



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
From the Secretary of State for Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Caroline Lucas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Thank you for your email of 19 March about the labelling of meat, milk and dairy products. I entirely understand your concerns. It's our aim not just to maintain effective food labelling but to improve the regime overall to more effectively recognise and reward good practice in animal welfare and sustainability.

We will ensure all existing protections are maintained through the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. It will transfer existing EU animal welfare and labelling legislation into UK law. There is no question of any dilution or weakening of standards.

Following our departure from the EU, we intend to build on the information existing labelling provides by developing a more sophisticated approach which could provide consumers with better information about, for example, how plants were grown and meat was reared and which can recognise farming approaches which respect the soil, reduce the risk of water pollution, limit air pollution, see greenhouse gas emissions controlled, contribute to the fight against climate change in other ways and also secure other environmental goods. We hope to consult widely on how such an improved approach to labelling might work and any thoughts you had would be much appreciated.

In the meantime, it's important that we learn from the progress that has already been made.

We agree that mandatory labelling of eggs has enabled consumers to make an informed choice about the eggs they buy.

In addition, there are rules for compulsory origin labelling of beef, veal, lamb, mutton, pork, goat and poultry meat, fish and shellfish, honey, olive oil, wine and most fruit and vegetables. Rules have been tightened in this area in recent years. Origin information is also displayed voluntarily on many meat and dairy products.

All these changes are welcome but there is much more to do.

Through the current consultation on the 'Future for Food, Farming and the Environment', which closes on 8 of May, we want to hear the views of the public and stakeholders to identify what welfare standards, terminology and definitions need clarifying and how best to deliver improvements. For example, I agree it is not always clear to the consumer what

standards underpin welfare terminology, such as 'grass fed', 'outdoor bred', and 'outdoor reared'.

I want to be sure that future additional activity, either by government or others will genuinely add value both in terms of consumer transparency and trust, as well as by adding real value to the UK's food industry in future trading relationships.

Thank you again for your letter.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Yours', followed by a stylized, elongated signature that likely represents Michael Gove.

Michael Gove