

Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill Briefing

Long title - *A Bill To Enable the implementation of, and the making of other provision in connection with, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).*

Background

In February 2021, the UK government initiated its application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), culminating in the formal signing of the accession agreement in July 2023. The UK is eligible to join the trade bloc by its sovereignty over the Pitcarin Islands in the Pacific Ocean. It will join the agreement when it has been ratified by all parties, including the UK government, and has passed through the parliamentary system. This is not expected until late 2024. The agreement will be laid before Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG), which provides a limited role for Parliament in the ratification of treaties. There are several primary legislative changes required before the bill can be passed, these include technical barriers to trade, procurement, and intellectual property. Furthermore, secondary legislation will also need to be amended with changes on immigration rules amongst others. Upon successful integration, the UK will enter into a free trade agreement with 11 countries in the Indo-Pacific: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. This will allow a reduction on import and export tariffs across multiple sectors, without mandating a strict alignment of standards among member states. Notably, Brunei and Malaysia represent the only two nations within this list with which the UK currently lacks a pre-existing free trade agreement. There is limited scope for the UK to change the text of the CPTPP agreement once joined.

Concerns with the Agreement

UK's inclusion in the CPTPP provides new export opportunities, albeit with a predicted marginal impact, estimating a 0.06% increase in GDP from 2020-2040¹. However, there are concerns regarding food safety, agricultural practices, environmental impacts and the risk of financially undercutting UK's high animal welfare standards. In response to this, the government assures that *'The UK's accession to CPTPP will be on terms which are right for UK companies, consumers and farmers as well as ensuring our right to maintain our food safety, environmental protection and animal welfare standards'*.¹¹

Animal Welfare Issues

The UK has higher legal animal welfare standards than every other CPTPP country, except New Zealand. The UK government emphasises that that joining the CPTPP will not compromise these standards and that any imported product would have to comply with UK import standards. However, a minimum standard for UK food imports is yet to be established. Ongoing tariff negotiations with Canada and Mexico raise concerns about potential vulnerability for UK farmers, particularly in the importation of eggs, pig, and beef meat products produced at standards illegal in the UK. Currently, both Mexico and Canada are net importers of egg products, but there are concerns that with the UK joining the CPTPP exports could extend to include the UK. Tariff free trade in egg products will be permitted 10 years post-UK's CPTPP acceptance, with all countries apart from Australia. Several CPTPP countries still allow practices such as conventional battery cages, banned in the UK since 2012. Similar concerns arise with pig meat imports from CPTPP members employing sow stalls, banned in the UK since 1999. Table 1 illustrates the animal welfare standard disparities between the UK and CPTPP countries and therefore the possibility of the CPTPP deal undercutting the UK's high welfare standards.

Table 1: Countries Within the CPTPP Agreement and Their Animal Welfare Standards Compared to the UK

Country	Existing Trade Agreement with the UK	Animal Protection Index ⁷	Pig Animal Welfare Standards	Hormone Use in Beef Production	Use of Conventional Battery Cages	Cattle Rearing Welfare Standards
Australia	Yes	D	Allows sow stalls. No obligation to use anaesthesia before castration/tail-docking/teeth-clipping/nose-ringing in piglets. ⁷	Yes – under FTA beef exported to the UK will be hormone free	Yes – however, due to distance, no eggs will be exported to the UK	Allow electro-mobilisation before stunning in cattle slaughter.
Brunei	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Canada	Yes – tariff reductions under negotiation	D	Allows sow stalls.	Yes - under FTA beef exported to the UK will be hormone free	Yes (51%) – being phased out by 2036. Tariffs on eggs with cease in 2034, allowing caged eggs to be imported.	Allows tie stalls and use of electrical trainers. ⁷
Chile	Yes	D	No legislation specific to pigs	No	n/a	No legislation specific to cattle
Japan	Yes	E	No legislation specific to pigs	No	Yes (94%) ⁶	No legislation specific to cattle
Malaysia	No	C	n/a	No	Yes ⁵	n/a
Mexico	Yes – tariff reductions under negotiation	C	Lower than the UK	Yes	Yes (99%) - tariffs on eggs with cease in 2034, allowing caged eggs to be imported.	No legislation specific to cattle
New Zealand	Yes	C	Higher than the UK	Yes - under FTA beef exported to the UK will be hormone free	No	Higher/on par with the UK
Peru	Yes	D	No legislation specific to pigs	n/a	Yes (98%) ⁴	No legislation specific to cattle
Singapore	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vietnam	Yes	F	Lower than the UK	No	Yes	No legislation specific to cattle

Please note; sow stalls were banned in 1999, conventional battery cages were banned in 2012, hormone use in beef production was banned in 1990 in the UK. The UK scores B under the world animal protection animal protection index.

Environmental Issues

The UK government anticipates a marginal 0.003% rise in greenhouse gas emissions attributable to altered global trading patterns upon joining the CPTPP³. Additionally, projections indicate a 4% increase in UK maritime and aviation freight emissions until 2035 owing to CPTPP-related factors³. Further environmental concerns include removal of tariffs on palm oil imports, and the possible consequences of importing goods cultivated with pesticides prohibited in the UK.

Palm Oil

The UK government's announcement to reduce palm oil tariffs from up to 12% to 0%¹, has raised concerns about increased palm oil imports in the UK. Environmental groups emphasise the significant impacts palm oil production, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, have on biodiversity and critically endangered species. In response, a collaborative joint statement between the UK and Malaysian governments has been published which addresses sustainable agricultural trade and forest conservation.

Pesticides

The CPTPP encourages regulatory alignment among member states on pesticides, including those prohibited in the UK for health reasons. This alignment poses the risk of importing food products containing banned pesticides, such as triadimefon (a fungicide) and chlorpyrifos (an insecticide), permitted for use in food in Australia, Chile, New Zealand (chlorpyrifos only), and Peru. These pesticides have been shown to increase cancer risk, reduce fertility and negatively affect neonatal development². Furthermore, levels of pesticides permitted in food in the UK may increase as CPTPP members allow for higher amounts compared to UK standards (Table 2)¹⁰. Additionally, UK membership in the agreement may inadvertently drive pesticide related environmental and human harm in the member countries they are used, as regulations on pesticide use tend to be weaker and poorly enforced.⁸ Furthermore, it creates a competitive disadvantage to UK farmers who have increased costs associated with adhering to producing food sustainably in line with UK health and welfare legislation.

Table 2: Differences in Pesticide Quantity between the UK and Other CPTPP Countries¹⁰

Pesticide Active Ingredient	UK	Australia	Canada	Chile	New Zealand	Peru	International Standard	Health Issues
Iprodione (grapes)	0.01mg/kg	X6000	n/a	X1000	X1000	X1000	X1000	Carcinogen Possible endocrine disruptor
Malathion (apples)	0.02mg/kg	X100	n/a	X25	X25	n/a	X25	Carcinogen Cholinesterase inhibitor Possible endocrine disruptor
Diuron (wheat)	0.01mg/kg	X10	X100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Carcinogen Suspected Endocrine Disrupter Developmental/Reproductive toxin

Food Safety Concerns

As the UK diversifies broadens its import sources, heightened scrutiny is placed on food safety systems and practices in exporting nations, with implications for human and animal health standards in the UK. Important considerations include the importation of hormone-fed beef, chlorinated chicken, genetically engineered products and global usage of antibiotics in the context of ensuring food safety of UK imports.

Hormone-Fed Beef and Chlorinated Chicken

The UK has defended its animal health standards and will not permit imports of products such as hormone use in beef production (Table 1), chlorine washed chicken and ractopamine injected pork from those countries that use those methods, which are illegal in the UK. However, the CPTPP has a higher threshold to justify bans on animal health grounds (hormone fed beef, chlorinated chicken) than any member state, and therefore the UK cannot use the precautionary principle for this.

Genetically Engineered Products

Under the CPTPP, exporting countries must submit a risk assessment for consideration before trade on any genetically engineered plant-based material is allowed. The recent enactment of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act in the UK suggests animals should soon be considered in this framework.

Antibiotic Usage

Within the CPTPP countries, varying regulations on antibiotic usage raise concerns about the potential importation of meat contaminated with antimicrobial-resistant bacteria. This has the potential for ramifications in the UK animal and human health systems. In the UK, antibiotic usage in food producing animals (FPA's) has reduced by 59% since 2014⁹. Importing animal products with elevated antibiotic levels could undermine this progress, with examples such as Japan, where medically important antibiotics are used for growth production², a practice illegal in the UK since 2006. Additionally, Mexico is the 9th highest user of farm antibiotics in the world – 12 times more than the UK.²

Important Future Dates

- The Trade and Agriculture Commissions (TAC) is an independent group who are due to produce a report by 30th November determining if by joining the agreement the UK remains consistent with the maintenance of statutory protections in relation to animal and plant health and life, animal welfare and the environment.
- Following the TAC report, the government will formulate a report concluding recommendations from the TAC report and Food Standards Agency advice.
- Once the government report is finished, it will start the CRaG ratification process in early 2024.

References

¹ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9121/>

² <https://www.sustainweb.org/news/mar23-uk-joins-indo-pacific-trade-bloc-cptpp/>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1170930/cptpp_impact_assessment.pdf

⁴ <https://arba.pe/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CAGE-FREE-PERU-2020-final.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2022.1038362/full>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/16/japan-cash-cages-chickens-alleged-bribery>

⁷ <https://api.worldanimalprotection.org>

⁸ Sustain Report UK accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) (March 2023)

⁹ VARSS Report 2022 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/654cb1fde70413000dfc4a89/_2669927-v1-UK_VARSS_REPORT_2022__2023_.PDF

¹⁰ https://www.pan-uk.org/site/wp-content/uploads/CPTPP_Pesticides_Briefing_Mar2023.pdf

¹¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027860/dit-cptpp-uk-accession-strategic-approach.pdf