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Lightning quick response needed to avoid more border chaos

The EU's agri-food chain has issued a joint statement outlining urgent measures to avoid more border chaos from January 1, after EU and UK trade negotiators announced the conclusion of their talks today. Read the joint statement here.

It is very positive that negotiations have finally reached a conclusion, and we would like to thank Michel Barnier and his team for their tireless work. In particular we thank the EU's negotiating team for taking agri-food sector needs into account, working to ensure the integrity of the Single Market and for avoiding large tariffs which would have hit food and drink operators under a 'no deal' scenario.

The European Union is based on a strong economic collaboration and development, therefore ensuring a level playing field is crucial for the future relationship between EU and UK.

We now urge the authorities to maintain their positive momentum over the coming week and to develop an effective transition phase from January 1, 2021, towards the eventual full implementation of new trade rules.

We must warn that stormy waters lie ahead for the agri-food sector – and for EU-UK trade in agri-food products worth around €48 billion – if we don't get the next part right.

We all need to look at the detail of the agreement to understand the full implications, but it is essential for EU and UK authorities to move at lightning speed to ensure businesses understand the new trade requirements, that border controls can operate efficiently from January 1 and that the Commission has a crisis management protocol, including direct communications with agri-food chain operators, to identify and solve border issues as they arise over the coming weeks and months.

Failure to move quickly will lead to more border chaos and supply chain disruption that will not only put thousands of jobs at risk, but also impact the safe supply of affordable agri-food products to consumers.

Given the agri-food sector will be one of the sectors worst-hit by the effect of Brexit, we are also calling for a swift deployment of the EU's €5 billion Brexit Adjustment Reserve.

Specifically, we urge the European Commission and relevant authorities to implement these pragmatic measures without delay:

- Develop an effective transition phase from January 1, 2021, towards the eventual full implementation of new trade rules.
- Provide the human, technical and financial resources to implement and enforce the new customs and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures.
- Ensure the new rules are clear to interpret and enforce to ensure predictability for business.

- Reiterate the 'essential' nature of the agri-food value chain and maintain 'green lanes' alongside other customs measures which were successfully deployed during the Covid-19 lockdown to fast track agri-food products across borders.
- Develop and circulate business-friendly guidance to enable better planning and preparedness.
- Swiftly deploy the €5 billion EU Brexit Adjustment Reserve, particularly for SMEs, farmers, agri-cooperatives and traders already suffering from the Covid-19 impact. Job security for the agri-food sector workforce is particularly important in this context.
- Ensure a continued formal communication channel for agri-food chain operators to communicate with the European Commission and national authorities to raise issues and solve them as they emerge over the coming weeks and months.
- With Northern Ireland remaining part of the Single Market, pay special attention to trade in products between Great Britain and Northern Ireland to maintain the integrity of the Single Market and acknowledge the need for enduring solutions particularly on SPS measures and new labelling rules.

ENDs

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About us:

[FoodDrinkEurope](#) represents the food manufacturing industry. Made up of 294,000 businesses and 4.7 million workers, the food and drink industry buys 70% of all EU agricultural produce and is Europe's largest manufacturing industry.

[Copa and Cogeca](#) are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, they ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe. Copa represents over 23 million farmers and their families whilst Cogeca represents the interests of 22,000 agricultural cooperatives. They have 66 member organisations from the EU member states. Together, they are one of the biggest and most active lobbying organisations in Brussels.

[CELCAA](#) is the EU umbrella association representing the trade in agri-food and commodities to the EU Institutions and stakeholders, representing more than 35,000 trading companies. We cover the trade in cereals, grains, oil, sugar, animal feed, wine, meat and meat products, dairy and dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, tobacco, spices and nuts, cut flowers and plants and general produces.