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Monday 23rd November 2020, 10:46 GMT

Wales calls for urgent govt action as Brexit nears



Ten groups representing Welsh food and drink write to PM demanding measures to avoid **devastating impact** on businesses and livelihoods

Welsh food and drink producers have written to Boris Johnson urging immediate action to guarantee their survival as the Brexit transition period draws to a close.

Many Welsh companies in the sector rely heavily on the UK's trading relationship with the EU, and what happens before 31 December 2020 is therefore critical to their business, and to the supply chains and jobs they support.

FDF Cymru, the Welsh branch of the Food and Drink Federation, penned the letter along with nine other Welsh food and drink organisations, highlighting six "essential" actions:

1) A trade deal allowing tariff free access to the EU market. This "must be reached if acute and long-lasting damage to our industries is to be avoided," the authors said. With EU Most Favoured Nation

(MFN) tariffs for key Welsh food exports often ranging from 40-85 per cent of a product's value, failure to reach a trade deal would devalue exports to levels "well below production costs".

2) The negotiation of a six-month grace period to allow businesses to adjust to the impacts of the new export rules, many of which remain unclear, even if a trade deal is agreed.

3) The stepping up of efforts to reduce the impacts of non-tariff barriers, including a reduction in the frequency of physical checks at borders based on trusted Third Country status. Since non-tariff barriers will add significant costs, threaten deliveries and potentially cause product losses in transit, it is essential that such impacts are minimised.

4) The food and drink sector must be added to the Shortage Occupation List

and "meaningful steps" must be taken to improve access to seasonal workers. Skilled and unskilled workers, especially from the EU, play a central role in Wales' food and drinks sector, and restrictions to labour access "would cause major additional challenges" and threaten the survival of some Welsh processing facilities.

5) Appropriate physical infrastructure and staffing at UK ports "must be in place at the end of any transition or grace period to ensure the smooth flow of products". The letter also called on the government to negotiate an agreement with the EU ensuring the same happens at UK-facing ports. Agricultural and fish products should be put in the priority list for processing at ports due to their perishable nature.

6) Financial assistance packages for must be made available to producers and manufacturers ahead of any

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changes to trading arrangements "to fully make up for the additional costs and significant losses anticipated", especially in the most vulnerable sectors.

As well as the FDF Cymru, the letter was signed by: British Meat Processors Association, CLA Cymru,

Farmers' Union of Wales, Livestock Auctioneers Association, National Beef Association, NFU Cymru, National Sheep Association Cymru/Wales and Royal Welsh Agricultural Society.

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