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UK sets out no-deal Brexit trade plan



Fruit and vegetables among the 87 per cent of products that will have tariff-free access

Most imports into the UK, including all fruits and vegetables, would be tariff-free in the event of a no-deal Brexit under a unilateral temporary scheme announced by the government today.

Tariffs would be cut to zero on 87 per cent of imports (by value), a slight increase on the 80 per cent of goods that enter tariff-free at present.

However, they would still apply to beef, lamb, pork, poultry and some dairy products in order to protect domestic farmers and producers.

The government also said it would not introduce any new checks or controls on goods moving to Ireland or Northern Ireland.

The temporary schedules would apply for up to 12 months while a full consultation and review of a permanent approach is undertaken.

Trade Policy Minister George Hollingbery said: "Our priority is securing a deal with the EU as this will avoid disruption to our global trading relationships. However we must prepare for all eventualities.

"If we leave without a deal, we will set the majority of our import tariffs to zero, whilst maintaining tariffs for the most sensitive industries.

"This balanced approach will help to support British jobs and avoid potential price spikes that would hit the poorest households the hardest.

"It represents a modest liberalisation of tariffs and we will be monitoring the economy closely as well as consulting with businesses to decide what our tariffs should be after this transitional period."

The UK imports about half of the food it consumes, but for fruit and vegetables the figure is much higher. Around 90 per cent of the lettuce, 80 per cent of tomatoes and 70 per cent of soft fruit consumed in the UK is imported.