



Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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20th September 2024

Dear Minister,

RE: Environmental Horticulture Sector and challenges with Cross Border Trade with the EU

We write to you from the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), representing businesses throughout the environmental horticulture supply chain. The impact of UK border controls and processes, including the Government's Sevington Inland Border Facility, are severely challenging the sector. We welcome the Government's stated mission to reset the relationship with the EU, including supporting a new approach to EU-UK SPS arrangements, inclusive of the area of plant health. We recognise this will take time and look forward to actively supporting this work.

We have made substantive and evidence-based representations to DEFRA (see attached correspondence) since the 30 April BTOM implementation date, which overnight switched checks from at-destination to at-border and it is on this we seek your urgent attention, action and engagement.

All parties involved in moving plants, trees, flowers, bulbs and seeds between the EU and the UK are now doing so under maximum pressure, facing unmanageable increases in costs, experiencing painful border processes yet with minimal information with which to do it. We recognise the need for a strong biosecure system yet one that still facilitates and encourages legitimate trade.

Long-held business relationships between UK importers, EU exporters and their various hauliers and service providers are becoming strained to breaking point, with freight operators specialising in transport of plants now withdrawing from the UK market, and exporters expressing deep concern about the potential loss of the UK as an important market for the EU's horticultural sector.

The serious pest recently intercepted at Sevington is an example of where communication, transparency and information are key to ensuring industry and importers are not significantly affected.

**The Horticultural
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The whole supply chain takes its biosecurity responsibilities extremely seriously, and needs relevant, real-time information and transparency in order to act on any potential pest and disease problems and to have the opportunity to adjust accordingly. We are now customers of Government at Sevington, paying new costs via the application of the Common User Charge, and receiving unacceptable service.

We urge agencies to work together more effectively, to communicate with their service users and each other clearly and with clarity and have processes in place that keep all informed at all times.

We repeat our ask for a ministerial roundtable and we wish to work swiftly and constructively on solutions, including on an effective joined-up communication process from agencies, publishing of key border-related and biosecurity data, and transparency of progress with Border Control Posts and related operations before it is too late and the loss of trust and damage to trade is irreversible.

We welcome the new Government's positive approach to a reset on EU trade and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Fran Barnes
CEO of the Horticultural Trades Association

Cc: Rt Hon Daniel Zeichner MP, Minister of State at DEFRA