



Department
for Environment,
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Daniel Zeichner MP
Minister of State

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Dr Luke Evans MP
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Your ref: LE30984
Our ref: MC2024/23099/EBT

10 December 2024

Dear Dr Evans,

Thank you for your letter of 2 December to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituent, about the pressures faced by British farmers and imbalances in the food supply chain. I am responding as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

This government sees food security as national security and understands the need for a resilient and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British farmers. We will therefore introduce a new deal for farmers to boost rural economic growth and strengthen Britain's food security. As part of this, we will ensure that the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA), and the Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator (ASCA), fulfil their respective remits to ensure and enhance fairness across the food supply chain.

The GCA regulates the relationship between the UK's 14 largest grocery retailers and their direct suppliers by encouraging, monitoring, and enforcing compliance with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice. In this role it operates independently from government and its regulatory approach is a matter for the GCA, including whether and how it engages with direct suppliers.

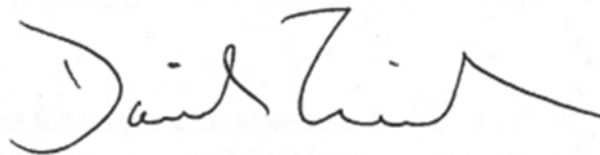
I understand your constituent's wish to avoid fear of retaliation for those raising issues to the GCA. The GCA has mechanisms in place to protect those reporting concerns, including the confidential online reporting platform 'Tell the GCA' which suppliers can use to report Code-related concerns anonymously.

The ASCA office currently enforces Fair Dealing Regulations in the dairy sector by handling complaints received from farmers with specific reference to the regulations. Should further regulations for new sectors be introduced, we expect its remit will expand to cover these. This approach follows a 2016 Call for Evidence, which found an expansion of the GCA's remit to the whole supply chain would not be a suitable solution to the problems producers face.

To achieve fairness across the supply chain, we will ensure an effective working relationship between the GCA and ASCA. Moving forward, we will conduct a statutory review to understand the effectiveness of the Fair Dealing Regulations in a timely fashion. The government will also undertake the fourth statutory review of the GCA next year, where stakeholders can share their views and give evidence on the organisation's effectiveness.

Thank you again for taking the time to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Zeichner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

DANIEL ZEICHNER MP