Dear Neil,

Thank you for your letters dated 11 January 2018 to Secretaries of States the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP and Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, about the Government’s Call for Evidence on extending the Groceries Code Adjudicator’s (GCA) remit in the UK groceries supply chain. As Ministers leading in this policy area, we are responding jointly on their behalf.

The Call for Evidence was published together with a consultation on the performance of the GCA. Responses to the consultation informed the Statutory Review of the GCA, published in July 2017, which found that the GCA is regarded as an exemplary modern regulator with an international reputation. It also found that the GCA has been effective in exercising her powers and in enforcing the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (the Code).

In launching the Call for Evidence, we recognised that there are still some concerns about unfair trading practices in the groceries supply chain; in particular, amongst primary producers who are not covered by the GCA or the Code. The Government wants to do all it can to help, whilst taking account of the interests of all parties in the groceries sector. BEIS and DEFRA officials have carefully analysed responses to the Call for Evidence and the opportunities for improvements. We also wanted to consider these alongside the changes that are coming as we leave the EU, and the tools that farmers and growers will need to adapt to the future.

We appreciate that our response to the Call for Evidence is keenly anticipated and we would like to reassure you that the Government is committed to taking action to deal with problems identified in the food supply chain. We aim to publish the Government response shortly. We will write to you again, in greater detail, at that point.

ANDREW GRIFFITHS MP
Minister for Small Business, Consumers & Corporate Responsibility

GEORGE EUSTICE MP
Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food