Brexit Government urged to take control of food, farming and fisheries for public good

* The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics has joined 84 organisations have signed a letter to David Davis and Theresa May to stress the important implications of Brexit on food and farming.
* With many of the UK’s food and farming policies and subsidies being defined at EU level, the UK government now has an opportunity to reshape these to ensure that taxpayers money is spent for public good.

Organisations representing the health and long-term interests of millions of British citizens have called on government to adopt common-sense food, farming and fishing policies that are good for jobs, health and the environment, when they plan for the UK’s exit from the European Union.

Concerns are expressed in a letter to Prime Minister Theresa May and David Davis MP, the Minister appointed to oversee a new Unit advising the Government and PM on the post EU Referendum strategy. The letter, co-signed by over 80 food, farming, fair trade, poverty, animal welfare, wildlife and environmental organisations, argues that good food, farming and fishing policies must be central to any post EU Referendum strategy for the UK.

The organisations point out that better food, farming and trade policies can help to cut greenhouse gas emissions from farming and food industries by 80% by 2050, and promote healthier diets to combat heart disease, cancers, diabetes and obesity, saving the NHS, and ultimately taxpayers millions. Such policies can also support a vibrant and diverse economy, supporting good jobs and working conditions, in the UK and overseas. Further, the UK could prioritise ethical and sustainable production methods which reduce the need for antibiotics, improved animal welfare, more farmland and marine wildlife, a healthy future for bees and other pollinators, as well as enhancing the beauty of the countryside and protecting the environment, whilst also providing a safe and traceable food supply.

Kath Dalmeny, head of Sustain, an alliance of food and farming organisations, who coordinated the letter, said: “*The British public has given no mandate for a reduction in food and farming standards, a weakening of protection for nature, nor a reversal of the UK’s commitment to lifting millions of the poorest people in the world out of poverty through trade. We are seriously concerned that such vital considerations may be over-run by a drive for new trade deals at any cost.”*

Emma Rose, Coordinator of the Alliance to Save our Antibiotics said, “*The UK government has, in the past, pointed to current negotiations within the EU on veterinary medicines as an reason for inaction on this issue. With the UK set to leave Europe, the government is no longer bound by such constraints. Policy-makers have repeatedly stated their opposition to routine preventative medication of groups of healthy animals. It is imperative that we now see ambitious unilateral action on farm antibiotics which mirrors this rhetoric.”*

Professor Tim Lang from the Centre for Food Policy, City University London, said: *“Brexit was largely won on the idea that the UK can ‘take back control’ but what does this mean in a country that imports nearly a third of its food? How will we manage for fruit and veg pickers if we can no longer rely on the 65% of our farm workers that come from other EU countries? If we want a home-grown supply of fresh, healthy and sustainable food, then farm incomes must improve, including fair terms of trade for farmers, and better pay and conditions for farm workers, as well as some level of continued allowance for migrant and seasonal workers. Will David Davis advise the government to negotiate all that?”*

The signatory organisations also ask David Davis MP to ensure that the advice the new unit provides to government is drawn up in consultation with people with science, health and sustainability expertise in relation to food, farming and fishing, alongside economic concerns. Further, the signatory organisations urge that food, farming and fishing make up one of the Options Papers being developed by the unit, to advise the PM and government.

**Press contacts**

* Kath Dalmeny and Ben Reynolds, Sustain (coordinators of the letter to David Davis MP and press release), tel: 020 7065 0902; email: [kath@sustainweb.org](mailto:kath@sustainweb.org) or [ben@sustainweb.org](mailto:ben@sustainweb.org); mobiles: 07989 557982 and 07939 202711.
* Emma Rose, the Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics: 07917 799 203 - erose@saveourantibiotics.eu

Notes

1. For a list of EU policies that influence our food and farming system, please see the paper: *Food, the UK, and the EU: Brexit or Bremain*. March 2016. Tim Lang and Victoria Schoen. http://foodresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Food-and-Brexit-briefing-paper-2.pdf

2. Food employs 3.6 million people in the UK. Source Food Research Collaboration paper. *Food, Brexit and the consequences.* <http://foodresearch.org.uk/2016/07/food-brexit-and-the-consequences-what-can-academics-and-the-uk-food-movement-do/>

3. Sustain is the UK alliance for better food and farming. It advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. www.sustainweb.org

4. The letter and full list of signatories is below:

David Davis MP  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall   
London SW1A 2AS 14th July, 2016

Dear David Davis MP (copied to Theresa May PM),

We are writing to you in your role overseeing the new government unit, which will lay the groundwork for a British exit from the European Union.

Our group of 84 signatory organisations works across a wide spectrum of food issues, including farming, countryside, environment, fishing and marine environment, poverty, trade, animal welfare and public health, together representing the interests of millions of people. We met this week to discuss the implications of the EU Referendum for food and farming.

A large proportion of the UK’s current food, farming and fishery policies is covered by EU competence, and re-thinking this creates many opportunities. Better food, farming and trade policies can help to cut greenhouse gas emissions from farming and food industries by 80% by 2050, and promote healthier diets to combat heart disease, cancers, diabetes and obesity and to promote oral health. Such policies can also support a vibrant and diverse economy, good jobs and working conditions, ethical and sustainable production methods, international development, improved animal welfare, more farmland and marine wildlife and restored farmland biodiversity, as well as enhancing the beauty of the countryside and protecting the environment (in particular fresh water and soils), while providing a safe and traceable food supply.

Crafting good food and farming policies is also essential to help heal the rift that has so far characterised the EU Referendum process, as well as to combat the disenfranchisement and distrust in the political process that so many of our fellow citizens have expressed.

We therefore suggest that the new unit, under your leadership, should:

**Ensure, in concert with the devolved administrations, that fair, healthy, humane and environmentally sustainable food, farming, fishing and land management are central to the post EU Referendum strategy for the UK.**

* Food, farming and fishing policies, and the sectors’ compliance with strong environmental protections, designed explicitly to achieve public good, must be the bedrock principle for any post EU Referendum negotiations.
* Public spending on subsidies, research or other support must be directly linked to public goods.
* The role of migrant and seasonal labour in food production needs to be tackled head on.

**Ensure that new trade agreements build on, and do not undermine, progress achieved over several decades and under several governments.**

There are many examples, to name but a few: local and sustainable food in public sector food buying, which can help lead the way in investing in quality British production; environmental legislation that protects natural environments, wildlife and habitats; the living wage and better working conditions; millions of food jobs supported in the world’s poorest countries; food labelling and marketing controls; animal welfare standards; tackling food waste; support for organic production methods, and new approaches to reducing farm antibiotic use. While more progress is needed in all of these areas, we are seriously concerned that such considerations may be over-run by a drive for new trade deals at any cost, and pressures to de-regulate. Conducting Environmental and Health Impact Assessments as part of the preparation for new trade deals should be a critical step in the process.

We therefore urge you to ensure that:

1. The unit’s terms of reference include public health and sustainability.
2. Food, farming and fishing makes up one of the Options Papers being developed by your unit.
3. The unit includes officials with food, farming and fishing, public health and sustainability expertise, including from e.g. DEFRA, DfID, BIS, FSA, FSS and DH, and from the Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland governments and administrations.
4. You draw on expertise outside the civil service to support your fact-finding and development of options. We are ready to support you in this and our networks include some of the UK’s best academics on food policy, experts on key issues and other well-informed stakeholders.
5. Respect for scientific advice on environmental and public health matters is prioritised, for example when advising on environmental legislation and fishing quotas.
6. Consideration is given to the wealth of policy work that our organisations and others have done in recent years, to inform your food and farming Options Paper. Examples include:
   * *Square Meal: Why we need a new recipe for farming, wildlife, food and public health* (Square Meal group) – [www.foodresearch.org.uk/square-meal/](http://www.foodresearch.org.uk/square-meal/)
   * *Plenty: Food, farming and health in a new Scotland* (Scottish Food Alliance) - [www.foodcoalition.scot/uploads/6/2/6/8/62689573/plenty\_complete.pdf](http://www.foodcoalition.scot/uploads/6/2/6/8/62689573/plenty_complete.pdf)
   * *The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* (Welsh Government): [www.thewaleswewant.co.uk/about/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015/well-being-goals](http://www.thewaleswewant.co.uk/about/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015/well-being-goals)
7. Important principles, processes and legal requirements that are already enshrined in UK policy or have been upheld in EU negotiations, often with the strong support from the UK, are built upon. For example: the need for policy to further international development objectives; legislation to protect species and habitats and to ensure fishing at sustainable levels (Maximum Sustainable Yields – MSY); drives to reduce waste in commercial fisheries; climate change targets; the precautionary principle, and the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030 for which the Cabinet Office oversees domestic implementation), especially to support the most economically vulnerable in the UK and internationally.
8. Important policy initiatives already underway are not further delayed, nor undermined, such as the Childhood Obesity Strategy; the 25-year Environment Plan; implementation of the national pollinator strategy; and the devolution of power and responsibilities to UK cities and local administrations.
9. The highest standards of transparency in policy development are upheld, as this will be key to winning support and building public trust.

We would really value an opportunity to meet with you, at your earliest convenience, to discuss these issues and to explore how we can support the new unit in its important work.

Yours sincerely (in alphabetical order by organisation),

**Contact for correspondence**: Kath Dalmeny, Coordinator of Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, email: [kath@sustainweb.org](mailto:kath@sustainweb.org); telephone: 020 7065 0902; mobile: 07989 557982

Jenny Rosborough Campaigns Manager Action on Sugar

Christopher Jones MBE Coordinator Agricultural Christian Fellowship

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Sharon Hodgson MP Chair All Party Parliamentary Group: School Food

Emma Rose Coordinator Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics

Patti Rundall OBE Policy Director Baby Milk Action

Jacqui Mackay National Coordinator Banana Link

Dr Elizabeth Mitchell Chair Belfast Food Network

Dr Sue Christie Vice Chair Belfast Food Network

Pat Thomas Founder Director Beyond GM

Peter Brown Director Biodynamic Association

Katharine Jenner Chief Executive Blood Pressure UK

Shaun Spiers Chief Executive Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

James Treasure-Evans International Policy Manager Concern Universal

Professor Graham MacGregor, Chair Consensus Action on Salt and Health

Philip Lymbery Chief Executive Compassion in World Farming

Sue Dibb Coordinator Eating Better Alliance

Ricarda A Steinbrecher Co-Director Econexus

Barbara Young Co-Chair Environmentalists for Europe

Stanley Johnson Co-Chair Environmentalists for Europe,  
and Former Conservative MEP

Dr Mick Horton Dean Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK), Royal College of Surgeons

Professor Simon Capewell Vice President for Policy Faculty of Public Health

Barbara Crowther Director, Policy & Public Affairs Fairtrade Foundation

Pippa Woods CBE Chair Family Farmers’ Association

Ian Eggington-Metters Interim Director Federation of City Farms &  
Community Gardens

Niki Charalampopoulou Managing Director Feedback: The global food waste campaign

Helen Crawley Coordinator First Steps Nutrition Trust

Dan Crossley Executive Director Food Ethics Council

Anna Taylor Executive Director Food Foundation

Victoria Williams Director Food Matters

Professor Tim Lang Founder Food Research Collaboration, City University

Professor Corinna Hawkes Chair Food Research Collaboration, City University

Geoff Tansey Curator Food Systems Academy

Mark Driscoll Head of Food Forum for the Future

Jonathan Porritt Co-Founder Forum for the Future

Clare Oxborrow Senior Campaigner Friends of the Earth  
Land, Food & Water

Joe Mann Director and Food Teacher Fun Kitchen

Lawrence Woodward Director Future Sustainability

James Campbell Chief Executive Garden Organic

Nick Dearden Director Global Justice Now

Liz O’Neill Director GM Freeze

John Sauven Executive Director Greenpeace

Oliver Dowding Agricultural Spokesperson Green Party of England and Wales

Professor Ralph Early Professor of Food Industry Harper Adams University (Food Science & Agri-Food Supply Chain Management)

Robin Ireland Chief Executive Health Equalities Group

Dr Richard Marsh Chief Executive Institute for Food, Brain and Behaviour

Professor Sylvia Tilford President Elect Institute of Health Promotion and Education

Emily Howgate Coordinating Director International Pole & Line Foundation

Allison Ogden-Newton Chief Executive Keep Britain Tidy

Ed Hamer Spokesperson Landworkers Alliance

Rosie Boycott Chair London Food Board,  
Greater London Authority

Jerry Percy Executive Director Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE)

and Chief Executive New Under Ten Fishermen’s Association

Carmel McConnell MBE Founder Magic Breakfast

Carrie Hume Director of Conservation Marine Conservation Society (MCS)  
and Campaigns

Professor David Haslam Chair National Obesity Forum

Marc Stears Chief Executive New Economics Foundation

Pete Ritchie Director Nourish Scotland

Alan Schofield Chairman Organic Growers Alliance

Nic Lampkin Director Organic Research Centre

Paul Moore Director Organic Trade Board

John Meadley Chair Pasture Fed Livestock Association

Keith Tyrell Director Pesticides Action Network UK

Ruth West Co-Founder / Director Real Farming Trust

Sara Jayne Stanes Chief Executive Royal Academy of Culinary Arts

Alison Swan-Parente Director School of Artisan Food

Stephanie Wood Director School Food Matters

Dr Jonathan Rae Head of College Schumacher College at Dartington Hall Trust

Professor Annie Anderson Chair Scottish Cancer Prevention Network

Patrick Krause Chief Executive Scottish Crofting Federation

Paul Stuart Interim Chief Executive Send a Cow

Helen Browning Chief Executive Soil Association

Laura Stewart Director Soil Association Scotland

Caroline Bennett Founder / Director Sole of Discretion

Shane Holland Executive Chairman Slow Food in the UK

Rend Platings Coordinator Sugarwise

Kath Dalmeny Coordinator Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

*…Sustain coordinates the following alliance activities, involving many national and community organisations:*

Better Jobs for Better Farming and Land Use

Campaign for Better Hospital Food

Campaign for a Sugary Drinks Duty

Children’s Food Campaign

Sustainable Fish Cities

Tom Andrews Programme Manager Sustainable Food Cities Network

Patrick Holden Chief Executive / Founder Sustainable Food Trust

Tom Wills Policy Officer Traidcraft

Richie Alford Co-Chair UK Food Group

Dr Angela Wright Co-Chair UK Food Group

Modi Mwatsama Director, Policy & Global Health UK Health Forum

Diana Holland Assistant General Secretary  
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Dave Prentis General Secretary UNISON

Professor Kevin Morgan Professor of Governance University of Cardiff, Geography & Planning  
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Vicki Hird Director of Policy & Campaigns War on Want

Stephen Trotter Director for England Wildlife Trusts