

To (ordered by number of MPs at the end of the 2017-2019 Parliament):

Conservatives
The Labour Party
Scottish National Party
Liberal Democrats
Democratic Unionist Party
Sinn Féin
The Independent Group for Change
Plaid Cymru
Green Party
Alliance Party
Brexit Party
SDLP
UK Independence Party
Ulster Unionist Party

4th November 2019

General Election Manifesto commitments sought by Compassion in World Farming

Dear Party Leader,

Compassion in World Farming (Compassion) would welcome policy commitments in the forthcoming General Election manifestoes, of all UK Parties, that promote and protect higher standards of UK animal welfare.

I am writing to you to request that the following policies are included in your manifesto for the forthcoming General Election.

Live animal exports

Compassion was pleased to see the UK Government announce a consultation on a live animal export ban for slaughterⁱ, and that this was recently strengthened to include options for restricting exports for fattening as well. A similar policy has also been announced by the Labour Party, covering live exports for slaughter and fatteningⁱⁱ. We encourage you to adopt a similar policy at the coming election.

Alternatives to live exports are available, including raising calves for rose veal, using sexed semen to reduce the number of male dairy calves born, or using more robust breeds of cattle to allow an income stream from male calves reared for beef. Live calf exports account for just 1.5% of all British calves born annually in the UK –for sheep it is just 0.33%. It is unlikely this trade provides significant buoyancy to the industry. To clarify our position:

- This ban would not halt the export of breeding animals.
- This ban would not halt movement of animals from the Scottish islands to the mainland.
- A ban on live exports would only impact on trade to countries outside the UK.

We would welcome strong support for a ban on live exports for slaughter and fattening in your manifesto.

End the Cage Age

Despite well-established, economically viable alternatives, over 16 million laying hens and sows are confined to 'enriched' cages and farrowing crates every year in the UK.

Regarding sows (mother pigs), the scientific evidence shows that welfare is severely compromised in farrowing crates. Numerous alternatives exist that give piglet mortality rates as low as or *lower than* crates, improve productivity and provide many benefits for sow welfare. Several free-farrowing systems, such as PIGSafe and Midland 360, are produced in the UK.

Several European countries have already banned caged systems. Britain should seize the opportunity to be a global leader in farm animal welfare, and also a global leader in animal welfare innovation, and a ban on farrowing crates and enriched cages for hens would help deliver against these goals.

This position is supported by a parliamentary petitionⁱⁱⁱ that secured over 107,000 signatures.

We would welcome policies that would phase out the use of enriched cages and farrowing crates in British farming, as well as prohibiting the building of any new caged systems on British farms.

Protecting British farmers from being undermined by trade deals

When conducting future free trade agreements, it is essential that British farmers are not undermined and that our animal welfare standards are protected. In order to do this, it should be a legal requirement that imported food products meet UK standards. Without such safeguards it will be very difficult to strengthen UK animal welfare standards and there may be pressure for existing legislation to be diluted to provide a level playing field for UK farmers in relation to imports.

This position is supported by the Commons EFRA Committee: "While we recognise the huge benefit that trade agreements could bring, these must not be at the detriment of the UK's reputation for high animal welfare, environmental and food standards. The UK Government must not allow imports that have not been produced to the UK's high standards"^{iv}.

We would welcome policies ensuring the UK cannot conclude any new trade agreement permitting the import of products produced to welfare standards lower than those required by UK law.

Public money for public goods (farm subsidies)

Compassion welcomed the Government announcement that farm subsidies will be provided for delivering 'public goods', including payments for good animal welfare. We also believe that small capital grants should be provided to farmers wishing to move to genuinely higher welfare farming systems, to help meet any additional costs involved.

We would welcome a commitment to introduce subsidies that deliver genuinely higher standards of welfare, rather than area-based payments (as is currently the case under the CAP).

Method of production labelling

Compassion has long campaigned for mandatory method of production labelling of meat, milk, dairy products as to farming method – as is already the case eggs, which have seen a corresponding, marked increase in the percentage of sales from free range farms. The Commons EFRA Committee recommended twice in 2018 “that the Government [should] introduce mandatory method of production labelling”.^v

We would welcome policies requiring meat, milk and dairy products, including those which have been produced intensively, to be labelled as to farming method.

Public Procurement

Defra’s ‘Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering’ merely require meat, milk and eggs to have been produced to legislative minimum standards. This is unacceptable. World-class animal welfare cannot be achieved while the public sector settles for the bare minimum. Public sector bodies should use their buying power to support the market for food produced to high nutritional, environmental and animal welfare standards – thereby further supporting British farmers in becoming global leaders in animal welfare.

We would welcome policies requiring the procurement strategy of public bodies to “promote the highest standards of animal welfare” – this is already the case in Scotland^{vi}.

Sentience

The UK Government said they would recognise animal sentience after Brexit. As things stand, if the UK leaves the EU, there will be a gap in the statute book. A petition on the parliament website demanding that sentience legislation is brought forward immediately, to protect animal welfare whatever the outcome of Brexit, backed by over 40 NGOs, closed in August having secured over 100,000 signatures.^{vii}

We urge you to commit to introducing legislation in the next Parliament that will recognise animals as sentient beings and require the Government, when formulating and implementing policy, to pay full regard to animal welfare. This should be a priority, to ensure no gap in the statute book.

Overuse of antibiotics in farming

We are delighted that the EU has taken steps to end the routine, prophylactic use of antibiotics in farming from 2022. Antibiotics are often used irresponsibly in intensive farming systems, to ‘prop up’ systems that would otherwise make animals ill. We would urge you to commit to ensuring the UK also implements this ban, to protect the efficacy of antibiotics for both human and animal medicine.

We urge you to commit to implementing the EU restrictions on farm antibiotic use in full, whatever the outcome of Brexit.

I would be happy to meet with you, or your officials, in order to discuss this in more detail if that would be helpful.

Sincerely,



James West
Senior Policy Manager

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ban-on-live-animal-exports-for-slaughter-explored-by-government>

ⁱⁱ <https://labour.org.uk/issues/animal-welfare-plan/>

ⁱⁱⁱ End the Cage Age: ban cages for all farmed animals. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/243448>

^{iv} Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee Report, Brexit: Trade in Food (2018):

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvfru/348/348.pdf>

^v EFRA Select Committee Report, Brexit: Trade in Food (2018):

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvfru/348/34802.htm>

^{vi} Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/12/contents>

^{vii} Recognise animal sentience & require that animal welfare has full regard in law

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/242239>

Copies of this letter were sent to the following parties, at the following addresses:

Conservatives: 4 Matthew Parker Street, London, SW1H 9HQ

The Labour Party: 105 Victoria St, Westminster, London SW1E 6QT

Scottish National Party: Gordon Lamb House, 3 Jackson's Entry, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH8 8PJ

Liberal Democrats: 8-10 Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AE

Democratic Ulster Unionist Party: 91 Dundela Avenue, Belfast BT4 3BU

Sinn Féin: Sinn Féin, 53 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 4PD, Ireland

The Independent Group for Change: Vox Studios, 1-45 Durham St, Vauxhall, London, SE11 5JH

Plaid Cymru: Plaid Cymru, Tŷ Gwynfor, Anson Court, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4AL.

Green Party: The Biscuit Factory, Unit 215 J Block, 100 Clements Road, London, SE16 4DG.

Alliance: 88 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HE

Brexit Party: 83 Victoria Street, London, UK, SW1H 0HW

SDLP: SDLP Headquarters, 121 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH

UK Independence Party: PO Box 408, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 9BG

Ulster Unionist Party: Ulster Unionist Party, Strandtown Hall, 2-4 Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AN