

# Britain 'will offer Australia trade deal after 15-year transition period'

Britain will offer Australia a zero tariff, zero quota trade deal following a 15-year transition.

Trade Secretary [Liz Truss](#) has been given the go-ahead to bring about the post-Brexit deal in spite of a significant backlash from the UK agriculture industry.

Australia has been negotiating for a five-year period of cutting import and export taxes, but the idea has stoked fear that British farmers would be undercut by the introduction of cheaper beef and lamb from overseas.

Despite this, a 15-year deal has now been agreed by the Cabinet committee in charge of the negotiations, [The Sun](#) reports.

A fierce row had broken out between free trade advocates, such as Liz Truss, and protectionists within the Government, such as Michael Gove and George Eustice.

Boris Johnson came down on the side of free trade, and ministerial sources are understood to be confident an agreement with Australia is now within reach.

The details of the exact transition length will still need to be negotiated.

Those in favour of a deal claim that food and wine prices in UK supermarkets will go down as barriers to imports are done away with - but the existing tariffs would be 'tapered out slowly' so British farmers could adjust.



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The Prime Minister chaired a meeting of senior colleagues as negotiations with Australia about the terms of a deal continued.

The PM's official spokesman said: 'There are a regular series of meetings on not just this trade deal but the deals we have been working on throughout.

'The Prime Minister met with the ministers involved, like Liz Truss obviously, as part of the regular process.'

Mr Johnson 'wants to maximise the massive opportunities presented by post-Brexit trade deals', the spokesman said.

Downing Street insisted farmers would be protected in any deal with Australia.

'Any agreement would include protections for our agriculture industry and won't undercut UK farmers,' the Prime Minister's official spokesman said.

'We want a deal that is good for the British public and any agreement would have protection for the agriculture industry.'

But the spokesman refused to be drawn on what the measures to protect farmers would be, insisting he would not comment on the ongoing negotiations.

The proposed deal has been criticised on environmental grounds because of the prospect of Australian beef being shipped around the world.

Patrick Holden, chief executive of the Sustainable Food Trust, said: 'Our cattle come from a mainly grass-fed nation and we have one of the best carbon footprints for beef production in the world.'



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Australia has been negotiating for a five-year period of cutting import and export taxes, but the idea has stoked fear that British farmers would be undercut by the introduction of cheaper beef and lamb from overseas (stock image)



Those is favour of a deal claim that food and wine prices in UK supermarkets will go down as barriers to imports are done away with - but the existing tariffs would be 'tapered out slowly' so British farmers could adjust (file image)

'In contrast, imported Australian beef will likely be produced on feedlots, fed on grain and full of antibiotics and growth-promoting hormones.'

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said: 'We have significant commitments that we are delivering on climate change.'

'Obviously we would want to take all those things into consideration when looking at any sort of deal.'

RSPCA chief executive Chris Sherwood said: 'We're really concerned about reports that the Government is getting close to a trade deal with Australia which could see zero tariffs on goods produced to lower animal welfare standards, failing to protect our own welfare standards and the livelihoods of

British farmers.'

He said the Government should keep its commitment to set up a trade and agriculture commission to scrutinise deals.

Shadow international trade secretary Emily Thornberry told Times Radio: 'I think we should do a trade deal with Australia and I think there's huge potential in it, but what we should be doing is thinking about what it is that we need from trade, what we want to get from it, what our offensive-asks are, and how we need to defend ourselves.

'Frankly, we in this country have high food production standards.

'We have good animal welfare standards, and we don't want that undermined by cheap imports from countries that don't have the same standards as we do.'