From the Chairman of the Committee

David Rutley MP
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As you are aware, the EFRA Committee is interested in fairness in the food supply chain. Over the past year, we have scrutinised the work of the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) and made recommendations about the proposed fair dealing obligations for first purchasers of agricultural products in the Agriculture Bill.

The EU recently adopted a Directive on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain. As noted by the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) in its Sixty-sixth Report of Session 2017–19, this legislation will affect the UK under all Brexit scenarios. The ESC stated that even as a third country with no requirement to align in full or in part, the terms of the Directive would apply to relationships between EU suppliers and UK buyers and so UK authorities would need to make provision for such circumstances.

On 15 May, I participated in an evidence session held by the BEIS Committee on the work of the GCA. During that session, the GCA told me that she had expressed her reservations to you over potential confusion that may be caused by the fair dealing obligations in the Agriculture Bill. In relation to the EU Directive, she stated that she had not thought through the practical implications of implementation and the impact on her role.

We would, therefore, be grateful if you could clarify the Government’s position on the EU Directive on Unfair trading practices in the food supply chain. We are keen to understand how the Government intends to ensure coherence in the regulation of fairness in the food supply chain, taking into account the existing Groceries Supply Code of Practise and aforementioned proposals in the Agriculture Bill.

We will be publishing this correspondence, along with your response. We would appreciate a response by Monday 17 June. I am also copying this letter to Christine Tacon, the Groceries Code Adjudicator.

Neil Parish MP
Chairman of the Committee