

Jane Hunt MP



House of Commons

14 May 2020

Dear local residents,

Thank you to those who have contacted me about the *Agriculture Bill*.

Food and farming is a bedrock of our economy and environment, generating £112 billion a year and helping shape some of our finest habitats and landscapes. Leaving the EU creates a once in a generation opportunity to design a domestic agricultural policy that will stand the test of time. Starting from first principles we can bring in innovative new ideas to support investment in healthy, sustainable British food production and do much better for farming, the environment and animal welfare.

The *Agriculture Bill* will champion British food by improving transparency and fairness in the supply chain and through investing in new technology and research to ensure our food producers remain competitive and innovative. The Government will also help food producers strengthen their negotiating position at the farm gate and seek a fairer return by collecting data from across the supply chain.

Moreover, the Bill sets out how farmers and land managers will in future be paid for “public goods”, such as better air and water quality, improved soil health, higher animal welfare standards, public access to the countryside and measures to reduce flooding.

The new environmental land management (ELM) system will bring in a new era for farming, providing an income stream for farmers and land managers who protect and preserve our natural environment. For the first time, farmers and land managers will be able to decide for themselves how they can deliver environmental benefits from their businesses and their land, and how they integrate this into their food, timber and other commercial activities.

I note that some local residents have raised concerns about organic farmers specifically. Organic farmers will be well placed to benefit from ELM due to the environmental benefits they produce, such as increased biodiversity and improved soil quality, which contribute to the delivery of these goals.

With regards to food standards and future trade deals, I fully recognise the importance the public attach to the UK’s high standards of food production, and the unique selling point it provides for our farmers, whose high-quality produce is in demand around the world. I would like to reassure local residents that the Government will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards.

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That said, New Clauses One and Two of the *Agriculture Bill* would have put up new trade barriers and prevent the Government from being able to agree fair and mutually beneficial trade deals. Forcing all our trading partners to produce to UK domestic standards will only result in fewer export opportunities for our own farmers. Indeed, the UK already imports food from countries such as Canada, South Africa and Japan through preferences in existing free trade agreements – none of these agreements require those countries to follow domestic UK production standards.

In addition, the amendments would have caused real challenges for developing countries and our Commonwealth partners, as for them it would be particularly difficult to align with UK domestic production standards. I, therefore, could not support them.

I hope that this information is helpful. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane".

Jane Hunt MP