will see a ban on outdoor use of three neonicotinoids – Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam.

Currently, their use is banned for oilseed rape, spring cereals and sprays for winter cereals, but they can be used to treat sugar beet, various horticultural crops and as seed treatments for winter cereals.

In November last year the Environment Secretary Michael Gove said [tougher restrictions on neonicotinoids are justified](#) by the growing weight of scientific evidence they are harmful to bees and other pollinators.

This followed advice from the [UK government's advisory body on pesticides](#) which said scientific evidence now suggests the environmental risks posed by neonicotinoids – particularly to our bees and pollinators – are greater than previously understood, supporting the case for further restrictions.

Research estimates the value of the UK's 1,500 species of pollinators to crops at £400-680 million per year due to improved productivity.

A Defra spokesperson said:

We are committed to enhancing our environment for the next generation, and welcome the vote today in support of further restrictions on neonicotinoids.

The Government has always been clear we will be led by the science on this matter. The weight of evidence now shows the risks neonicotinoids may pose to our environment, particularly to the bees and other pollinators is greater than previously understood.

We recognise the impact a ban will have on farmers and will continue to work with them to explore alternative approaches as we design a new agricultural policy outside the European Union.

The current restrictions will stay in place until the new measures comes into force following a phasing out period of around eight months, giving farmers and businesses time to adjust.

Unless the scientific evidence changes, the government will maintain these increased restrictions post-Brexit.

The UK reserves the right to consider emergency authorisations. We will only

do so where there is a real need for the products and the risk to bees and other pollinators is sufficiently low.

[News story: Meeting of the Australia-UK Trade Working Group](#)

The Australia-UK Trade Working Group met in Canberra on 19 to 20 April 2018.

It was the third meeting of the Trade Working Group since it was established in September 2016 by:

- the Hon Steven Ciobo MP, Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism, and Investment
- the Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP, the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade

The meeting brought together senior officials to identify practical steps Australia and the UK can take to deepen their existing trade and investment relationship.

The delegations were led by officials from:

- the UK's Department of International Trade (DIT)
- Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

They included representatives from a wide range of UK and Australian government departments.

The Trade Working Group continued to build momentum towards the shared commitment to begin bilateral FTA negotiations once the UK leaves the European Union.

Discussions covered a range of topics to help build a shared understanding of both countries' approaches and ambitions for the future bilateral trade and investment relationship.

The Trade Working Group also discussed broader trade policy issues of mutual interest, including World Trade Organization processes and the wider regional and plurilateral trade landscape.

The Trade Working Group reflects a strong political commitment by Australia and the UK to take a leadership role in the global rules-based multilateral trading system.

[News story: Review announced into training NHS staff to use AI and robotics](#)

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has announced a review into how tens of thousands of NHS staff can be trained to use artificial intelligence and robotics.

The review will be led by Dr Eric Topol an expert in cardiology, genetics and digital medicine. Dr Topol will look at opportunities where the NHS could invest in training for existing staff. He will also consider the implications on the skills required of future healthcare professionals.

Dr Topol will look at technologies such as artificial intelligence (including robotics), genomics and digital medicine. He previously led a US research programme on using technology and data for more precise, tailored patient treatment.

He will begin with a visit to Moorfields Eye Hospital to see its life-changing technology in action. Moorfields Eye Hospital is looking at how machine-learning technology could help analyse eye scans, giving eye care professionals a better and faster understanding of eye disease.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said:

Every week we hear about exciting new developments surfacing in the NHS which could help provide answers to some of our greatest challenges such as cancer or chronic illness. These give us a glimpse of what the future of the whole NHS could be, which is why in the year of the NHS' 70th birthday I want to empower staff to offer patients modern healthcare more widely and more quickly. I'm delighted that Dr Topol is kicking off this review – ensuring the NHS is at the forefront of life-saving, life-changing care across the globe for decades to come.

Dr Topol said:

While it's hard to predict the future, we know artificial intelligence, digital medicine and genomics will have an enormous impact for improving the efficiency and precision in healthcare. Our review will focus on the extraordinary opportunities to leverage these technologies for the healthcare workforce and power a sustainable and vibrant NHS.

[News story: Ocean Prefect report published](#)

The MAIB report on the two separate groundings made by Ocean Prefect while approaching Ahmed Bin Rashid Port on 10 and 11 June 2017 is now published. The second grounding resulted in a breach of the ballast tanks which required the vessel to dry dock in Dubai for repair. There were no injuries or pollution.

The report contains details of what happened and subsequent actions, [read more](#).

Press enquiries

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[Speech: Urgent Need for Renewed Negotiations That Can End the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Deliver Peace](#)

Thank you very much indeed Mr President, and thank you to the Special Representative for his briefing, and to the two other speakers.

I think it's obvious, Mr President, that the ongoing violence on Gaza's borders have made the past weeks especially challenging for all those of us who are committed to pursuing a revived Middle East Peace Process. For the United Kingdom, we are deeply concerned by the recent increase in violence and by the resulting high number of Palestinians killed and injured. And we would continue to strongly urge Israel to show restraint in their response to the protest, but for all actors to abide by their obligations under international law. And in particular, along with Ambassador Haley, we reiterate the importance of protecting minors.

That said, it is crystal clear that Hamas and their operatives have been

exploiting these protests for their own benefit. Israel has the right to secure itself against Hamas and other terrorist groups.

Given the importance of accountability, we are supportive of an independent and transparent investigation. We therefore welcome Israel's commitment to investigate the conduct of operations. We would urge that its findings be made public and if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account.

The immediate concern, Mr President, has to be preventing further violence. We urge all parties to show maximum restraint and to do whatever they can to prevent further escalation and the loss of life. In particular, we urge Israelis to reconsider the use of live fire, and we urge the Palestinian leadership to maintain their calls for non-violent protests. Palestinians have a fundamental right to protest peacefully, but those with influence over Hamas must make clear that the use of violence and aggressive tactics is unacceptable and it will do nothing to further the Palestinian cause.

The violence has sadly put added strain on the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. This is particularly true of the health sector and this was already operating far beyond capacity. The parties, Mr President, need to do all they can to address the underlying causes of the dire economic and humanitarian situation. We look to Israel to lift its movement and access restrictions on people and goods including urgently granting medical permits. While we welcome last week's short reopening of the Rafah crossing, we urge Egypt to open it on a more permanent basis in order to ease the suffering of ordinary citizens in Gaza. And Hamas needs to decide whether it is prepared to work for the good of the Gazan people and join efforts in peace, or whether it will continue to use terror and neglect the basic needs of Gaza's population.

The international community has an important role to play in improving the humanitarian situation, and this includes the continued support to UNRWA, as this provides essential services to some of the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees.

The situation in Gaza could, we believe, be radically improved through the return of the Palestinian Authority. The United Kingdom remains strongly supportive of a Hamas Fatah reconciliation and this would see the PA resuming government functions in Gaza and restoring effective and accountable governance. We welcome Egypt's facilitation role and would like to encourage them to help the parties discuss the most difficult issues, such as security.

The Special Coordinator, Mr Mladenov, has shown outstanding leadership on both reconciliation and on progressing access and projects to improve the situation in Gaza. And as ever, Mr President, I'd like to reiterate that the United Kingdom stands ready to assist him.

Like many worthwhile things, the process towards peace requires much patience. But we know from history that violence will not help us to achieve this ultimate goal and the conflict will only be resolved through a political process to a two-state solution. There is an urgent need for renewed

negotiations that can end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and deliver peace and safe, secure and sovereign homes for both Palestinians and for Israelis and the United Kingdom again will be committed to doing all we can to support that goal.

Mr President,

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be seen in isolation from the many other conflicts in the Middle East. Israel's security, let alone her existence, should not be put at risk by any UN member state. The missile build-up in Syria and elsewhere offers the clear risk of escalation, and a slide in to further violence in Israel and the occupied territories would have a significant detrimental effect on stability in the wider region. I would like to take this opportunity, Mr President, to recall since the JCPOA agreement has been mentioned by the Israeli Ambassador, I would like to recall that the United Kingdom's position on that agreement is clear and remains clear. We believe it is a crucial agreement that makes the world safer and contributes to regional and global security by neutralizing the threat of a nuclear armed Iran. And we engage all partners as we take discussions on the JCPOA forward.

Thank you Mr President.