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By Luisa Cheshire

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Give us workers, not border-control delays, says NFU



Minette Batters, NFU President

Post-Brexit import control delays won't solve UK food supply crisis, says NFU - more seasonal workers will

Delays to post-Brexit import checks on agri-food products announced by the UK government yesterday (14 September) won't solve the current supply chain issues crippling the UK food and agriculture sector, says the NFU.

Instead it called for Westminster to urgently allow more seasonal labour into the country to fill a recruitment shortage that is paralysing the agri-food and logistics sectors.

Responding to Westminster's decision to postpone border controls due to come into effect on 1 October, NFU President Minette Batters said: "Since the implementation of the EU's border controls in January, UK agri-food exporters to the EU have lost more than £1.8 billion. Yet while our exporters have been struggling with additional costs and burdens, EU competitors have been given extended grace periods by our own government to maintain access to the UK market relatively burden free.

"While further delays to controls on imported EU products may go some way to keep supermarket shelves stocked at a challenging time for the UK supply chain, the current production and supply issues are largely due to workforce availability. That is why the food and farming industry is asking for a 12-month Covid Recovery Visa and to expand and make permanent the Seasonal Workers Scheme. A delay to controls on EU imported products will do little to address supply chain problems, nor the long-term trade frictions farmers are experiencing.

"Negotiators must seek to achieve a level playing field with pragmatic and equitable checks on imports and exports as quickly as possible."

The government yesterday announced it would delay 1 October 2021 Brexit requirements for pre-notification of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) goods to 1 January 2022; and the requirement

for Export Health Certificates to 1 July 2022.

It also postponed phytosanitary certificates and physical checks on SPS goods at Border Control Posts (due to be introduced on 1 January 2022) to 1 July 2022; and delayed safety and security declarations on imports to 1 July 2022, as opposed to 1 January 2022.

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