From the Chairman of the Committee

Steve Brine MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
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Thank you for your initial response to our Committee’s Report into 2 Sisters and Standards in Poultry Processing. We were pleased to note that the Government has acted on some of our recommendations – for example, into the requirement for CCTV in cutting plants as well as slaughterhouses – and we look forward to a further update on progress by 17 February 2018.

In the period between publication of the Report and our receipt of your response there have been further allegations made against standards in 2 Sisters plants, specifically the Coupar Angus plant in Perth and Kinross. These ongoing issues have highlighted how vital the reforms we called for are to ensuring the smooth and safe running of the poultry supply chain. In that context, we are disappointed with the lack of definite action taken by the FSA, and wider Government, to date.

We trust that the further response we receive by 17 February will be more thorough in setting out the concrete steps the Government will be taking in response to our Report. In particular, we look forward to confirmation that:

- Government funding for the National Food Crime Unit has been approved by the Treasury; and

- the Food Standards Agency has a written agreement that it will be in receipt of all data gathered by retailers and accreditation bodies so that a single, unified picture of standards and hygiene practices in food processing plants can be drawn and failings better identified. If such an agreement is not forthcoming we would appreciate an explanation of the reasons for that and the steps taken in response.

A failure in the modern food supply chain – such as that at the Sandwell plant in 2017 – can have a catastrophic effect on hundreds of small suppliers and farmers. The reforms we called for in our November 2017 Report will, we believe, go some way to preventing similar failures...
in future. We would therefore urge you to take all practicable steps to bring these about as soon as possible.

Upon receipt of your further update we will consider our future actions, including whether to hold evidence sessions with your Department, the Food Standards Agency, 2 Sisters Food Group and the major retailers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for his information.

Neil Parish MP
Chairman of the Committee