June 2020

Thank you for contacting me about support for farmers in the Agriculture Bill.

Food and farming is a bedrock of our economy and environment in the UK - generating £112 billion a year and helping shape some of our finest habitats and landscapes. The Government understands this and has guaranteed the current annual budget in every year of the new Parliament, giving significant certainty on funding for the coming years. Indeed, nearly £3 billion of funding will top up the remaining EU funding to match the total funding for direct payments that was available for 2019.

I see examples locally of what many farmers are currently doing nationally to benefit wildlife and counter the effects of climate change. Now we have left the European Union, this country has the chance to tailor its agriculture policy to encourage this further. As we move away from the EU’s bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy, we will head toward a fairer system where our farmers are paid public money for the public goods they deliver.

Payments will be made for activities such as conserving plants grown or used in agricultural, horticultural or forestry activity. Land management actions which improve the quality of soil are also being considered. I am aware that land managers in receipt of Direct Payments are also required to protect hedgerows on their land. Through agri-environment schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship, their valuable role is recognised going forward, funding the management of hedgerows in the future to deliver recognised benefits for wildlife, landscape and the historic environment that we all want to see.

Finally, the Government has made a very clear commitment that any future trade agreements must uphold the UK’s high levels of food safety, animal welfare standards, and environmental protection – and the EU Withdrawal Act transferred all existing EU food safety provisions onto the UK statute book. Ministers have made clear these standards will not be watered down in pursuit of any trade deal now that the UK has left the EU.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**