

PRESS RELEASE

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**Government must act now to safeguard animal welfare standards after brexit**

The UK, as part of the EU, currently enjoys some of the highest standards for farm animal welfare in the world. But these welfare standards risk being diluted or sacrificed after Brexit unless assurances given by Government ministers become firm commitments written into UK Law. This is the message of a report published today by the Food Research Collaboration at City, University of London. Itspells out the gaps in animal welfare standards between the UK and its likely future trading partners, and specifies the measures that need to be put in place to protect animal welfare – and livestock farmers – as the UK leaves the EU.

Influential voices are already arguing in favour of weakening UK standards to facilitate trade deals, unilaterally removing import tariffs, and ending farm subsidies.

Lawyer and report author Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Adviser to the animal welfare charity Compassion in World Farming, said: “Trade and subsidies will be the key determinants of post-Brexit farm animal welfare. The Government’s aim of achieving world-class animal welfare will evaporate unless it can prevent low-welfare imports from entering the UK. If this happens farmers may, understandably, resist welfare improvements and could even press for existing standards to be lowered. Subsidies must be used to support farmers who wish to attain genuinely high welfare standards.”

The US Commerce Secretary has already stated that the UK would have to adopt US food standards to secure a trade deal after Brexit. This means that food items currently outlawed in the EU, including hormone-treated beef, dairy and pork products from animals raised using growth promoters, and chlorine-washed chicken would have to be accepted into the UK.

The US also uses much higher levels of antibiotics in livestock production than the UK. In terms of mg of active ingredient of antibiotic per tonne of livestock unit:

* use in US pigs is about twice as high as in UK pigs;
* use in US chickens is about three times as high as in UK chickens;
* use in US cattle is about nine to sixteen times as high as in UK cattle.

Importing meat from these animals could increase the risk of UK consumers being affected by antibiotic-resistant foodborne diseases.

Other key factors determining the post-Brexit level of welfare include:

* Subsidies: farmers should receive support for attaining high welfare standards.
* Consumers: mandatory labelling of meat and dairy products to indicate production system is needed, so that consumers can play their part in driving welfare improvements.
* Public procurement: this should promote the highest standards of welfare throughout the UK, as it already does under Scottish law.

Professor Tim Lang, Policy Advisor to the Food Research Collaboration, said: “The animal welfare movement is one of the best organised lobbies in the UK. They have extracted important assurances from the Government – but so far nothing that is legally binding. This report provides the detail of the laws needed to substantiate the promises.”

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

The briefing paper *A Better Brexit for Farm Animals: What the Government must do to protect welfare standards* is available at: [http://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/a-better-brexit-for-farm-animals-what-the-government-must-do-to-protect-welfare-standards/.](http://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/a-better-brexit-for-farm-animals-what-the-government-must-do-to-protect-welfare-standards/.%20) It was published on the Food Research Collaboration website at 00.01AM (GMT) on Wednesday 27 June 2018.

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**Peter Stevenson** is Chief Policy Advisor of Compassion in World Farming and is a qualified solicitor. He played a leading role in winning the EU bans on veal crates, battery cages and sow stalls as well as a new status for animals in EU law as sentient beings. He has written comprehensive legal analyses of EU legislation on farm animals and of the impact of the World Trade Organisation rules on animal welfare. He is lead author of the study by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reviewing animal welfare legislation in the beef, pork and poultry industries.

The **Food Research Collaboration** is a UK initiative started in 2014 to bring together academics and civil society organisations to improve the production, sharing and use of the evidence-based knowledge needed to influence and improve UK food policy. It is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and based at the Centre for Food Policy, at City, University of London: <http://foodresearch.org.uk/>

**Compassion in World farming** was founded in 1967 by a British dairy farmer who became horrified at the development of intensive factory farming. Today Compassion is the leading farm animal welfare organisation dedicated to ending factory farming and achieving humane and sustainable food: <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/>