



25th July 2019

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson, MP, Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

National Sheep Association
The Sheep Centre, Malvern
Worcestershire, WR13 6PH
Tel: 01684 892661
enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk
www.nationalsheep.org.uk

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the National Sheep Association (NSA) I would like to welcome you into your role as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and wish you every success with the work ahead.

You will be very aware of the messages coming from our association, shared by those of other farming organisations, that any disorderly exit from the EU could be severely damaging for the UK's sheep industry. The reasons for this are simple:

- We export between 35 and 40% of British sheepmeat production and 96% of this volume goes to EU member states.
- Any sudden loss of access to the EU market, or the application of 46% tariffs on exports, is expected to reduce sheep prices by a minimum of 30%. Profit margins are extremely tight on our sheep farms and a drop in prices of this magnitude would undoubtedly leave our industry in decline at a time when we should be encouraged to build our capacity to take advantage of obvious future opportunities.
- 96% of exports going to the EU means only 4% of export volumes currently accessing non EU markets. While significant trade opportunities exist globally it will take a number of years for these to come to fruition, certainly to replace the volumes being exported to the EU.

We very much agree with your aspirations for the UK to adopt a can-do attitude, for us to find solutions and to unleash the productive power of Britain's sheep farming industry. Sheep farming and its production of high quality food and fibre from grass is one of Britain's most sustainable industries and one that delivers on economic, environmental, and social fronts.

Since the EU referendum we have worked closely with our Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, and his related Ministerial team, to inform them about the value and importance of British sheep farming. Having been given assurances that support would be provided to a level that would allow our industry to maintain its current scale and nature we have more recently discussed contingency options in the event of a damaging exit from the EU. The NSA's approach to this differs from that of the Government and its agencies in that we want to see support that prevents our markets from collapse, while officials appear to prefer rescuing it once it has collapsed. I am sure you would share our sentiments as once our great industry is in demise it will lose capacity and infrastructure and it will be difficult to rebuild. We are constantly told that the UK cannot do what we recommend (a creative scheme that would cover any export tariffs and allow the market to function) because it does not comply with WTO rules, and this is exactly where we welcome your aspirations for a more can-do way of working.

  Find NSA @natsheep on social media

Chief Executive: Phil Stocker
A company limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registration No. 37818.
Registered charity in England and Wales (249255) and in Scotland (SC042853)

Continued / ...



I would urge you to do whatever you need to, to unleash the creative intelligence within Defra and the Treasury, working with ourselves, to establish a scheme to be announced now, to give confidence to our industry before seasonal trading begins, and provide a strategic approach that could cost Government less while also allowing our markets to function until future alternative trade opportunities can be secured.

This is just one, albeit immediate, issue that we are working on to ensure our sheep industry flourishes into the future. I would be happy to discuss wider sheep farming issues with you to optimise your understanding of our industry and to make sure you understand the importance of decisions that will be made in future months and years ahead.

In the meantime I reiterate our congratulations on your appointment and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Stocker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Phil Stocker
Chief Executive