



Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

16th March 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

Horticulture House
Chilton
Didcot
Oxfordshire OX11 0RN

T 0333 003 3550
E services@hta.org.uk
W hta.org.uk

Windsor Framework and the Trade in Plants, Trees and Seed Potatoes

The HTA welcomes the Windsor Framework and the benefits it will bring to both British growers and traders and Northern Irish businesses and consumers. We recognise the effort and difficulties in achieving this outcome.

This is of huge importance to many HTA members, who have seen an almost complete cessation of trade in their products with Northern Ireland. Trade relationships which had existed for decades have been lost or reduced.

In your speech announcing the Windsor Framework on the 27th of February you said, “the same quintessentially British products like trees, plants and seed potatoes will once again be available in Northern Ireland garden centres.” Whilst we welcome the sentiment, on reviewing the detail of the Framework, HTA believes this statement does not reflect the reality our members will experience, as there several substantial issues that remain unresolved for the trade in trees, plants and seed potatoes.

Whilst we are encouraged by the starting point and tone of the Windsor Framework, we would welcome developments to allow the opportunity for our members to be able to trade. Below, we set out our issues and hope these can be considered to further benefit both trading partners, consumers and the environment.

Below we set out the main issues:

- There will still be **several key species of trees and plants that will remain prohibited** for exporting to Northern Ireland. Iconic and popular native British species such as hawthorn, hazel and cherry along with honeysuckle and jasmine will still be banned. This represents £millions of lost trade and biodiversity.
- **Seed potatoes sourced in Great Britain will not be able to be sold in NI garden centres**, nor via mail order, only grower to grower, with NI consumers missing out on direct access.
- Northern Irish consumers will find it **difficult and costly to order plants from British based online sellers and mail order** growers due to the requirement for phytosanitary certificates remaining for parcels of plants sent from GB businesses to NI consumers
- For Northern Irish growers there is uncertainty about when a GB-sourced plant **becomes a Northern Irish good** this may mean Northern Irish businesses will decide to buy from EU suppliers to ensure their goods can subsequently be sold in the EU.
- There will be difficulties around **regaining business lost to EU-based suppliers**. GB businesses who make the decision to re-establish their market in NI will be competing against EU businesses

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that will still be able to sell to NI growers and garden centres directly, with no administrative burden or phytosanitary prohibitions.

- Whilst a reduction in customs requirements is welcome, there are concerns about **extra administrative burdens for businesses**. Commercial information will still need to be supplied to authorities and authorisation audits will need to be passed to enable the NI Plant Health Certificate label to be applied – meaning extra cost and resource requirements. There is uncertainty about the exact criteria to enable businesses to gain Green Lane access. All this extra burden makes crop and supply chain planning for this year and beyond even more difficult - meaning the cost of doing business in and with Northern Ireland is also unclear.

We seek that these issues are addressed in a timely way, to properly open up access to trade once again for GB & NI businesses and consumers.

HTA propose that a “British & Northern Irish Horticulture & Seed Potato Traders Forum” be formed as soon as possible. The Forum would work through the issues and the detail, develop new policies, mitigate costs, reduce bureaucracy and move forward positive change as quickly as possible. We would be pleased to help facilitate this.

We propose that the group includes trade associations, business representatives, and government officials from all the nations associated with horticultural and seed potato trade, with the aim of working towards finding solutions to these issues as quickly as possible. Additionally, this proposed forum would give a direct platform to those businesses impacted by GB-NI trade and allow up to date (and valuable) information and knowledge sharing.

We welcomed the original indications given to us by Defra on the Windsor Framework, the commitment officials have shown to working with our sector and the reassurance that you specifically gave to our sector in your speech. We seek reassurance that the dialogue will be there to deliver the improvements to the GB-NI trading relationship that the UK horticultural industry needs.

We look forward to your reply and engaging on next steps.

Yours faithfully

Fran Barnes

CEO, Horticultural Trades Association

Cc

Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP; Secretary of State for the Department for Business and Trade
Rt Hon Therese Coffey MP; Secretary of State for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG; Minister of State and Government Spokesperson, Cabinet Office