27th September 2019

Dear Secretary of State,

In these testing and volatile times, little is more important than tackling the global climate and nature crises and securing the nation’s long-term health and wellbeing.

The RSA’s Food, Farming and Countryside Commission reports, published in July, offer a bold and ambitious, yet realistic and optimistic version of a future which does both. They underscore the clear connections between farming and environmental stewardship; healthy, affordable food and the public’s health and wellbeing; flourishing rural economies and thriving communities. We are delighted to support their ambition.

Above all, they’re a call to action – to governments, businesses and to civic society – and for joined up, resolute leadership for the radical and practical steps needed. The Commission’s 15 recommendations include reversing the decline in the nation’s health and wellbeing with more support for healthy, affordable food, especially British fruit, veg, nuts, fish, meat and dairy from sustainable sources; committing to a workable transition plan for climate and nature friendly farming; providing the resources needed for a just and green transition, including a National Agroecology Investment Bank.

Taken together, they add up to a programme for change on a scale commensurate with the challenges, highlighting areas where people in different sectors, walks of life and political parties can find common ground.

A pre-requisite for this progressive agenda, and all the benefits it will bring, is a level playing field in whatever trading environment follows. The risks to citizens, rural communities, food and farming businesses are immense if we rush into the wrong trade deals after Brexit. UK Governments have established their ambitions to be world leading in environmental performance; this cannot be achieved by offshoring our responsibilities to countries who have less capacity, fewer resources or lower standards than we do.

The Commission has described a compelling future, which we all want to help happen. Its work was showcased at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York. Let’s not undermine this opportunity to demonstrate strong UK leadership to invest in a more sustainable future, through pressures to do trade deals, at any cost.

Yours faithfully,

Sir Ian Cheshire

Chair, Food, Farming and Countryside Commission & Chairman, Barclays Bank UK

and,

Andrew Selley

Commissioner. Chief Executive, Bidfood
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<th>Title and Affiliation</th>
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