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h Jo,

Thank you for your email of 3 December on behalf of your constituents about the rearing of animals and the labelling of meat and dairy foods.

British food enjoys a reputation for quality which has been built on some of the highest standards of animal welfare in the world. The EU (Withdrawal) Bill will transfer existing EU animal welfare and labelling legislation into UK law. Following our departure from the EU, there will be an opportunity to review labelling requirements for all foods to ensure that we maintain the highest standards of quality and transparency for consumers and take the greatest opportunities for marketing our Great British food across the world.

Under the Food Information to Consumers Regulations (EU 1169/2011) it is a requirement that food information shall not be misleading as to its method of manufacture or production, or by attributing to the food effects or properties which it does not possess. Therefore food manufacturers and retailers have a responsibility to ensure that the way information is presented is not misleading.

The terms used to describe methods of production for eggs, such as 'free range' and 'barn', and poultry meat ('extensive indoors', 'free range') are defined in law. For pig meat, industry have produced a code of practice to clarify the pig production terms used on labels such as 'outdoor reared' and 'outdoor bred' which are widely used in the UK. Several of the main supermarkets voluntarily support and have signed assurances that their labels are compliant with the code. Additionally, some supermarkets have dairy products where the cows spend a minimum amount of time outside and this information is available to consumers.

Maintaining safety and public confidence in the food we all eat is a high priority for the Government.

It is welcomed that the subject of food's labelling receive greater attention and I will be pleased to further discuss how all consumers can become better informed about the quality of British foods.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

With best wishes,

DAVID RUTLEY MP