



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Alister Jack MP
20 Academy Street
Dumfries
DG1 1BY

Dear Alister,

I am writing to express my dismay at the letter you signed, along with some of your Conservative colleagues, calling for an extreme Brexit that would have devastating consequences for rural Scotland – not least for our constituents who make their livelihoods in the agricultural sector.

Your demands that “*any implementation period should be based on WTO principles*” and for further trade liberalisation is of particular concern – especially in light of the recently published [SRUC study](#) on the potential economic impact of post-Brexit trade scenarios for Scotland’s farms.

Indeed, both these scenarios were among those explored by the research. The report concluded that in every scenario, Scotland’s farmers would be worse off compared to under the current trade arrangement, with some or all producers facing lower returns.

Unilateral trade liberalisation emerged as the most damaging option, hitting prices on all types of farms, with beef down 45%, sheep 27%, milk 8%, barley 5% and wheat 3%.

If any of the scenarios were combined with the removal of direct support payments at current levels, the financial consequences for Scottish farms would be much more significant, particularly across beef, sheep, and crop sectors.

The possible effect of your preferred hard Brexit on the sheep and cattle farmers we represent in the south of Scotland is seen to be particularly damaging, with sheep numbers in Scotland falling by more than half, beef cows by more than a quarter and the removal of direct support payments leading to 89% of specialist sheep farms make losses in 2022 and two-thirds of specialist beef producers.

Just yesterday it was reported that Scotland’s food and drink industry leaders are concerned that costly tariffs would hammer the sector under a Brexit scenario where exports between the EU and UK would be subject to World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules – something for which you are now openly advocating.

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According to research conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute, food would be worst hit under a WTO scenario. The research predicts that sales of fish would fall by about 40%, while processed meat and fish products would plunge by 90%.

More than 5,000 products classified by the WTO attract diverse tariffs. This includes almost 50% for meat, and 34% for processed meat and fish, as well as 9% for fish and crustaceans.

Additionally, your vision of Brexit puts at risk future protection of Scottish protected food names and common regulatory frameworks that help maintain food safety, animal and plant health standards, as well as reduce non-tariff barriers to trade.

I would urge that, in responding to this letter, you explain to your constituents, the farmers and wider agricultural sector you represent in the south of Scotland how you can claim to champion their interests when all evidence points to you in fact doing the exact opposite.

Do not sell out our rural community in the south of Scotland in pursuit of your own personal ideological positioning on Europe.

Yours Sincerely,

Emma Harper MSP



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