

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE BRIEFING NOTE: FOOD PRODUCTS (MARKET REGULATION AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT) BILL

Drop-in session

Wednesday 19 March 2025

- The Countryside Alliance welcomes Mr Alistair Carmichael MP's initiative to introduce a Food Products (Market Regulation and Public Procurement) Bill and is grateful for the opportunity to help develop it.
- The Countryside Alliance has a policy and campaigning focus particularly on food procurement, seeking to maximise opportunities for British farmers and food producers to access lucrative public procurement contracts and thereby supporting the rural economy.
- In the 2023-24 session of the previous Parliament we worked with Sarah Champion MP on her Public Procurement (British Goods and Services) Bill. One of the Bill's objectives was to promote the procurement of British food. The Bill ran out of time owing to the General Election, but one result was the Will Quince review of food procurement.
- Separately the Countryside Alliance has been surveying local authorities and other public bodies as to what policies they have in place to encourage the procurement of British food, and what proportion of the food served in their outlets within a given period was British. Preliminary findings indicate that most local authorities have no such policy and have not routinely monitored the origins of their procured food.
- Recent years have seen councils lobbied by the 'plant-based' movement to pass motions committing themselves to advocating veganism and removing meat and dairy from catering menus. We believe an exclusive focus on livestock as the "ill" in our food system is myopic and disingenuous. We have therefore been campaigning to encourage local authorities instead to pass motions committing to procuring more British and, preferably, local food. To date, 11 councils across the UK have passed associated motions.
- Food labelling is another issue on which the Alliance has long campaigned. We have focussed on meat labelling and consistently highlighted the absurdity of bacon being labelled as British when the pork was produced abroad and only processed in the UK. Clear and transparent labelling empowers the consumer, ensures British farmers are not competing in an unfair market and can drive up animal welfare.
- We believe that this Bill offers a valuable opportunity to support and promote British food and farming. Strengthening the Groceries Code Adjudicator, improving labelling so customers can make better-informed decisions and ensuring the public sector procures more British and local food offers a lifeline to this essential sector.

For more information please contact:

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