

Policy Statement



FOOD, FARMING and the COUNTRYSIDE

A farming and rural affairs
programme for an
independent Britain

October 2009

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1 Introduction

The British countryside remains amongst the most beautiful in the world, and forms the basis of the image many people have of Britain as a "green and pleasant land". Whilst the majority of the British population live in the town, a sizeable percentage of people live, work and raise families in the countryside. For too long, the major parties have ridden roughshod over the concerns of the people of the countryside, and have often instituted policies without the consultation of the people they impact upon. Rural poverty remains unacceptably high, rural crime is problematic and the rural economy remains vulnerable.

The rural economy has sustained heavy blows in recent decades. The scares surrounding salmonella and BSE hit farmers hard, as did the recent foot and mouth outbreak. Many young people are leaving the countryside due to a lack of perceived job opportunities, and difficulties climbing on the housing ladder. The banning of hunting and other countryside pursuits was seen by many in the countryside as little more than class revenge by an urban political elite, with damaging consequences for rural culture, identity and leisure. The scenes of countryside folk being ruthlessly beaten and arrested by police during a peaceful demonstration in response to this ban outside the Houses of Parliament remains a disgraceful chapter in British political history.

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) believes that the countryside has been neglected for too long. UKIP feels that Britain's membership of the European Union (EU) is a major complicating factor in addressing the concerns of the rural economy. The EU is a regulatory straight jacket in virtually every aspect of the rural economy, from controls on pesticides and food labelling, to veterinary and animal transportation rules. The regulatory costs imposed by EU regulations on the UK runs into the billions of pounds per annum. This is on top of the extortionate daily membership fee the British tax payer must fund. UKIP finds this situation intolerable, particularly at a time of economic hardship for many in the countryside.

In addition to this, the EU denies Britain its own seat at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This means that the EU negotiates policies which are dictated on the basis of the demands of vocal and aggressive farmers in France, and rarely if ever in the interests of British farmers. This routinely sours talks at the WTO, and in the past has caused a number of diplomatic rows.

UKIP has a vision of Britain outside of the political structures of the EU, yet retaining our trading and economic links with our European neighbours through a Swiss style free trade agreement. All other major parties support EU membership thus their capacity to address rural concerns is gravely limited. Unlike other political parties, UKIP can produce its own Food, Farming & Countryside policy paper, without the restraints imposed by EU membership.

To that end, we have put together the following policy statement to allow a future British Government to put into practise concrete reforms and policies which will breathe new life into our countryside, the rural economy and the lives of the people who live in it.

2 The Problem:

Too much regulation and not enough concern for the countryside

EU ministers adopt 'scandalous' pesticide rules
(Farmers Guardian 29/9/09)

EU rules 'threaten Britain's dairy farms'
(Daily Telegraph 22/8/07)

Scottish farmers under threat from EU livestock rules
(The Herald 10/9/09)

Northern Ireland farmers struggle with bureaucracy
(Meat Trades Journal 5/10/09)

Three times as many French farmers receive large subsidies from the EU than those of any other country
(The Times 14/12/05)

Supermarket Inquiry Highlights Farmers' Concerns
(Stackyard 24/1/07)

WTO talks collapse over farm row
(Reuters 30/7/08)

British farmers twice as likely to consider suicide as other professionals
(University of Wales College of Medicine
<http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/reprint/169/4/329.pdf>)

Poverty blights 1 million rural homes
(BBC Online 3/3/08 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/7273516.stm)

Farming coping with the credit crisis but big risks loom
(Farming UK 30/9/09)

3 Executive Summary

3.1 The importance of farming to the British economy

Around 500,000 people work part or full time in farming, with an additional 4 million involved in linked industries.

3.2 The EU Dimension

EU overregulation of the farming sector is costly and bureaucratic. Many regulations push farmers to the edge of ruin. EU law is superior to British law. Only withdrawal from the EU can allow a truly independent and effective farming policy to be enacted.

3.3 A sovereign UK's place in the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

EU negotiating positions generally favour French farming interests, often at the expense of British ones. UKIP would withdraw from the EU, and have our own seat at the WTO from which to pursue agricultural trade policies in our national interest.

3.4 The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its deficits

CAP remains wide open to fraud and abuse by both European farmers and politicians. UKIP would gently disengage from CAP over the longer term, to minimise disruption to UK farmers.

3.5 Future Levels of Subsidy and the Future of the Single Farm Payment

UKIP would gradually move towards replacing the system, and would simplify the system of payment in the mean time.

3.6 Help for New Farmers?

UKIP will not propose specific schemes for young farmers but supports the strengthening of the farming industry for all.

3.7 Science

UKIP would re-invigorate and where necessary expand this well-established system of advice, particularly in the area of food safety. Labelling schemes would be introduced to highlight the country of origin of produce, and its method of production.

3.8 GM Foods

UKIP is opposed to the production of GM crops in Britain, but open to scientific research, advice and consumer demand. UKIP would require all imported GM produce to be labelled to indicate the presence of GM.

3.9 Animal Welfare

Imports produced to lower EU standards currently cannot be prevented. Labelling schemes would be used to indicate produce that had ethical methods of production. Advertising campaigns would educate the consumer about these labelling schemes. UKIP would rely on veterinary advice in the event of any disease outbreaks.

3.10 Animal Health: Import controls

UKIP would examine ways pandemics like avian influenza could be prevented, with reference to expert opinion.

3.11 Bovine TB

UKIP would set up a high level scientific enquiry to establish the link between bovine TB and wildlife.

3.12 Foot-and Mouth Disease and Vaccination

UKIP would maintain the current policy on slaughter, based on veterinary advice

3.13 Agri-environmental Schemes

UKIP broadly supports the current range of voluntary agri-environmental schemes. We are more sceptical about compulsory measures such as ‘cross-compliance’ (random inspections of farms to enforce regulations). UKIP would review all such schemes to determine whether they make a genuine contribution to environmental goals at acceptable overall cost.

3.14 Burdens Placed on Producers

Any legislation for environmental reasons must be proportionate to the threat and be effective. UKIP would review all existing legislation, and repeal legislation that did not meet these tests. All EU imposed rules, EU Directives, regulations, quotas, targets and requirements will be comprehensively reviewed, and repealed or reformed, as necessary under British law.

3.15 Changes to the Nitrate Directive

UKIP will review the EU Nitrate Directive, with a view to easing the present unrealistic threshold on receipt of expert opinion.

3.16 Set Aside

UKIP is concerned about the morality of paying for non-production. UKIP will only support set aside in future if such benefits can be demonstrated unambiguously.

3.17 Regulatory Burdens on the Food and Farming Industries

Withdrawal from the EU would significantly reduce the amount of regulation and red tape on these industries.

3.18 Retailing and Supermarkets

UKIP would appoint an Ombudsman, who would ensure produce growers receive a fair share of the retail price. The level of enforcement of this code will be benchmarked against improved producer returns for milk and fresh produce. We also see a role for the Ombudsman in ‘cost of production- plus’ schemes.

3.19 Co-operatives

UKIP would change legislation to insist the Competition Commission allowed more mergers of co-ops.

3.20 Fisheries

UKIP would repeal the Common Fisheries Policy and restore control over our own fishing grounds, to help stock levels recover.

3.21 Hunting with dogs

UKIP does not support the ban on hunting with dogs, and would allow referendums on a county basis on the subject of lifting the current ban.

3.22 Miscellaneous

UKIP would allow local referendums on countryside issues. UKIP would retain the current systems for organic farming.

4 The basis for policy on Food and Agriculture

4.1 Farming remains a major part of the British economy, with around half a million people involved in it either full or part-time. In addition to those directly employed in agriculture, there is a wide web of other businesses involved in the processing, distribution and retailing of agricultural produce. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) estimate that this interdependency has an economic value of around £80 billion gross value added (GVA), and employs around 4 million people¹.

4.2 This is despite a number of harrowing crises which have hit the farming community in recent decades. In 1988, unhelpful remarks by the then Health Minister, Edwina Currie concerning salmonella in eggs triggered a crisis in the farming sector. This was despite the fact that officials in the Department of Health were unable to prove such a link existed. The crisis was such that the British Egg Industry Council sought legal advice on what it described as "factually incorrect and highly irresponsible" remarks². During the 1990s, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), so called "Mad Cow Disease" caused a similar media panic, with resultant harm inflicted on the rural economy.

4.3 In general, any government policy on farming and rural affairs must be based on three elements. Firstly, the citizen, both as consumer (cost, safety and environment) and taxpayer (cost). Secondly, production (efficiency, productivity and the position of producers) and, thirdly, the environment (appearance and biodiversity). It is the Government's job to ensure all these aspects are given proper weight in policy formation and that special interest groups are not able to hijack the process.

4.4 The agricultural and food sectors are subject to special inter-linked factors and constraints, which is part of the reason why it is particularly heavily regulated. These factors need to be properly analysed and understood so we can identify a better way forward in which the industries will be less regulated, and hence more productive, with no reduction in public protection.

5 The EU dimension

5.1 Virtually all policies and standards on agricultural production, food safety and controls on food ingredients, pesticides, animal health and welfare, veterinary medicines, the agro-environment and all fishing matters (including limits, catch levels and conservation) are currently set at EU level. The scope for truly national initiatives is very limited.

5.2 There is virtually no area of farming where EU rules have not been damaging, for both pastoral and arable farmers. The EU Nitrates Directive³ was attacked by the National Farmers Union, for its proposed threat to farmers. The terms of the directive would have cast 70% of farmland in England as "nitrate vulnerable zones". Farmers

would be required to spend tens of thousands of pounds on slurry storage, and DEFRA estimates the costs of monitoring compliance would cost nearly £50 million per annum. This is despite evidence that nitrate levels in rivers have actually been falling⁴.

5.3 The EU's proposed Electronic Identification (EID) scheme also poses major problems for Britain's farmers. Whilst the EU claims this scheme is needed to prevent disease outbreaks, farmers will have to pay over 90% of the tagging costs out of their own pocket. Furthermore, this would place such an economic burden on some farmers, that they would have no choice but to reduce the number of animals they keep or go bankrupt. Around 67% of sheep farmers said they would reduce their flock numbers if EID was brought in, and Oliver Cartwright, National Farmers' Union (NFU) West Midlands spokesman, said the union feared a significant percentage of the nation's sheep would simply "disappear" if EID was introduced⁵.

5.4 Many EU regulations are passed without any consideration for the logistical realities of farming in many parts of the UK. This is most clearly demonstrated with the EU directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC, which both concern the transportation of animals. This is especially true in Scotland, where many farmers in the Highlands and Islands have to transport animals vast distances to abattoirs in other parts of the UK. EU Regulations on the transportation of animals have threatened the viability of these farms. The National Farmers Union of Scotland vice-president Nigel Miller said "Many journeys within the UK would be impossible, in particular, the movement of cattle and sheep from the Scottish Highlands and Islands and the transportation of pigs to England...the Scottish industry's reliance on slaughtering facilities elsewhere in the UK will be severely challenged"⁶.

5.4 Withdrawal from the EU will free the industries concerned from an enormous bureaucratic burden with substantial economic and other gains but the process will need careful management. Gaps in legislation on, for example, food safety would not be acceptable. Over time, the EU standards will be replaced by British standards reflecting British priorities. All EU imposed rules, EU Directives, Regulations, quotas, targets and requirements will be comprehensively reviewed, and repealed or reformed, as necessary under British law. EU set aside targets will be withdrawn immediately on leaving.

6 A sovereign UK's place in the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

6.1 The global market for agricultural produce is immense, and accounts for a great proportion of international trade. The G8 Agricultural Products market grew by 4% between 2003 and 2007 to reach a value of US \$506.6 billion and by 2012, the market is forecast to have a value of US \$597.1 billion, an increase of 3.3% from 2007⁷.

6.2 Competitor countries have shown tremendous strides forward in recent years in the field of agricultural exports. In 2008, the USA emerged as the number three dairy exporter in the world after the EU and New Zealand, with a volume share of 13 percent of global trade, an increase from an 8 percent share just three years previously⁸. In exports of wheat, the USA accounted for 22%, Canada 15% and the EU on 13%, and Russia was just behind the EU on 12%⁹. In terms of agricultural production, China actually produces more wheat than the EU, but most of this is for

domestic consumption and thus does not feature largely in global trade statistics.

6.3 UKIP supports genuine free trade based on fair competition and the application of equivalent high standards. We support membership of the WTO along with the disciplines that must be demonstrated in terms of tariffs, trade barriers, export subsidies and direct payments to farmers. However, UKIP believes British farmers' interests will never be fairly or adequately represented as long as Britain does not have a seat at the WTO. Only by withdrawal from the EU can Britain have its own seat at the top table in global trade, and negotiate terms that are in the interests of our farmers, our economy and our country.

6.4 Given the huge market for agricultural produce, there is massive economic potential for Britain's farmers. The WTO is the lynch-pin of the world trading system. As the UK is a major trading nation it is of vital importance to us. At present, the EU negotiates and makes commitments in the WTO on behalf of all its member states, including the UK. This is problematic given the way EU trade policy generally reflects the interests of France and its vocal farming lobby. These interests are often ruthlessly pursued, regardless of the consequences for British farmers.

6.5 In a 2005 address to the French Parliament, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin declared that France would veto any amendments to the EU budget which reduced French farmers' advantageous position, regardless of the concerns of other countries. This inflexible, stubborn attitude drew criticism from several angles. Neil O'Brien, of the all party think-tank *Open Europe* said, "The world trade talks will fail because the EU won't budge, the EU won't budge because France won't budge, and France won't budge because its farmers have it over a barrel". Claire Godfrey, Oxfam's Trade Policy Officer was even more scathing, saying "[France] is holding the EU budget and the WTO talks to ransom. The intransigence is unbelievable"¹⁰.

6.6 UKIP is the party of the Commonwealth and seeks to re-establish close trading, diplomatic and cultural links with the Commonwealth. In terms of UKIP policy within the WTO, we are not in favour of imposing tariffs and will seek to reduce tariffs slowly over time. Each WTO Member has a set of maximum tariffs called bound tariffs which are contained in its WTO schedule of commitments. These tariffs are also called MFN (Most Favoured Nation) tariffs. According to Trinity College Dublin, estimates of the EU average bound MFN tariff on agricultural imports range between 18% and 28%. This is much higher than the EU's protection of manufactured goods, which averages around 3%¹¹. We expect British Agriculture to become more competitive once free of suffocating EU regulation.

6.7 Whilst we seek independence from the EU, we will trade fully with the EU in agricultural produce, under WTO rules. In 2008, the CIA described Britain as the third biggest economy in Europe, and the sixth biggest economy in the world, and thus the EU would have every desire to trade its agricultural produce with us, regardless of whether or not Britain remained an EU member. This support for trade with our EU neighbours is a key plank of UKIP policy. After UK withdrawal from the EU it is vital that a truly sovereign UK plays a full and constructive role in the WTO including in that part specifically devoted to commitments on agricultural support.

6.8 UKIP would aim to have 70% of the UK food market being met by UK

producers over time, up from the current figure of around 58%. UKIP would also encourage a greater share for Commonwealth based producers, which the removal of EU imposed tariffs would make easier to realise.

7 The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its deficits

7.1 In recent years public perception of the food sector has probably been dominated by their distaste for the CAP. This distaste is certainly justified. It is a well-known fact that the UK is a large net contributor to the CAP to the tune of several billions of pounds per annum. In other words, the UK pays not only for the cost of the CAP in the UK, but for part of the cost in other member states. Indeed, it is this inequity which provides the essential justification for the UK rebate. It must be remembered the rebate only returns less than two thirds of the UK net contribution, and that the UK pays a heavy price in other objectives foregone in order to secure agreement that the rebate is continued. Thus much of the UK's unsatisfactory position in the EU is due, in reality, to the wasteful and discriminatory nature of the CAP.

7.2 CAP, like most EU agricultural policy, is heavily biased in favour of France and French interests. EU Commission figures show that 131,000 French farmers took £13,000 or more in 2003, more than the combined total taken by farmers from Britain, Italy and Germany. Furthermore, France received €7.4 billion in subsidies in 2003, more than twice the total of Britain, Italy and Germany¹². UKIP feels these figures illustrate clearly the stranglehold French interests have in the EU, at the expense of the British taxpayer.

7.3 CAP is also wide open to abuse, and official corruption. French finance magazine *Capital*, has estimated that a number of French politicians receive handsome CAP subsidies for "farms", sometimes over €100,000 per annum. This includes Senators in the French upper house and French Members of the European Parliament. This situation is also found in other European Countries. Dutch Agriculture Minister Cees Veerman received €168,000 for his farms in France and an additional €22,000 for his farms in the Netherlands. In the same time frame, four out of eighteen cabinet ministers in Denmark received CAP payments. The husband of the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, also received CAP payments. The scale of EU politicians receiving CAP payments is such, that the Centre for European Policy Studies think-tank has compared it to "legitimate corruption".

7.4 UKIP fails to see why the UK taxpayer should continue to fund a scheme which clearly discriminates against British farmers and taxpayers in such a blatant way. Given the rampant corruption and abuse of the system by politicians, and the lack of meaningful safeguards, we feel it is time to derail the "gravy train" which has aroused so much rightful anger in the UK.

7.5 Quite apart from its net cost the CAP has other important disadvantages. Philosophically it offers a limited, defensive and introverted view of global trade when the UK interest is best served by an outward, global view. By keeping prices high, it has a resource cost in addition to the financial cost. CAP costs the average household around £398 per annum¹³. It sours relations with other countries in both the developed and less developed world. Thus at WTO meetings the CAP is the main

target of almost all delegations. It has some other unappealing policies such as destroying value in beef by freezing or destroying fruit and vegetables when in surplus, destroying wine by distillation, and subsidising exports to the disadvantage of even the poorest countries - effectively dumping surplus produce on the most needy. Indeed, even the European Parliament's own Development Committee has admitted CAP is a major factor in creating and maintaining poverty in the developing world¹⁴.

8 A Responsible Process for Disengagement from the EU and CAP

8.1 Though recent changes to the CAP have reduced these defects somewhat it is still a fundamentally flawed policy and the UK will be well rid of it. However, UKIP is conscious that the process of UK disengagement will need care, and must be done responsibly. Such care will be at least equally important in the case of other EU measures such as those dealing with food safety. It will not be responsible nor desirable simply to remove the legal validity of EU measures if that would remove an important protection for the public or produce economic hardship. There will not be a 'Big Bang' on leaving the EU, but a steady reform over time - where EU subsidies are gradually replaced by fair pricing and greater market share.

8.2 In some cases, there is already UK legislation on the statute book which could replace EU measures without difficulty, but this is by no means always so. Hence as a general rule, EU measures would continue in force even after withdrawal, until explicitly repealed as part of a wider process of deregulating Britain from EU laws. This responsible approach will enable a UKIP government to prioritise its consideration of what would best replace existing EU measures. UKIP recognises that in some cases, EU measures may not need amending in the short run. In others, they will need immediate action. EU quotas such as those requiring import of French milk into the UK despite self-sufficiency in dairy production being achievable, will be totally abolished.

8.3 All other regulations will be reviewed in the light of need and benefit. Assessment criteria to be evaluated on the basis of 'risk' as opposed to 'hazard' including the current burning issues of: The working Time Directive, the Waste Regulations, the IPPC rules, Sheep individual electronic ID (EID), Salmonella testing and pesticide evaluation.

9 Future Levels of Subsidy and the Future of the Single Farm Payment

9.1 In general, UKIP policy would be to move towards the reduction of subsidies over time, though the precise details would depend on the outcome of the negotiations in the WTO and it is those that would define the starting point. Progress would also depend in part on the state of world markets. Both of these conditions are difficult to predict in advance.

9.2 Under WTO rules, the Single Farm Payment is one of the very few ways of legitimately supporting Agriculture. We are aware that the abrupt withdrawal of the scheme would be highly unpopular with British farmers. The costly and frustrating experience that was suffered by the industry waiting for the Government to eventually

deliver it in this country should not be wasted.

9.3 A matter of special concern, given its size, would be the status of the Single Farm Payment, which has replaced a number of subsidies paid previously while certain environmental obligations are imposed as a condition of eligibility. The position in the UK is confused at present since slightly different rules apply in the four home countries. UKIP considers that in the medium-term, the Single Farm Payment would need to continue in something like its present form to avoid disruption. However, like other subsidies, we would expect its level to diminish over time, the rate of change dependent in part on the state of world markets. Where possible, we would look to simplify the system. A significant cause of the debacle over payments in England in recent years has been the unnecessary and undesirable complexity introduced into the scheme at the behest of present UK Ministers, whereas the Welsh system, for example, ran smoothly.

9.4 We intend to retain the SFP, but with qualifications: its size will not increase above existing 'modulated' rates, it will never exceed EU payments to their own farmers, and it will be subject to downward review on lowland farms in the presence of increasing world commodity prices. We anticipate that the SFP will become a diminishing proportion of farm incomes and for that reason will not attempt to rationalise the different payment methods across the UK. The principle will be one of limiting subsidies to genuine food producers / farmers who occupy land for the purpose of producing agricultural products. Good stewardship of the land will be rewarded.

10 Help for New Farmers?

10.1 Statistics show that UK farmers are on average well into middle-age (median about 55 years)¹⁵ and it is sometimes argued that this shows the need for help for younger newcomers to redress the situation. UKIP believes such statements must be carefully qualified. Firstly, the average age is high partly because the number of full-time holdings has been diminishing for decades in response to strong economic forces; many farmers have no successor when they retire. It would be odd to subsidise new entrants from public funds when the evidence is that economic forces will in any event bring about a reduction in numbers. Secondly, to be successful in current conditions, farm enterprises must be very well capitalised. A new entrant would need hundreds of thousands of pounds with which to start to have a realistic chance of commercial success. The provision of public money on this scale could not be justified. UKIP will not propose specific schemes for young farmers but supports the strengthening of the farming industry for all.

11 Reinvigorating the Mechanisms for providing Expert Scientific Advice on Food Safety and Standards

11.1 The processed food sector is currently heavily regulated by the EU on such matters as safety and additives. In this area, some regulation is a must - but it must be simple, effective and cost-efficient. However in most cases, there are long-standing UK scientific committees which provide advice to UK administrations. These committees have provided the factual basis for the objective decisions that are

essential in these areas of policy and have also more recently provided advice to the UK representatives on the relevant EU decision-making bodies. Outside the EU, it will be UKIP policy to continue, re-invigorate and where necessary expand this well-established system of advice. Common sense suggests that decisions on food safety should be based on science, not on fashion or inexperienced opinion.

12 GM Foods

12.1 One of the most contentious areas where science impinges on food policy is in respect of genetically modified (GM) products, both for crops and animals. Rigorous safeguards are always necessary when new products are developed. The situation is comparable to pharmaceuticals research, where rigorous standards are also rightly applied and where genetic modification is also practised.

12.2 UKIP believes that GM crops should not be produced in the UK, and that imported food that has been genetically modified should be clearly labelled as such to allow the consumer to decide. UKIP is also concerned that once GM patents are developed, large multinationals will have too much control over the food supply. We feel it is neither democratic, nor in the national interest, to allow multinationals with no particular loyalty to the UK to control such a strategically significant sector.

12.3 However, UKIP would allow trials of new GM products, under the strictest conditions of safety. If these trials showed a clear benefit to the environment and/or the consumer in future, then some limited access might be allowed, driven by consumer demand and not producer pressures. Accurate labelling of products produced as a result would be mandatory.

13 Strengthening the UK's Scientific Base on Food Science

13.1 The UK science base is of vital importance to the rural economy. Yet the well-regarded chain of agricultural research institutes which existed in the UK fifty years ago has been allowed to waste away and much of it has disappeared because funding has been steadily reduced. The BSE crisis spurred research into animal diseases over the last 15 years, much more than research in other areas. Yet the dismal, dilapidated state of the Institute of Animal Health (IAH) in Surrey was recently revealed in an official reports highlighting communication difficulties between DEFRE, IAH and scientific research company Merial¹⁶. This centre is meant to be the leading laboratory for foot-and-mouth disease in the world. Putting this regrettable state of affairs right will require action that goes well beyond the food sector but UKIP is determined to do so.

14 Animal Welfare

14.1 Animal welfare is an issue which can divide town and country. UK citizens are arguably more animal loving than those of any other country. It is very much part of our culture. This is in many ways an admirable sentiment but it can create difficulties in the economic sphere. In particular producers are understandably bitter when the UK authorities impose restrictions on them which are not applied to their competitors by their own governments, thereby creating an unlevel playing field.

14.2 Since we are currently in the EU this is particularly damaging because imports produced to lower EU standards cannot be stopped. For example, the use of sow stalls and tethers, banned in the UK, to produce pig meat elsewhere in the EU which is then imported into the UK is not desirable. The situation for producers is the more galling because some of those who vociferously favoured the ban seem strangely reluctant to protest about the import of such products which are widely sold, particularly by caterers.

14.3 Outside the EU there will be a positive and balanced way forward. Whilst WTO rules do not allow the banning products solely due to production methods (only for safety), we will insist however that the method of production is clearly labelled on all imported products sold for consumption within the UK. Thus methods such as battery cages, sow tethers, veal crates etc would be clearly shown for the consumer to make his or her moral decision on the issue, whilst recognising the pressure on budgets of low income households.

14.4 UKIP does not support the reintroduction into the British countryside of potentially hazardous species such as wolves, wild boars or minks. We do support the reintroduction of previously native species such as beavers.

15 Animal Health: Import Controls

15.1 The BSE and foot-and-mouth crises and the threat of avian influenza have demonstrated how important animal health is to both human health and to the economy. We need to maintain both policies which will minimise the risks and first class research facilities which can provide government with the scientific support and advice needed. On the first many suspect that our import controls are either inadequate in conception and/or ineffectively enforced. It is certainly the case that some countries (e.g. Australia) apply far more rigorous regimes and have not suffered to the same extent from major outbreaks. This provides important inspiration though, of course, the UK's geographical situation is different.

Cost & Responsibility Sharing

15.2 As a party that promotes free trade we believe it inequitable to ask farmers to pay towards the cost of clearing up the problems caused by imported diseases. UKIP policy is to see how our present system of import control can be strengthened, with reference to expert opinion, based on genuine high standards and not underhand barriers to trade. We will be guided by British veterinary and scientific advice on how to control outbreaks of all diseases including Foot & Mouth and Bovine TB.

16 The Threat of Avian Flu

16.1 Whether avian flu will eventually be contracted by humans in the UK is not yet clear, though informed commentators believe the threat is substantial. Government must do all it can to prevent the threat becoming reality and careful monitoring of flocks, imports and wild birds is necessary. We must also take precautionary measures, such as the stockpiling of vaccines, so that effective action can be taken if

the disease does, notwithstanding best efforts, transfer to humans.

17 Bovine TB

17.1 The main current animal health concern lies with bovine TB. The Government response over more than a decade has been lamentable. Ministers have effectively admitted to a covert decision that reduction in badger numbers was off the agenda whatever the evidence¹⁷. UKIP feels that a calm, and careful scientific programme based on veterinary advice is needed to establish the exact causes of bovine TB, and the role of wildlife in spreading the disease. In the event a link is established, UKIP will widely consult on all appropriate and necessary measures required.

18 Foot-and Mouth Disease and Vaccination

18.1 Having experienced two outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in five years in the UK - one of which cost billions¹⁸ - it is right to reconsider whether provision ought to be made for an alternative policy should the disease strike again. UKIP has an open mind to any convincing evidence to this effect. On the other hand, we are also conscious that for decades expert veterinary opinion has favoured slaughter in UK circumstances. We are also conscious that whatever the extent of the difficulties experienced, it is not the case that some alternative policy ‘must’ be better. Accordingly UKIP will support the slaughter policy until authoritative advice is that it should be changed.

19 Agri-environmental Schemes

19.1 UKIP deeply values our beautiful countryside and is determined to safeguard the rural environment. Protecting the countryside becomes increasingly important as every year its extent is diminished by property development. Interestingly much of the actions which brought about the beauty from which we now benefit came about through the action of men pursuing economic goals. Though we should not, therefore, automatically assume that preservation necessitates incentives UKIP accepts that often it will do so. We, therefore, broadly support the current range of voluntary agri-environmental schemes.

19.2 We are more sceptical about compulsory measures such as ‘cross-compliance’ (whereby farms are randomly inspected to ensure compliance with EU regulations, with potential financial penalties if they are not) all of which should be subject to review. We oppose the concept of Set-aside in a world where food consumption is rising. We will not impose it on British agriculture unless environmental benefits can be demonstrated unambiguously. Such set-aside would be an alternative to the voluntary schemes. Environmental organisations e.g RSPB are welcome to enter into individual contracts with farmers to manage their land as required.

20 Burdens placed on producers for environmental reasons must be proportionate to the threat and be effective

20.1 Whilst UKIP recognises climate change is occurring, we are deep sceptical of

the argument that this is due to man made Global Warming. More generally on environmental policy we fear that the threat of climate change will be used to impose unnecessary, ineffective and damaging burdens on producers. There are a large number of pressure groups active on green issues which advocate the imposition of regulations on other people's property and businesses in what can only be described as a cavalier fashion. Unfortunately the same government department, DEFRA, is responsible for both the environment and farming, and under recent Ministers has given far more weight to pressure from so-called environmental groups than to economic concerns. UKIP will resist the imposition of any such unreasonable burdens.

21 Changes to the Nitrate Directive

21.1 UKIP goes much further in respect of one burden about to be imposed by The Government on a substantial number of producers. The EU Nitrate Directive sets a maximum level for nitrate in water (50mg/litre), ostensibly to protect human health¹⁹. Conditions are such that meeting this requirement is difficult in many arable areas of the UK and a recent consultation paper shows clearly that the Government intends to impose draconian new requirements on many UK farms which, if enforced, would require a fundamental change in the businesses concerned to a less intensive and profitable system. This might be acceptable, though unfortunate, if there were any evidence that such action would do anything to protect human health. However, there is no evidence to this effect.

21.2 The EU Nitrate Directive imposes restrictions on UK producers, which will have a potentially devastating impact on some, for no gain in the protection of human health. UKIP will aspire to ease the current unrealistic thresholds imposed by the directive. UKIP will base its recommendations for changes on sound scientific opinion.

22 Set Aside

22.1 Recent price movements for arable crops have eliminated any economic justification for Set Aside. In any case UKIP is troubled about the morality of paying for non-production. The case for Set Aside rests, therefore, purely on claimed environmental benefits. UKIP will only support Set Aside in future if such benefits can be demonstrated unambiguously. In addition we would need to be convinced that the provision of public money for such a purpose was justified. There is nothing to prevent environmental groups entering into agreements with individual farmers where there would, in their view, be significant environmental benefits should they wish to.

23 Regulatory Burdens on the Food and Farming Industries

23.1 Even Government Ministers recognise that industry and commerce, especially food and farming, are overregulated. Past governments have, however, been unable to take action to deal with the problem within rigid EU schemes. UKIP does not underestimate the power of the forces favouring regulation. Indeed some regulations protecting consumers and the environment are entirely justified. Nevertheless not all regulations are justified. Any government faces strong pressures from interest groups favouring particular regulations. Unlike other parties UKIP would not, however,

allow pressure from vociferous minorities to achieve laws acting against the interests of society as a whole.

23.2 Overall, withdrawal from the EU would lead to a substantial reduction in regulation. Apologists often point out, accurately enough, that not all regulation comes from Brussels. A lot of it does originate from the EU, however, and much of it has no value in UK circumstances. Only UKIP policies, therefore, offer a real prospect of a major total reduction in regulation on UK farming and related industries.

24 Retailing and Supermarkets

24.1 Recently supermarkets, by far the largest type of food retailer, have come in for much criticism. Very small, but vocal minorities are opposed to supermarkets in principle, such as within the "green" movement. It is clear from the large majority that use supermarkets regularly that this method of retailing is very important, and that many supermarkets offer a good blend of choice, quality and competitive prices.

24.2 Nevertheless some major concerns remain especially about the negotiating power which supermarkets can bring to bear on their suppliers, especially small suppliers such as farmers. Tesco alone, for example, has a 30% share in the UK grocery market²⁰. UKIP is very supportive of the conclusions reached by the recent Competition Commission Investigation. We are determined to ensure that the Ombudsman appointed has real teeth and will outlaw criminal activities and practices. We welcome the fact that prosecutions will be brought against individual employees, as opposed to the corporation itself.

24.3 Milk producers and fresh produce growers are not receiving a fair share of the retail price leading to underinvestment in these sectors. The level of enforcement of the code will be bench-marked against improved producer returns for milk and fresh produce. We also see a role for the Ombudsman in 'cost of production-plus' schemes i.e. where retailers agree to cover the production costs incurred by producers, plus paying a bit on top so as to provide the producer with a profit margin. Trouble currently exists whereby retailers and producers can never agree on what the true cost of production is.

25 The use of labelling to promote high standards

25.1 As a free trade party, UKIP would respect WTO rules, and would not resort to tariffs or import bans on food products from other countries. However, outside the EU Britain would be in a position to insist that all foods must display country of origin on their label. UKIP would require all produce to display labelling indicating the country of origin, and would require that the majority of the production took place in the specified country not just minor finishing of imported food. The label "Made in the EU" would not be acceptable.

25.2 British produce would also carry a label indicating its country of origin. This would allow consumers to identify British produce, with its high standards of animal welfare and quality. Labels would also be introduced to highlight areas of consideration for the consumer (e.g. pig tethering, battery produce, meat products

subject to water injections, produce from areas prone to disease outbreaks etc). UKIP would run advertising campaigns to educate the public about the meaning of food labels, with the intention of empowering the consumer to make an informed choice.

26 Cooperatives

26.1 Farmer cooperatives have had limited success in the UK though many accept that in principle they are a good idea. Attempts at inter co-op mergers have been repeatedly blocked by the Competition Commission under competition laws, whilst retailers have been permitted to grow in size. UKIP is strongly in favour of rebalancing the food market between powerful buyers, primarily supermarkets, and food producers.

26.2 To address this, UKIP will insist that the Competition Commission allow mergers of co-ops to achieve a better power balance in the industry. UKIP would not force these co-op measures, it would simply amend or repeal competition laws which were well intentioned yet do not reflect the realities of the balance of power in the food market. This will allow co-ops to negotiate effectively with purchasing supermarkets. A good example is that of the egg industry such as the merger of Deans and Stonegate into Noble Foods, which has worked well in representing egg producers, and in being able to "look supermarkets in the eye".

27 Fisheries

27.1 UKIP would withdraw from the Common Fisheries Policy, and re-assert the principle that our territorial waters and the resources within it are the property of the nation state. This is consistent with the United Nations "Law of the Sea" Treaty. In addition, UKIP would institute seasonally moveable "No Take Zones" in which fish would be free to breed and spawn, in order to allow stock levels to recover from the over fishing of the Common Fisheries Policy, and to maintain stock levels into the future. UKIP would also establish a Fisheries College and a Crew Training School to invest in the UK fishing fleet's future. Further details of UKIP fishing policy are available in our Fishing Policy Paper, available on the UKIP website.

28 Hunting with Dogs and Angling

UKIP does not support the total ban of hunting with dogs, which has been a practical failure. UKIP believes that this is a matter best decided at the local level by local communities, and therefore will allow county-based referenda to overturn the ban within county boundaries on the basis of a simple majority. Where hunts cross county boundaries, co-terminus referenda could be promoted. Recent EU legislation that has made life difficult for anglers will be scrapped.

29 Miscellaneous

28.1 UKIP's Law & Order policy paper already underlines our belief that home owners who confront burglars and other intruders should always be given support. This is especially true in rural areas, where police assistance may take a very long time to arrive, and thus homeowners have no choice but to personally intervene.

UKIP would issue instructions to Magistrates to take this into consideration should an intruder attempt to claim assault.

28.2 UKIP supports the continuation of the current farm forestry schemes in broadly their current form. UKIP believes that the existing schemes supporting organic farming should be retained unless a good reason can be shown for changes to be made. UKIP believes that the horticulture sector in general will benefit from deregulation, action on retailers, labelling and co-op legislation.

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Appendix

Selected Statistics (2006)

Farming Output at market prices	£ 14.7bn
Total Area of UK Farming (includes rough grazing)	18.6mha
Subsidies Paid to UK Farmers	£ 3.0bn
Agricultural Productivity (1995-97=100)	109.9%
UK Self Sufficiency (all food)	58.1%
Household Expenditure on Food and Drink	£162 bn
Employment in Agri-Food Industry as % of total	13.9%

Note: Source, Agriculture in the UK (2006) (DEFRA)

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