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The EU-UK future trade relationship: our position

Friends of the Earth sets out a broad vision of how the future EU-UK relationship can best serve our environment and society.

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Summary

The UK's new relationship with the EU could have major impacts on our environment. Friends of the Earth has come together with 14 other civil society groups, including War on Want, Unison and the Trade Justice Movement to set out a broad vision of how the future EU-UK relationship can best serve our environment and society.

Trade policy for a purpose

All future UK trade, including that with the EU, should serve the overall aims of achieving a healthy and safe environment for all and increasing global wellbeing. That means the future EU-UK relationship must:

- Protect our environment and be consistent with our responsibility to fight the climate emergency
- Protect decent jobs and our rights at work and prevent economic hardship and global inequality
- Protect standards that we value, including human rights, quality food and animal welfare

Sequencing

The sequencing of trade negotiations will be key. The UK must seek a strong and cooperative relationship with the EU, going beyond trade to safeguard the social and environmental protections we share. Our discussions with the EU must not be further complicated by attempts to run negotiations with other trade partners such as the US at the same time. We need to secure our most important trading relationship first.

Standards

The UK government must adopt strong Level Playing Field provisions with the EU to lock in promises that workers' rights, food standards and action on climate change will not be weakened. The UK and EU have evolved these world leading standards over decades and they must be protected to provide a 'floor' below which future protections cannot drop. This would have the added benefit of signalling intent to other future trade partners.

Scrutiny

The processes that the UK currently uses to negotiate trade deals are outdated and undemocratic. The government must pass new legislation to guarantee the EU-UK deal - and other future trade negotiations - are conducted transparently and democratically. Public scrutiny, independent, comprehensive Sustainability Impact Assessments and a guaranteed vote for MPs are vital to ensure that the EU-UK trade deal reflects the public interest.

Other threats

- Healthcare and other public services are not 'tradable' and must not be covered by trade rules.
- Investment protection and Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) must not be introduced.
- Digital regulation must not be restricted by new and problematic digital trade provisions.
- Developing countries must not be disadvantaged by provisions in this deal.

Opportunities for the future relationship

The EU-UK trade deal must be truly innovative and not replicate provisions from other deals that don't serve social and environmental goals. This treaty is an opportunity to reinvent trade policy to ensure it truly serves the public interest, rather than treats trade as an end in itself.

This briefing, supported by the Trade Justice Movement, ChemTrust, Pesticide Action Network, Unison, Unite, Traidcraft Exchange, Friends of the Earth, the GMB, War on Want, Global Justice Now, Keep our NHS Public, Greenpeace, the Human Rights Consortium Scotland, the national Education Union, and the University and College Union, sets out civil society support for the UK to make use of this opportunity to secure a strong and cooperative relationship with the EU that is equal to the challenges we face.

[Download Priorities for the EU-UK future relationship](#)