7 October 2020

Dear Edward,

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES: UPDATE

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee on 9 September 2020. Further to our discussions at committee you noted there were a number of points that I committed to following up in writing.

We agreed:

- To provide figures on food & drink exports to the US, particularly on sectors impacted by US tariffs, such as whisky and shortbread.

- To share the timing and content of non-statutory statement of policy on food, following the next ministerial working group on food meeting.

- To share the updated timing for the farming and food production future policy group to publish its progress report.

To provide figures on food & drink exports to the US, particularly on sectors impacted by US tariffs, such as whisky and shortbread.

**Overall Figures**

- In the first six months of 2020, **Scottish food and drink** exports were valued at £2.2 billion, down £795 million (-26.5%) compared to the first six months of 2019.

- **Scottish food exports** were valued at £703 million in the same period, a decrease of £113 million (-13.9%) on the first six months 2019.
Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Scottish drink exports* were valued at £1.5 billion in the same period, a decrease of £682 million (-31.2%) on the first six months of 2019.

* Drink exports are defined as UK exports of Scotch Whisky

US Specific Figures

- In the first six months of 2020, Scottish food and drink exports to the United States were valued at £353 million, down £204 million (-36.6%) compared to the first six months of 2019.

- Scottish food exports to the United States were valued at £42 million in the first six months of 2020, a decrease of £28 million (-40.2%) on the first six months of 2019.

- Scotch Whisky exports to the United States were valued at £311 million in the same period, a decrease of £176 million (-36.1%) on the first six months of 2019.

To share the timing and content of non-statutory statement of policy on food, following the next ministerial working group on food meeting.

The next meeting of the Ministerial Working Group on Food is in the process of being arranged and will take place towards the end of October. I will be able to provide more details once the Ministerial Working Group on Food has met and discussed this work and associated timetables in more depth. As I have noted previously the intention is that this work will be an iterative process and will take account of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the wide range of work already being undertaken as part of the Good Food Nation policy and, where applicable, strategies such as the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the UK Governments’ National Food Strategy. This will not be a quick process and the intention is that these pieces of work would be stand-alone but would contribute, over time, to the development of a non-statutory statement of policy on food.

To share updated timing for the farming and food production future policy group to publish its progress report.

The Farming and Food Production – Future Policy Group (FFP-FPG) last met on 23 September and agreed that they need to meet further in order to finalise their Report. The Group is fully aware of the importance of their role in advising on future farming policy and wish to ensure that their Report sets out a clear ambition in that respect. The report will be published when they consider that it does so.

Yours sincerely,

FERGUS EWING