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By email: iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk

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Dear Iain,

Thank you for your email of 28 September, on behalf of your constituents, regarding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). I am responding as this trade negotiation sits within my remit.

The UK concluded negotiations to join the CPTPP on 31 March 2023 and signed its Accession Protocol on 16 July 2023. In the documents published alongside the announcement, the Government set out that the UK's import tariffs for palm oil for all CPTPP Parties will be eliminated at entry into force of the UK's accession to CPTPP.

Palm oil is the most widely used vegetable oil in the world. It is a critical input for the UK's food sector including for products such as margarines, chocolate, pizzas, and breads and as an input for consumer goods like cosmetics, soaps, and cleaning agents. The UK does not produce palm oil domestically and already imports palm oil from other countries including Malaysia. Liberalising palm oil could reduce costs for UK businesses and consumers.

In this context, the Government's focus is on working with countries to support the sustainable production of palm oil, rather than seeking to stop palm oil entering the UK market altogether. It is encouraging that 72% of UK imports of palm oil were certified as sustainable in 2021, up from 16% in 2010.

We want to build on this progress and are doing so both through our domestic legislation and by working with international partners. Domestically our landmark Environment Act 2021 makes it illegal for larger businesses operating in the UK to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. Our recent consultation identified seven key forest risk commodities that are responsible between them for driving the majority of recent and ongoing deforestation. This included palm oil, alongside cattle (beef and leather), cocoa, coffee, maize, rubber, and soy. The consultation also sought evidence on other commodities driving deforestation.

We will take into account consultation responses in developing legislation and accompanying guidance to implement due diligence regulations.

Internationally, the UK is committed to working with other countries to achieve our shared goal of halting and reversing forest loss and land degradation globally by 2030, as a signatory to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and Land Use.

In CPTPP, there is an extensive environment chapter which commits Parties to strive to encourage high levels of environmental protection and not to derogate from their environmental laws in order to encourage trade or investment between Parties.

The CPTPP agreement also provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation with other CPTPP members to address deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity conservation, among other areas, through a dedicated Environment Committee. On top of this, on 17th July 2023 the UK issued a joint statement with Malaysia setting out our shared commitment to work together to promote sustainable production of commodities and conserve forests.

In terms of scrutiny of the deal, the CPTPP treaty text has been presented to Parliament accompanied by a draft Explanatory Memorandum which outlines the rationale for the treaty, policy implications and any changes to UK law that are required. In addition, the Government has published an independently scrutinised impact assessment which includes updated estimates of accession on the UK economy.

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG) requires that the Government lay the treaty (alongside the final Explanatory Memorandum) before Parliament for 21 sitting days. If during that time the House of Commons passes a Motion against ratification the 21-day period must be repeated, and the Government cannot ratify the deal in the interim.

Additionally, the Government is clear that it will seek to allow time between finalising a new FTA and laying it before Parliament under the CRaG procedure, so the relevant Select Committees in Parliament may produce independent reports on the Agreement. This will assist Parliamentarians and the public in understanding the Agreement and its potential implications and reflects the Government's commitment to transparency. Furthermore, prior to commencing the CRaG process, the Government will lay two mandatory reports on the deal:

- The independent Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) will scrutinise the deal and produce a report on whether the measures within it are consistent with the maintenance of UK statutory protections in relation to animal and plant health and life; animal welfare; and the environment. This report will take up to 4.5 months to produce from signature of the agreement.
- Informed by the TAC's advice (as well as advice from the UK's Food Standard Agencies) the Government will lay its own report under Section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 (S42 report). The S42 report will cover the same topics as the TAC report with the addition of human health and life.

In line with previous commitments the Government will seek to accommodate a debate on CPTPP where a request for one is made in a timely manner, and subject to Parliamentary time.

Thank you again for your email. I hope this response is helpful in responding to the issues raised by your constituents.

Yours sincerely,



Nigel Huddleston MP
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