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The UK's agri-food trade policies one year on from Brexit

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The UK's Agri-food Trade Policies One Year On From Brexit

Les politiques commerciales agroalimentaires du Royaume-Uni un an après le Brexit

Die Handelspolitik der Agrar- und Ernährungswirtschaft des Vereinigten Königreichs ein Jahr nach dem Brexit

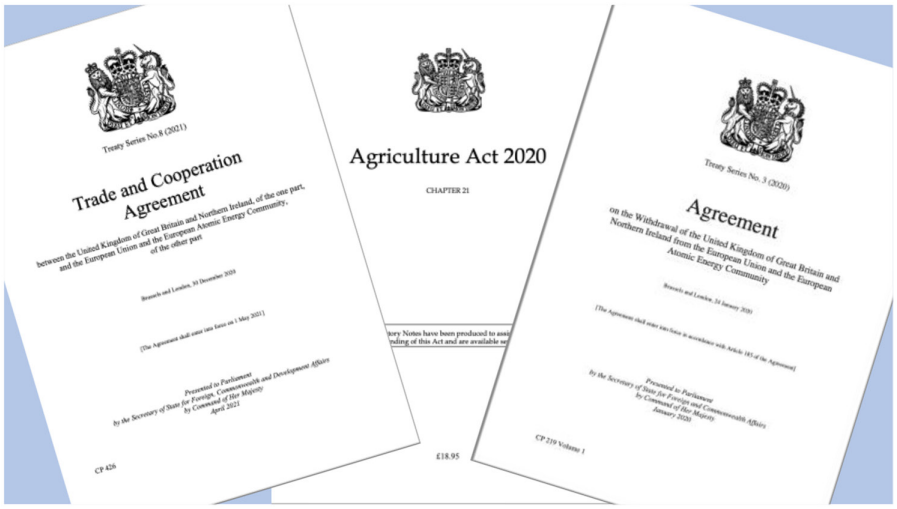
Alan Swinbank

After a long and fractious debate, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK, GB, NI) left the European Union's (EU) Customs Union and Single Market at the end of 2020. 'Brexit', which had been mandated by a referendum held in June 2016, was one of the most significant policy changes enacted by the British state in recent times. Earlier issues of *EuroChoices* explored various aspects of what Brexit might imply for food, farming, fisheries, and the rural environment, and examined the UK's policy choices. Several specifically addressed agri-food trade policy concerns. For example, Matthews (2019) discussed the implications for Ireland; Revell (2017) outlined the mysteries of Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs); Swinbank (2019) summarised the temporary tariff policy the UK intended to adopt if new trade arrangements could not be agreed with the EU; and Wilkinson (2020) explained the international trade rules that the UK would have to accommodate if it sought to protect British agriculture. One year on the shape of the UK's post-Brexit agri-food trade policies is perhaps a little clearer than it was during the Brexit debate, but the situation is fluid as uncertainties remain.

Prior to the UK's December 2019 General Election, the Brexit negotiations were stalled, with no clear consensus on an appropriate way forward. In that election Prime Minister Boris Johnson secured a clear majority of Conservative MPs in the House of Commons, having purged the most prominent Europhiles from his parliamentary party. He was thus enabled to press ahead unhindered with his main election pledge to '*Get Brexit done*'.

In the election campaign the Conservatives had made two further commitments of relevance to this article. First that a newly elected government would 'aim to have 80 per cent of UK trade covered by free trade agreements within the next three years, starting with the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.' Second, that: 'In all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards' (Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019, p. 57).

Johnson concluded a *Withdrawal Agreement* with the European Union's remaining 27 Member States (EU-27), including its crucially important *Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland* which differed significantly from the pact for which his predecessor Theresa May had failed to secure parliamentary approval. Accordingly, the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. However, Brexit was not quite 'done'. The UK remained in the EU's Customs Union and Single Market for a transition period throughout 2020.



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On Christmas Eve 2020 the UK and the EU-27 agreed a *Trade and Cooperation Agreement* (TCA), which meant that from 11pm GMT on 31 December 2020 *Global Britain* was finally in control of its trade policy. Some terminology from this paragraph and the subsequent discussion is outlined in Box 1.

The article briefly outlines the provisions of the Irish Protocol and the TCA, drawing attention to rules of origin; it introduces the UK's Global Tariff and the Free Trade Area (FTA) agreements the UK has rolled over from its EU membership; and it discusses the UK's FTA negotiations with Australia, New Zealand, the USA, etc. Trade policy is determined by the government in London, with the devolved administrations (in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh) having relatively little, if any, say. The article does not touch on related issues such as the development by the four nations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) of their own agricultural policies, shortages of migrant labour, or the allocation of fishing licences.

The Irish Protocol and the TCA

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement created an EU-UK FTA within which no tariffs or quotas apply on *originating products*. However, having left the Single Market, controls to demonstrate regulatory compliance became necessary. These are particularly onerous with respect to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures impacting dairy, meat, fish; and impinge heavily on small consignments. The Horticultural Trades Association, for example, has said: 'To send even the smallest packet of sunflower seeds to customers in the EU, businesses now have to obtain a phytosanitary certificate … This costs a minimum of £50 to obtain …, plus all the other costs of export, … *[meaning]* that a £2 packet of seeds costs over £100 to send' (House of Lords, 2021, pp. 21–22). The EU applied these provisions against GB products from 1 January 2021; but GB was still not in a position to fully reciprocate by the end of the year. From 1 January 2022 EU exporters to GB face enhanced customs controls to validate traders' claims for originating products status, and later in the year tightened SPS measures will apply.

Box 1: Some Terminology

The EU is a *Customs Union*. Goods circulate freely within a Customs Union, and imports pay the same import duty/tariff regardless of the member state into which they are imported.

In a *Free Trade Area* (FTA), such as the UK-EU TCA, the free trade provisions apply only to *originating products*, and each member of the FTA is free to determine its own tariff schedules (up to the limit of its WTO commitments). WTO rules determine the form Customs Unions and FTAs can take.

In an FTA, complex *rules of origin* are needed to determine what is sometimes referred to as 'economic nationality': has the product undergone sufficient processing in the exporting state for it to qualify as an originating product? The rules are often product-specific rather than generic; and vary from one FTA to another. Most FTAs provide for bilateral *cumulation* of origin, which means that production or processing in the FTA partner can count in determining whether a product qualifies; and more complex cumulation rules might also apply in which third party raw materials or processing might count. Traders need to demonstrate their products meet the requirements.

The EU is also a *Single Market*. This is an EU construct, rather than a WTO criterion, and reflects the fact that virtually all regulatory provisions, which in the past would have required customs controls on goods passing between EU Member States, have been harmonised. EU rules seek to ensure that EU businesses compete on a 'level playing field'.

A *Tariff Rate Quota* (TRQ) refers to a maximum quantity of product that can be imported having paid a preferential within-quota tariff rather than the prevailing out-of-quota tariff.

Under WTO rules, to ensure equal treatment of WTO Members, *MFN* (most-favoured-nation) tariffs apply, unless overridden by preferential arrangements (e.g. FTAs and TRQs). The UK's MFN tariffs are set out in its *Global Tariff*: these *applied* rates are sometimes somewhat lower than the maximum —*bound*— rates that it has notified to the WTO. The UK's Integrated Online Tariff can be found at: https://www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk/browse?day=1&month=1&year=2022

> « L'impact global de la libéralisation des échanges consistera probablement en une pression à la baisse sur les prix à la ferme au Royaume-Uni, se traduisant par une diminution des prix à la consommation. »

'Groupage' – in which a truck carries consignments from several suppliers, or a mix of a supermarket's products – has proved problematic as inadequate documentation for one part of the load can hold up the entire consignment. A further complication was that leaving the Single Market triggered changes to the Value Added Tax (VAT) regime. In particular: 'EU rules on e-commerce, which came into force on 1 July 2021', mean that all

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'commercial goods imported into the EU from third countries are subject to import VAT' whereas 'previously, goods under €22 in value were exempted' (House of Lords, 2021, p. 26). This had a significant impact on online retailers in GB supplying EU-based purchasers.

> "Die Auswirkungen der Handelsliberalisierung werden wahrscheinlich einen starken Druck auf die britischen Ab-Hof-Preise haben, der sich in niedrigeren Verbraucherpreisen niederschlägt."

An issue that had preoccupied British and EU negotiators throughout was the vexed question of the Irish border. The very act of leaving the EU's Customs Union and Single market created, *ipso facto*, a border between Brexit-Britain and the EU-27. If that border were to divide the island of Ireland — between NI and the Republic of Ireland — the danger was that it would reignite political tensions, however unintrusive the infrastructure, and 'smart' the information technology. The alternative, chosen by the Johnson government, was to base the border in the Irish Sea, between the islands of GB and Ireland, with NI precariously sited in both camps.

Thus, the Irish protocol meant that NI remained, *de facto*, part of the EU's Customs Union and its Single Market, but it is also part of the UK's Customs Union. This meant that NI producers had free access to the EU, via Ireland, and 'unfettered' access to GB. Products entering NI from GB were to do so tariff free, provided they were not then transhipped to Ireland; but products imported into NI (including those from GB) were to respect the EU's relevant Single Market provisions, notably its SPS rules. Throughout 2021 these provisions exacerbated tensions between the UK and the EU: the EU claimed that the UK was failing to implement the provisions of the protocol. In the Foreword to a July 2021 Command Paper, which sought 'significant changes to the existing Protocol', Boris Johnson wrote that it had 'already become clear that it is not possible to operate these arrangements in a way that can be sustained, particularly not in the inflexible way the EU seems to want' (HM Government, 2021, p. 3). UK supermarket chains had faced difficulties supplying their NI outlets from GB sources, particularly with uncooked meat products such as British-style sausages. Thus, on 30 November 2021 an online headline in *The [Daily] Telegraph* read: 'End your Brexit 'sausage war' on British bangers, UK to tell EU'. At the end of the year these tensions remained unresolved. They led to the resignation of Northern Ireland's First Minister on 3 February 2022. This left a power vacuum, as under the power sharing arrangements the First Minister and a deputy are jointly appointed by the two main parties to head the Northern Ireland Executive as a duumvirate.

The level of uncertainty about future UK-EU trade arrangements that prevailed from the referendum in 2016 right through to Christmas Eve 2020, with various aborted deadlines for leaving the Customs Union and Single Market, doubtless impacted business planning, disrupting trade flows. As well as causing millions of deaths, and disrupting lives around the world, the Covid pandemic severely disturbed supply chains throughout 2020 and 2021; and seems likely to do so well into 2022, if not 2023. Labour shortages have also impacted food production and distribution. Under the circumstances, and on the basis of a few months' data, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact of Brexit on UK-EU trade in food and drink. Data compiled by the UK's Food and Drink Federation, however, suggests that food and drink exports to the EU in the first nine months of 2021 declined more sharply than exports to non-EU countries, when compared to the same period in 2019 or 2020. The statistics suggest that

Table 1: The UK's Food and Drink Trade: Key Indicators

	Q3			January–September		
	2021	Change 2019–21	Change 2020–21	2021	Change 2019–21	Change 2020–21
				Exports		
All food & drink	£5.3bn	–13.5%	–3.5%	£14.5bn	–15.9%	–4.1%
EU	£3.0bn	–16.9%	–10.5%	£7.9bn	–23.7%	–13.9%
Non-EU	£2.3bn	–8.7%	**+7.5%**	£6.6bn	–4.2%	**+11.1%**
				Imports		
All food & drink	£11.1b	–1.4%	–2.6%	£32.3bn	–5.9%	–4.0%
EU	£7.4bn	–5.7%	–6.3%	£21.0bn	–10.8%	–8.4%
Non-EU	£3.8bn	**+8.1%**	**+5.6%**	£11.3bn	**+4.7%**	**+5.5%**

Source: Food and Drink Federation (2021), compiled from HM Customs & Excise data.

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some of the UK's imports switched from EU to non-EU sources (see Table 1), although in part this may be a statistical anomaly as products previously transhipped through EU ports are now recorded as direct imports into the UK.

> "The overall impact … is likely to be a downward pressure on UK farmgate prices, feeding through to lower consumer prices."

As 2021 turned into 2022, with the spectre of Article 16 of the Protocol overhanging the impasse, the Brexit drama rumbled on. Article 16 allows either party to 'unilaterally take appropriate safeguard measures' if the protocol's 'application … leads to serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist, or to diversion of trade'. Although such safeguard measures should be 'restricted with regard to their scope and duration to what is strictly necessary in order to remedy the situation' there are those in the UK who would like to use Article 16 to repudiate the Protocol, and by implication the TCA itself. *The Irish Times* on 30 December 2021 reported that the European Commission's vice-president, Maroš Šefčovič, had warned that 'a British decision to trigger Article 16 would have 'serious consequences' for Northern Ireland's economy'; and that 'Without the protocol, the system collapses'.

The UK's Global Tariff

It is important to stress that much of the UK's imports of food and drink enter the country duty-free. This includes originating products from countries with which the UK now has an FTA (for example the TCA with the EU); from

'Sausages on the BBQ'. Photo by Jonathan Taylor on Unsplash

developing countries under the UK's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which has been rolled over from the EU scheme; and under various tariff rate quotas (TRQs). Nonetheless, the UK's high tariffs, inherited from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), remain problematic for products that cannot qualify under these preferential arrangements.

The UK's Global Tariff, in force since 1 January 2021, has done away with 'nearly 500' so-called 'nuisance' tariffs of 2 per cent *ad valorem* or less. Tariffs were also removed 'on nearly 2,000 goods where it is beneficial to lower the cost of imports for both producers and consumers' (Department for International Trade, 2020a, pp. 12, 9). The UK has also engaged in a 'simplification' exercise in which tariffs have been rounded down; but many of the CAP's prohibitively high tariffs were retained. Thus, the tariff on fresh and chilled beef carcases has been rounded down from 12.8 per cent *ad valorem* plus £147.95 per 100 kg under the CAP, to 12 per cent and £147. However, as this example shows, the compound tariff structure (a combination of an *ad valorem* and a specific component) for many agricultural products remains. Nonetheless, three emblematic features of the CAP's old protective mechanism have gone. First, the Meursing Table has been abolished.

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This was a complex arrangement under which tariffs for processed products were calculated according to their sugar, starch, and milk content. Second, the Entry Price system for fruits and vegetables – under which an additional tariff could be charged if imports were offered at less than the Entry Price – has been removed. And third, the residual variable element on bread-making wheat, Durum wheat, maize, sorghum and rye, agreed in 1994 as part of the Uruguay Round GATT settlement, has been abolished, and the duty fixed at 0 per cent.

New FTAs have been negotiated with Australia and New Zealand that open-up the UK's market to imports of beef, dairy products and sugar, to the chagrin of UK farmers, but the potential benefit of consumers. An image of Belfast Harbour © Shutterstock

Rolled-over ('Continuity') FTAs

According to the National Audit Office (2021, pp. 30–32) 'the UK was party to 39 existing EU-third party trade agreements covering more than 70 trading partners representing 15.7 per cent of UK trade in 2020'. These, it had been claimed, 'would take years to renegotiate, with no guarantee that the UK would obtain terms as good as those we enjoy today' (HM Government, 2016, p. 5). In practice, rolling-over FTAs proved to be rather easier than many sceptics had imagined. By 31 December 2020 the UK had 'transitioned 33' of the existing agreements, covering 98.6 per cent by value of the trade between the UK and these 70 countries. A further three were renewed in 2021. There had been a flurry of activity towards the end of the transition period, with ten agreements secured in the last month of 2020 alone. By the original Brexit date of 29 March 2019, only nine agreements had been secured.

In the main, given the time constraints, the Department for International Trade's aim was 'to replicate the terms of the existing agreements rather than agree improvements to the deals' (National Audit Office, 2021, p. 30). Thus Article 1 of the agreement with Chile declares that its 'overriding objective … is to preserve the links between the Parties established by the association created in … the EU-Chile Agreement'; and like others it was unashamedly a 'cut-and-paste' operation. The agreement with Canada, however, declares that negotiations on a new free trade agreement will begin within the year. Japan insisted on negotiating a new *Comprehensive Economic Partnership* agreement. This, it is claimed, includes some additional benefits for the UK, but it is still by-and-large a replica of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.

What most, if not all, of these continuity agreements have in common is a wider geographical coverage of their rules of origin. Whilst the TCA allows only for *bilateral* cumulation (i.e. only products originating in either the UK or the EU count) the Japanese deal, for example, allows for 'extended cumulation … for a majority of products' meaning that inputs originating in Japan, the UK, *and the EU*, can contribute to meeting the requirements. In addition, the Government claims that product-specific rules for 'certain agriculture and industrial goods, such as textile products, sugar confectionary and biscuits' are more liberal than those in the EU-Japan arrangement, 'opening up new opportunities for traders' (Department for International Trade, 2020b, p. 31).

New FTAs

Section 42 of the *Agriculture Act 2020* goes someway in delivering on the 2019 election promise not to 'compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.' When *new* FTAs are negotiated, the Government is obliged to lay before Parliament a report explaining 'whether, or to what extent' its provisions 'are consistent with the maintenance of UK levels of statutory protection in relation to: (a) human, animal or plant life or health, (b) animal welfare, and (c) the environment.' (Thus rolled-over FTAs from the UK's EU membership, as discussed above, were excluded). The Government has also launched a new *Trade and Agriculture Commission* (TAC) to 'provide expert scrutiny of new trade deals once they reach the signature stage, helping ensure world-leading British agricultural standards are upheld'. It will 'have a formal role to inform Parliamentarians and the public about how new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are consistent with UK laws on animal welfare, animal and plant health,

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and the environment' (GOV.UK, 2021).

Vindicating the pre-referendum claims of the Brexiteers, the UK-Australia FTA negotiations were concluded on 16 December 2021.[1] This is in marked contrast to those between the EU and the Australia which have dragged on since 2018. For most agri-food exports from the UK, Australia will eliminate tariffs on originating products on implementation of the agreement; but for a number of cheeses they will only be phased-out over six years.

In the reverse direction, for a transitional period, protection is retained for some 'sensitive' agri-food sectors before duty and quota-free access is achieved (beef, sheepmeat, dairy products, wheat, barley, rice and sugar). Duty-free imports of beef, for example, will initially be limited by a TRQ (of 35k tonnes in year 1, rising to 110k in year 10), with the tariff on out-of-quota imports phased out over the same period. Then, for a further 5-year period, the UK can apply the *ad valorem* element of its MFN tariff if annual imports exceed an annual aggregate trigger volume. A similar 'product specific safeguard mechanism' applies for sheepmeat. Duty-free imports of long-grained rice will, however, be limited to 1,000 tonnes a year in perpetuity. Despite these temporary measures, the UK farm lobby and the devolved Administrations have voiced concerns about the competitive impact on the UK's beef, sheep and sugar producers (Webb, 2021).

One reason for their concern is their belief that the UK-Australia FTA, with very similar provisions in the UK-New Zealand FTA following quickly in its wake, sets precedents that other countries will wish to emulate in their own negotiations with the UK. The Government believes that its FTA agreements with Australia, Japan and New Zealand will ease the UK's entry into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) of eleven Pacific rim countries. In aggregate these arrangements could negate any protection for UK agriculture which a casual perusal of the UK's Global Tariff might imply.

One recommendation of the original body styled the Trade and Agriculture Commission had been that 'if trading partners could not demonstrate equivalence with core standards, then they would not be considered for zero tariff, zero quota access for those products to which the core standards applied' (Webb, 2021, p. 25).

Although this provision is not explicitly written into the UK-Australia FTA, Chapter 25 does include a non-regression clause on animal welfare in that the Parties recognised 'that it is inappropriate to encourage bilateral trade or investment by weakening or reducing its levels of protection for animal welfare', and that neither will weaken or reduce 'its level of animal welfare protection as an encouragement for trade or investment between the Parties'.

On SPS, Chapter 6 does little more than reiterate WTO measures. Chapter 25 does nonetheless address antimicrobial resistance. The parties have agreed to 'explore initiatives to promote the reduced need for and appropriate use of antimicrobial agents in animal production and health, and in crop production, including promoting guidance on the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobial agents in good husbandry and veterinary practices, and biosecurity.'

During the first year (2021) of Joe Biden's presidency no progress was made on the planned UK-USA FTA that had been endorsed by Biden's predecessor. Nor is it clear that had Donald Trump retained the presidency negotiations would have progressed as fast as the UK had hoped.

Modest economic benefits for the UK

In addition to the actual and aspirational FTAs mentioned above the UK has indicated its intent to open FTA negotiations with India and Mexico. The TCA with the EU, the continuity FTAs discussed above, and the new FTAs with Australia and New Zealand amounted to 64 per cent of UK trade in 2020 (National Audit Office, 2021, p. 56) going a sizeable way to meeting the Government's Manifesto commitment to have FTAs covering 80 per cent of UK trade by December 2022. But there is still some way to go, particularly with no agreement with the USA in sight. Moreover, the *economic* benefits as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of having control of its own borders, are modest. The National Audit Office (2021, p. 12) reports Government estimates 'that by 15 years after implementation, the UK's agreement with Japan will add 0.07 per cent (£1.5 billion) to GDP each year and, if signed, the UK's agreement with Australia will add up to 0.02 per cent (£500 million) to GDP, with New Zealand 0 per cent (£0) and with the US up to 0.16 per cent (£3.4 billion)'. This contrasts with the February 2022 update from the Office of Budget Responsibility that the 'new trading relationship between the UK and EU, … that came into effect on 1 January 2021, will reduce long-run productivity by 4 per cent relative to remaining in the EU'. The OBS explained: 'This largely reflects our view that the increase in nontariff barriers on UK-EU trade acts as an additional impediment to the exploitation of comparative advantage'.

Whilst longish transitional arrangements for beef and sheepmeat are built into the Australian and New Zealand

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deals, precedents have been set that future FTA partners will no doubt wish to copy. The cumulative effect moves the UK towards a full liberalisation of agri-food trade, despite the totemic levels of protection written-into the UK's Global Tariff as inherited from the CAP. Some will welcome and advocate such an outcome; others will resist. The overall impact of trade liberalisation is likely to be a downward pressure on UK farmgate prices, feeding through to lower consumer prices (one of the benefits of Brexit that the Brexiteers championed before the 2016 referendum). This will likely be to the detriment of UK farmers and existing preferential suppliers to the British market (EU-27 farmers for example); as well as having potential implications for land use, the environment and the food industry. These issues will doubtless be debated by analysts, lobbyists and policymakers, for some time to come.

Other imponderables remain. Will, for example, the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol be renegotiated, and if so with what effect? Will 2022 prove as difficult for GB's food *importers* as 2021 did for its *exporters*? What is clear though is that there remains a need for robust and careful analysis and comment that a journal like *EuroChoices* can provide.

Note

1. At the time of writing the text of the FTA is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/free-trade-agreement-between-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-and-australia

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Summary

The UK's Agri-food Trade Policies One Year On From Brexit

In January 2021 the UK left the EU. Brexit was 'done'. One year later the shape of Global Britain's agri-food trade policies is somewhat clearer. The core EU agreements are a *Trade and Cooperation Agreement* (TCA), and a *Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland*. The protocol meant that Northern Ireland remained in the EU's Customs Union and Single Market, *and* in the UK's Customs Union. It has caused considerable political controversy within Northern Ireland. Implementing these agreements – particularly sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) controls – has proved problematic for traders, and politically controversial. The UK's new Global Tariff, for products that do not enter on a preferential basis, largely replicates the prohibitively high tariffs on meat, dairy and sugar, the UK inherited from membership of the EU. It has successfully 'rolled-over' FTA agreements the EU had negotiated with over 70 trading partners. New FTAs have been negotiated with Australia and New Zealand. These open-up the UK's market to imports of beef, dairy products and sugar, to the chagrin of UK farmers, but the potential benefit of consumers. Existing EU suppliers to the UK face increased competition, and loss of market share. Further trade liberalisation is likely to increase the downward pressure on UK farmgate prices, feeding through to lower consumer prices.

Les politiques commerciales agroalimentaires du Royaume-Uni un an après le Brexit

En janvier 2021, le Royaume-Uni a quitté l'Union européenne (UE). Le Brexit était "réalisé". Un an plus tard, les politiques commerciales agroalimentaires de la Grande-Bretagne mondiale ont pris une forme un peu plus claire. Les principaux accords avec l'UE sont un accord de commerce et de coopération (ACC) et un protocole sur l'Irlande/ l'Irlande du Nord. Ce protocole signifiait que l'Irlande du Nord restait dans l'union douanière et le marché unique de l'UE, *et* dans l'union douanière du Royaume-Uni. Il a provoqué une controverse politique considérable en Irlande du Nord. La mise en œuvre de ces accords – en particulier les contrôles sanitaires et phytosanitaires (SPS) – s'est avérée problématique pour les négociants et politiquement controversée. Le nouveau tarif global du Royaume-Uni, pour les produits qui n'entrent pas sur une base préférentielle, reproduit en grande partie les tarifs prohibitifs sur la viande, les produits laitiers et le sucre que le Royaume-Uni a hérités de son adhésion à l'UE. Il a réussi à « reconduire » les accords de libre-échange (ALE) que l'UE avait négociés avec plus de 70 partenaires commerciaux. De nouveaux ALE ont été négociés avec l'Australie et la Nouvelle-Zélande. Ceux-ci ouvrent le marché britannique aux importations de viande bovine, de produits laitiers et de sucre, au grand dam des agriculteurs britanniques, mais au bénéfice potentiel des consommateurs. Les fournisseurs européens actuels du Royaume-Uni sont confrontés à une concurrence accrue et à une perte de part de marché. La poursuite de la libéralisation des échanges augmentera probablement la pression à la baisse sur les prix à la ferme au Royaume-Uni, se traduisant par une diminution des prix à la consommation.

Die Handelspolitik der Agrar- und Ernährungswirtschaft des Vereinigten Königreichs ein Jahr nach dem Brexit

Im Januar 2021 verließ das Vereinigte Königreich die EU und der Brexit war "vollzogen". Ein Jahr später ist die Ausgestaltung der britischen Handelspolitik für die Agrar- und Ernährungswirtschaft etwas klarer geworden. Die wichtigsten EU-Abkommen sind ein Handels- und Kooperationsabkommen (TCA) und ein Protokoll über Irland/Nordirland. Das Protokoll bedeutet, dass Nordirland in der Zollunion und im Binnenmarkt der EU sowie in der Zollunion des Vereinigten Königreichs bleibt. Es hat in Nordirland erhebliche politische Kontroversen ausgelöst. Die Umsetzung dieser Abkommen - insbesondere die gesundheits- und pflanzenschutzrechtlichen Kontrollen - hat sich für den Handel als problematisch und politisch umstritten erwiesen. Der neue britische Gesamtzolltarif für Erzeugnisse, die nicht auf präferenzieller Basis eingeführt werden, entspricht weitgehend den prohibitiv hohen Zöllen auf Fleisch, Milchprodukte und Zucker, die das Vereinigte Königreich aus der EU-Mitgliedschaft übernommen hat. Es hat erfolgreich Freihandelsabkommen, die die EU mit über 70 Handelspartnern ausgehandelt hatte, "verlängert". Neue Freihandelsabkommen wurden mit Australien und Neuseeland ausgehandelt. Diese öffnen den britischen Markt für die Einfuhr von Rindfleisch, Milchprodukten und Zucker - zum Leidwesen der britischen Landwirtschaft, aber zum potenziellen Vorteil der Verbraucher und Verbraucherinnen. Bestehende EU-Lieferbeziehungen mit dem Vereinigten Königreichs sehen sich einem verstärkten Wettbewerb und dem Verlust von Marktanteilen ausgesetzt. Eine weitere Handelsliberalisierung wird wahrscheinlich den Druck auf die britischen Erzeugerpreise verstärken, was sich in niedrigeren Verbraucherpreisen niederschlagen wird.

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