

Labour shortages in the food and farming sector

Inquiry

There have been reports of labour shortages affecting some businesses throughout the food and farming sector, for example:

- farms have been unable to hire all the seasonal workers they need to harvest food (and pick other crops such as flowers);
- businesses in the food and drink processing sector – the country's largest manufacturing sector – have seen their output fall due to recruitment problems;
- shortages of HGV drivers, who provide the vital linkages within the food supply chain;
- some empty shelves at supermarkets & local stores and some menu items being unavailable at restaurants, which have had impacts for consumers.

The reasons are complex: Brexit following the end of the Transition Period on 31 December - including the introduction of the Government's new immigration policy - and the covid-19 pandemic in particular are often cited, but are other factors also at play, and are the causes temporary or permanent?

This inquiry will explore what is causing labour shortages, and the impact on the food and farming sector both now and in the future.

It will also ask what other factors are affecting the food supply chain. This is likely to focus on the new post-Brexit trading relationship with the EU, including the latest impact of additional red tape and checks at the border since 1 January 2021 on businesses exporting food (and other "Sanitary and Phytosanitary", or SPS, goods) to the EU. The inquiry will also consider the Government's latest delay to introducing border controls and checks for SPS imports from the EU, including the effect on the competitiveness of British businesses.

Call for Evidence

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1. What is the extent and nature of labour shortages currently being experienced in the food supply chain?
2. What are the factors driving labour shortages in the food supply chain?
3. What is the outlook for the labour shortage situation in the coming months and years?
4. What other issues are affecting the food supply chain?
5. What impact will the timetable for introducing physical checks at the border on food and live animal imports from the EU have on the current issues being experienced by the UK food supply chain?
6. What measures has the Government taken to alleviate the problems being faced by the food supply chain this year? To what extent have they been successful?
7. Does the Government need to take further steps to support the food supply chain?

If you are submitting evidence on behalf of an organisation, please be sure to select that option. The submission form will still give you the option to enter your own name and contact details.

In order to promote openness and transparency, the Committee will normally only accept anonymous or confidential evidence where there is a good reason. If you would like to request anonymity, or that your evidence is kept confidential, please include your reasons for the request at the beginning of your evidence.