

EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee

Brexit: plant and animal biosecurity

Call for evidence

The House of Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee, chaired by Lord Teverson, has launched an inquiry into the impact of Brexit on the UK's plant and animal biosecurity. The inquiry seeks to map out the challenges and opportunities the Government will face in relation to plant and animal biosecurity as a result of leaving the EU, highlighting the key areas where co-operation should continue and in what form.

For the purposes of the inquiry, "biosecurity" is defined as preventing and containing the spread of pests, diseases and pathogens. Animal health, plant health, food safety and invasive species are within the scope of the inquiry; human health and bioterrorism are not, as they fall outside the Sub-Committee's remit.

Public evidence sessions will be held from April 2018. The report published at the end of the inquiry will receive a response from the Government, and will be debated in the House.

The Sub-Committee seeks written evidence on this subject, and in particular on the questions set out below, from anyone with a relevant interest. The deadline for submissions is **Friday 13 April**. Instructions on how to submit evidence can be found at the end of this document.

Background

The UK's membership of the EU currently allows it to participate in a range of biosecurity information sharing mechanisms and early warning systems, such as the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and EUROPHYT. If the UK is not able to participate in these systems post-Brexit, it risks delays in receiving information which will allow it to respond to imminent biosecurity threats. In addition, on leaving the EU the UK may no longer be able to draw on the work of bodies such as the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

The EU maintains a "List of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern", which lists plants and animals that Member States must take action on by limiting unintentional introduction and working to detect and eradicate them, and another list of harmful organisms which must be reported if they are detected. Post-Brexit, the UK will have the option of continuing to align its lists of biosecurity risks with those of the EU, or of developing its own lists and risk criteria.

The entry of biosecurity risks into the UK is currently primarily controlled by inspections of products when they enter the EU. Once the UK has left the EU it is likely that those

inspections will have to take place at UK borders, which means the UK will have to establish processes for the additional inspections, and find the space and staff to carry them out.

The approach taken to managing biosecurity risks already varies across the UK, but within the context of an overarching EU framework which ensures the same risks are identified and managed. This has been particularly relevant in the context of the shared lists of restricted organisms which maintain biosecurity across the open borders between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and in the context of the island of Ireland, which is currently managed as a single system for the purposes of biosecurity.

Brexit may also present the opportunity to enhance the UK's biosecurity, for example by increasing restrictions on imports which carry a biosecurity risk, encouraging more domestic production of plants and animals to reduce the number of imported organisms, and taking a more integrated approach to biosecurity legislation.

Questions

The Sub-Committee is seeking evidence on the following questions in particular. You need not address all questions in your response.

1. What are the implications of the UK's withdrawal from the EU for the UK's biosecurity in terms of animal and plant health, invasive species and food safety?
2. Will the transfer of law via the EU (Withdrawal) Bill be sufficient to ensure that current legislative protections remain in place?
3. To what extent is a shared approach to biosecurity between the UK and the EU necessary and / or appropriate post-Brexit?
 - a. Should the UK retain the precautionary principle in its implementation of biosecurity legislation after leaving the EU?
4. To what extent is the UK reliant on the EU for the surveillance and timely notification of biosecurity threats?
 - a. Are there alternative (i.e. non-EU, or international) mechanisms that the UK will be able to participate in post-Brexit?
5. What are the main mechanisms for biosecurity information sharing between the UK and the rest of the EU? Can these be maintained post-Brexit?
6. What biosecurity risk assessment, inspection and management is currently carried out by the EU that will need to be repatriated post-Brexit, and are there any resource challenges associated with this?
7. To what extent is a common biosecurity framework across the UK necessary post-Brexit?
8. How should biosecurity be managed on the island of Ireland post-Brexit?

9. Are there steps the UK can take post-Brexit to strengthen its biosecurity, in ways currently prohibited by EU membership?

Evidence submission guidance

Written evidence should be submitted online using the written submission form available at www.parliament.uk/Brexit-plant-animal-biosecurity. This page also provides guidance on submitting evidence. All submissions made through the written submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email.

We are keen to make the process of submitting evidence as accessible as possible. If there is anything we can do to make the process more accessible for you, please contact the Committee clerk by email (mcmillana@parliament.uk) or by telephoning 020 7219 4579.

The deadline for written evidence is Friday 13 April 2018.

Short submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered.

Evidence that is accepted by the Committee might be published online at any stage; when it is so published it becomes subject to parliamentary copyright and is protected by parliamentary privilege. Submissions that previously have been published will not be accepted as evidence.

Once you have received acknowledgement that the evidence has been accepted you will receive a further email, and at this point you may publicise or publish your evidence yourself. In doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee, and you should be aware that your publication or republication of your evidence might not be protected by parliamentary privilege.

Personal contact details will be removed from evidence before publication, but will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, for instance to seek additional information.

Persons who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster and broadcast online; transcripts are also taken and published online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the clerk of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who might not have received a copy directly.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at www.parliament.uk/Brexit-plant-animal-biosecurity or on Twitter: @LordsEUCom