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Dear Greg,

It was a pleasure to see you recently, and thank you for allowing us to discuss the opportunities that we see from the current negotiations around Brexit.

You asked us what we would like to see under a new regulatory system for the UK for agricultural chemicals. As we mentioned, our members currently spend £200 million on agrochemical R&D in the UK, out of a global spend of £4 billion. We feel that there is a genuine opportunity to attract a greater share of that global investment to the UK.

Our view is that, at present, whilst the current EU environmental regime could be workable, the politicisation of almost every recent decision on crop protection products delineates a trajectory that will ultimately lead to EU farmers losing access to most of the crop protection tools currently at their disposal. Ultimately, this will lead to the EU becoming an agricultural museum, uncompetitive and perhaps unable to provide a steady and reliable supply of safe, affordable food.

The UK regulator, the CRD, leads the EU in the speed, efficiency and reliability of its regulatory decisions - 40% of EU regulatory decisions are currently managed by CRD. Our members feel that the absence of this regulator in the European sphere could have a serious effect on the pace of regulatory approvals in the future. A process that already takes over 10 years and £220 million pounds on average could increase significantly. This would mean farmers in the EU facing years of delay in access to new, innovative products with greater efficacy and lower environmental impact, putting them at a significant disadvantage. Already, the development of new technologies such as gene editing and biopesticides are happening outside the EU in part because of the political lottery involved in the current EU regulatory process.

As we discussed, a significant challenge for the UK will be the development of a future trade deal that recognises the importance of UK agriculture and food production and does not allow the EU to discriminate against UK products if our regulations diverge from those of the EU. Divergence from the EU is not a problem in itself – it is unfortunate that the EU has taken a different approach

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to the regulation of plant protection products (PPPs) shifting away from the proportionate, risk-based regulatory process practiced in almost all other parts of the world, to a precautionary and wildly disproportionate hazard-based approach. Clearly, the UK must not become isolated in the global marketplace by UK-specific regulatory requirements, and harmonisation and collaboration with the rest of the world where appropriate will help to avoid this.

The UK food and farming sector will need to have continued access to well-regulated PPPs in order to maintain the supply of high quality UK-grown produce, either for consumption at home or for export. For the UK to compete effectively in a global food market, the regulatory regime will need to be efficient and science-led. This could enable farmers and growers earlier access to innovations and cutting-edge products. However, accessing these products will depend on the UK being able to set its own maximum residue limits (MRLs) for produce grown using PPPs. If the UK continues to depend on the EU system, it will not be possible for the UK to operate an efficient bespoke regulatory regime that is appropriate for UK farmers, disadvantaging UK growers when competing in the global marketplace.

In establishing new trade and policy objectives following the UK's exit from the EU the government should be working to achieve:

- An approach to the regulation and approval of crop protection products that protects human health and the environment while incentivising innovation and giving farmers, growers and other users access to safe and effective products.
- An emphasis on risk rather than hazard in approving crop protection products for use, which assesses the actual, potential harm posed by any specific substance, rather than just the intrinsic hazard associated with a product, taking into account factors such as exposure and potency.
- A recognition of the importance of creating and supporting a policy environment for crop protection products that ensures businesses continue to invest in their research, development and manufacture, and bring products to the UK market that benefit farmers, growers and consumers.
- A lasting settlement that recognises the value of UK agriculture and the importance of domestic food production. In particular, government policy relating to agriculture should strike a balance between protecting and enhancing the environment and supporting productive agriculture in the UK, and should promote the role of technology in providing solutions that meet this aim.
- A deal that enables UK growers to access the innovations required to compete not just with the EU, but on the global market.

It does not seem appropriate for the UK to adopt wholesale a regulatory review regime that is a compromise designed for 28 countries to deliver. However, to ensure product safety, a functional review system suitable for the UK will need to be conceived and clarified by the point of exit. Consequently, the Government will need to make policy decisions prior to UK exit from the EU in order to ensure that the legislation is usable after we have formally exited the EU and any transition arrangements covering PPPs has ended. Due to the sheer number of decisions involved, detailed stakeholder consultation should begin urgently to enable Government to find the best solutions. We

are working on a report into what this better regulation might look like. We will, of course, share our findings with you as soon as we are able.

Production can be improved by the UK adopting a regulatory regime for agricultural inputs that promotes innovation. If the UK pursues pragmatic science-led regulatory decision making, the UK could become an early adopter of agricultural innovation and a world leader in agricultural productivity, giving farmers more choice as to the products they use.

One final point: we appreciate that all governments must connect with all sections of society, and that the environmental agenda is extremely important. Indeed, we are clear that we would not wish to see any diminution of current environmental standards in any future regulatory regime. However, investment decisions are being made by our members on R&D projects and infrastructure that will run for the next 15-20 years. The key players in our industry are international companies. If there is a perception elsewhere in the world, however false, that the UK is hostile to crop protection products, investment decisions will not go the UK's way. Even with the latest technology, there will be an essential role for chemistry in providing safe and affordable food for the foreseeable future, and a clearer signal that the government recognises this, and applauds the steps the industry is taking in regards to integrated pest management, stewardship and best practice would be most helpful.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries about any of the issues I have raised in this letter.

With best regards,



Sarah Mukherjee  
CEO  
Crop Protection Association

Cc: Secretary of State, DEFRA  
Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions