

SCF position on Brexit deal

There is a 'hard Brexit' deal which is significantly inadequate and is likely to have a severe detrimental impact on Scotland - especially on agriculture, a very EU dependant sector. Whilst better than no deal at all, it is also important to compare this deal with what we had in place when we were a member of the EU. Is this deal better for us? Scotland did not support leaving the EU and whilst recognising the UK would leave the EU, the Scottish government proposed staying in the single market and customs union. This has been ignored. Northern Ireland has special status - "the best of both worlds" as Senior Cabinet minister Michael Gove put it. So why not Scotland?

What we have four and a half years after the referendum is a last-minute stitch-up that scraped through at the eleventh hour. Is this the right footing for the future relationship with our most important partner? The deal undoubtedly has a myriad of hidden concessions that will take time to come out of the woodwork. It is clear that it has missed crucial areas of trade and will cause a massive amount of new 'red tape' - ironic that lessening red tape was one of the promises given by the Leave Campaign.

As the deal was delivered so late on the impact on agriculture has not been fully assessed but a key point is maintaining standards. The UK has the right to deviate from EU standards (animal welfare, environmental, use of hormones and chemicals, food hygiene etc) but if we do the EU has the right to impose tariffs. What happens if the UK government reduces standards in England but the Scottish Government doesn't? Would English exports of lamb have tariffs imposed but not Scottish exports? Unlikely, and under the Internal Market bill Scotland could not ban or discriminate sales of the inferior product.

MSPs have backed the Scottish Government's Legislative Consent Memorandum which means that the UK Government's Brexit trade deal does not have the consent of the Scottish Parliament; SCF supports this.

Scottish Government say it will now do everything it can to mitigate the damage that will be caused by the deal. We wait to see what this means with regards to support to rural development, agriculture and to trade of agricultural produce.