

The Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP  
Minister of State  
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
Sent by email

Climate Change Committee  
1 Victoria Street,  
Westminster, London,  
SW1H 0ET  
w [theccc.org.uk](https://theccc.org.uk)

Date 22 February 2023  
Ref 230222-LD-MS

Dear Minister,

I was concerned to read reports of comments that you made at a press conference at the National Farmers' Union Conference on 21<sup>st</sup> February about the import of meat under new trade deals.

The Climate Change Committee's advice on the Sixth Carbon Budget, which Parliament passed into law in 2021, is quite clear on the importance of the nation's diet in achieving our legal climate goals. We have advised that consumption of meat should fall by at least 20% by 2030.

The Sixth Carbon Budget is also based on the assumption that there will be a just transition to Net Zero and, in that context, the Climate Change Committee has made it quite clear that we cannot ask UK farmers to meet the high standards our carbon budgets require while importing food from nations that produce meat with higher emissions.

This is a sensitive issue all over the UK but it is particularly crucial for Northern Ireland, whose economy is so dependent on meat production. I fear your comments will undermine Northern Ireland's commitment to the tough carbon budgets that are necessary under their new devolved climate law.

The UK cannot reach our legal commitments and international obligations under the agreements at Paris and Glasgow unless our agriculture sector plays its part. That must not be compromised by a decision to allow the importation of meat with a higher carbon footprint than our own.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deben".

Lord Deben  
Chair of the Climate Change Committee