



Brexit: **Unite demands** **protections for** **workers in** **Food, Drink and** **Agriculture**

Brexit  **Check** 

Safe, healthy food and high-quality jobs

Brexit: Unite demands protections for

Whether you voted Remain or Leave, Unite wants a Brexit deal that works for you as a union member in the food, drink and agriculture (FDA) sector.

More than 100,000 Unite members work in the FDA sector, with thousands more in sectors linked to the food chain, such as logistics. FDA is one of the Unite sectors most affected by Brexit. Much of the food that the UK imports comes from the EU, which is also our most important export market. Farming receives more than £3 billion a year in subsidies from the EU. The sector's workforce includes migrant workers from both inside and outside the EU, and many are Unite members.

Major FDA employers include companies based in Europe. EU regulations cover food safety, food hygiene, health and safety, animal welfare and the environment, as well as the rights of workers.

Unite has a positive plan for Brexit in FDA, and it builds on our values of decent work, fair pay and strong working rights.

As well as Unite's demands for Brexit, our FDA sector has a set of priorities that build on the FDA strategy, From Plough to Plate*. Brexit has made these more urgent.

* You can get a copy of From Plough to Plate from your regional office, or from the Food, Drink and Agriculture section on www.unitetheunion.org, and logging in as a member.

“Nobody knows how long the Brexit negotiations will take or what the outcome will be. One thing is certain. Unite will defend our members. Together we will campaign to protect jobs, pay and conditions.”

Len McCluskey, Unite General Secretary

Unite's demands for Brexit



We won't pay for Brexit – it doesn't mean attacks on our jobs, rights and communities.

Keeping our rights

Unite will fight to keep all your rights at work – the long list of rights that are built on European law – such as health and safety at work and family-friendly rights – must be kept, and be built on for the future, by scrapping the 'Swedish Derogation' that makes working life harder for agency workers, and by improving rights for workers and their trade unions.

Access to the Single Market

To defend jobs, the UK needs tariff-free access to the Single Market. Adding extra costs to imports and exports in food and agriculture could finish off whole sectors. Thousands of jobs are at stake over this point and Unite will fight for what's best for members.

A seat at the table for workers

Millions of working people must have their say on the Brexit talks through their trade unions.

Industrial strategy for the best future after Brexit

The government could support a positive post-Brexit economy, if it had an ambitious industrial strategy. Unite wants to see apprenticeships to fill a gap in skills, the public sector committed to buying British to support manufacturing, help to reverse offshoring and bring jobs back, and direct support for UK-based steel and energy.



for you in Food, Drink and Agriculture

Even before the government triggered Article 50 to start the Brexit process, employers, particularly in FDA, were taking advantage of the post-referendum uncertainty.

Employers have told Unite members and reps that rights at work based on EU law no longer apply.

This is not the case, and Unite will fight back against employers who try this on.

Unite is demanding that workplace laws underpinned by EU law are kept after Brexit.

Employers are also taking advantage of the uncertainty by saying they can't do pay deals, will shut sites or move jobs abroad. But many will have made these plans months or even years before Brexit. Unite will challenge those using Brexit as a smokescreen. To end the uncertainty Unite is calling for access to the Single Market – trade without tariffs – to be central to Brexit talks.

In the meantime, nothing changes. That includes laws on your rights at work.

Your rights at work

European Works Council (EWC)

If you sit on an EWC or Social Dialogue project you cannot be excluded while the UK remains a member of the EU.

Legal rulings

Your employer cannot opt out of EU legal rulings while the UK remains a member of the EU. This includes the ruling that protects holiday pay – it is still in effect.

Laws

Your employer cannot say that legislation based on EU legislation no longer applies to UK workers, e.g. Working Time Directive, Agency Worker Directive, Part-time Workers Directive, Equal Treatment Directive, and directives on health and safety.

Brexit on our Terms

We must make sure Britain retains the best of the EU, while putting trade union values at the centre of Post-Brexit Britain.

Our agenda calls for investment in infrastructure, proper jobs, decent pay and strong working rights at its heart.



We Won't Pay for 'Brexit': Exiting the EU must not result in a renewed attack on our jobs, rights and communities.



Protections for you: There must be no attacks on our rights at work and the right to remain for all EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens abroad must be protected.



An Ambitious Industrial Strategy: The only way to mitigate the impact of Brexit is with an ambitious industrial strategy, covering all sectors and using all options at the government's disposal



World class public services: We must continue to have well-funded and properly resourced public services, with long term investment, sustainable infrastructure and continued collaboration and research on health, education, our environment and our communities.



Access to the Single Market: Tariff-free access to the Single Market is vital to defend jobs. Such access will allow us to retain the best of the EU, while committing to a much needed industrial strategy.



A Seat at the Table for Workers: The collective voice of millions of working people must be central to the negotiations.

A stronger voice for Food, Drink & Agriculture

The impact of Brexit on our sector is mostly being ignored by the government, even though millions of jobs depend on it.

Unite is the trade union representing workers along the food chain. The union is demanding that the collective voice of workers is central to Brexit negotiations. That goes in particular for our members in FDA as the food chain is so exposed to the changes that Brexit may bring. Unite wants continued protection for our members at work and for the safety of food. Our members and consumers shouldn't pay the price for Brexit in lost jobs, worse pay and conditions, and less safe food imports.

All of us in FDA know Brexit will seriously affect not just our industry but every aspect of the food chain. That is why Unite is fighting to protect jobs and a safe and healthy food system.

*Steve Leniec and Mark Pryor, joint chairs,
FDA national committee*

Our members and their families deserve better than a Brexit-led race to the bottom. Unite demands a Brexit for the food industry that secures the livelihoods of millions

Julia Long, FDA national officer

Defending our members' jobs

Unite will use its collective voice with employers and with government to defend the jobs of our members in FDA. The industry is the biggest sector in UK manufacturing. Around 80% of FDA businesses are SMEs, (small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 250 employees). So every community in the UK has food, drink and agriculture businesses, with local jobs at stake.



Brexit must not be used as an excuse by global companies to wind down their UK sites and to move all production out of the country. Equally, the government must not use the FDA sector as a bargaining chip, trading off its future to win special treatment for other sectors.

Keep protections for workers, consumers and the environment

EU legislation underpins a wide range of workers' rights. These include on working time, equal pay, health and safety, discrimination, TUPE, equal treatment for part-time, fixed-term and agency workers, information and consultation rights, paid holiday, maternity and parental leave.

Unite will be campaigning hard for a Brexit deal that ensures



rink and Agriculture

EU legislation also affects the UK food system in a number of important ways. EU directives on water and the environment protect natural resources, which food and farming depend on. Food safety in the UK is supported by a legal framework based on EU laws, protecting consumers and keeping their confidence in food high.

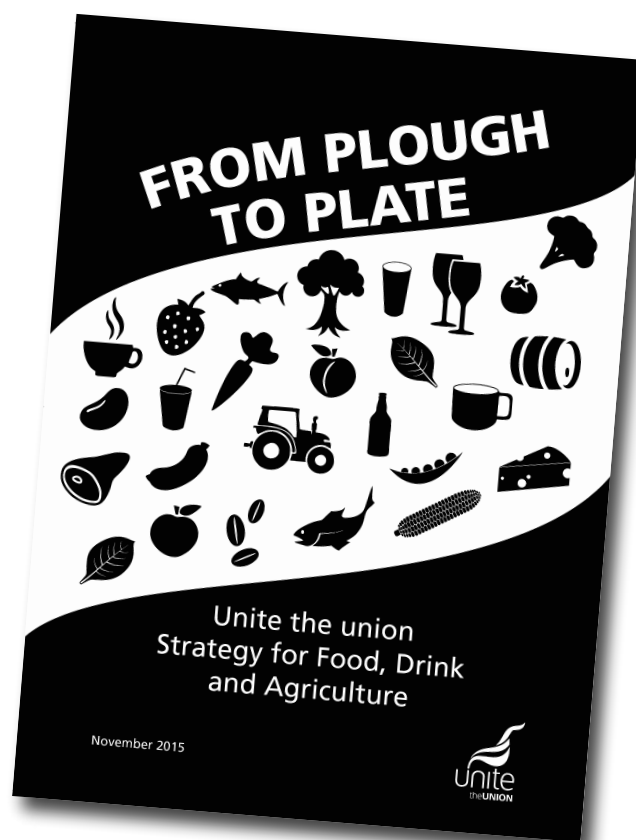
In our strategy document, From Plough to Plate, Unite's FDA sector argues for a food system that provides safe and healthy food in a sustainable way, with decent work and strong workers' rights. The EU has not been perfect and could be much stronger, but the protections of the UK food system in EU legislation support our goals. We are backing calls by environmental and consumer groups for existing EU regulations to be banked for now, and used as a baseline for stronger future protection.

Investment in skills

FDA's strategy on skills has been for more investment in training at all levels, not just graduate level, so that the industry becomes a high-skills industry with higher-paid workers. Increased automation means some unskilled and lower-skilled jobs are being lost, but may mean more demand for skilled workers. Brexit and the fall in the value of the pound means EU migrants have been leaving the UK to find better-paid work elsewhere and to escape anti-migrant racism. This is leading to labour shortages.

Now is the time for all in Food Drink & Agriculture to stand together for safe healthy food and high quality jobs. We need skills, safety, no discrimination, decent rights and standards for the food we eat and the workers who produce and distribute it. One big alliance from Plough to Plate!

Diana Holland, AGS



So Brexit has made our call for both immediate and long-term investment in skills more urgent. We want investment in training for the jobs of the future, including upskilling the existing workforce, and apprenticeships for young people – with a proper rate of pay – to attract them into the industry, and these opportunities need to be open to all. The UK needs a food industry with a stable long-term future that is built on well-paid, secure employment, and more investment in skills and training is the only way to achieve that.

A food system for the future

Food, drink and agriculture is too important to be used as a bargaining chip by a Tory government who would like to see the UK become a low-tax, low-regulation regime off the coast of Europe. However people voted, they didn't vote for the Tory vision of Brexit which risks the safety and security of our food supply for a long time to come.

ures safe, healthy food and high-quality jobs in the sector.



The facts



Brexit and Food, Drink and Agriculture

The food and drink sector is worth £26.9bn to the UK economy and it is also a major employer in every part of the UK.

The challenges from Brexit to the FDA sector in particular are clear. A high level of exports and imports, including 'components' for food and drink goods produced in the UK, would be very hard-hit by a version of Brexit that led to extra customs checks at borders, and high new tariffs. Many UK-based companies depend heavily on EU migrant workers, without which their future in the UK is in question. Unite wants to see a Brexit that is honest about what the food sector needs, and solutions that safeguard the jobs of all our members.

"The problem is not cheap labour in Britain – it's cheap labour anywhere."

Anyone who has had to negotiate for workers, in manufacturing in particular, knows the huge difficulties that have been caused by the ability of capital to move production around the world in search of far lower labour costs and higher profits. Supply and demand affects the sale of labour too, pitting worker against worker."

Len McCluskey, Unite General Secretary

- Around 850,000 people work in agriculture, fishing and food and drink manufacturing, while elsewhere in the supply chain, wholesale, retail and catering employs 3 million workers.
- Exports of food, drink and agricultural products are vital to the UK economy, with more than two thirds of them going to the EU.
- Exports of food and non-alcoholic drinks have doubled in 10 years, and total global exports, including alcohol, were £18bn in 2015.
- Imports are also vital to the UK, especially fresh produce – we import around £5bn of fresh fruit and vegetables each year, for example.
- Food manufacturers in the UK rely on imports of raw ingredients for products. Around 70% of food and drink imports come from the EU.
- The FDA sector has relied more on EU workers than any other UK industrial sector:
 - around 29% of the food and drink manufacturing workforce are non-UK EU nationals
 - about 80,000 work in horticulture
 - more than 90% of the vets in the meat hygiene sector are from the EU



Frequently Asked Questions

Q) How can workers' rights be protected?

A. From equal pay to the Working Time Directive, EU laws have underpinned many rights that trade unions have fought for. UK law must retain these completely from the moment that Brexit takes effect. As Unite, we must build our workplace strength to demand that employers pledge to retain all rights, terms and conditions, including access to European Works Councils.

Q) Why is access to the Single Market important for FDA?

A. Two-thirds of FDA exports go to the EU, and 70% of imports come from the EU. These goods can move with minimum hold-ups at customs, because the UK is part of the EU. A Brexit deal without this access means goods could be held up at borders – a major problem for perishable foods.

Q) What about 'Hard Brexit'?

A. No deal with the EU would mean a 'Hard Brexit'. The UK would have to fall back on World Trade Organisation rules, which would include tariffs. High tariffs on imports would push up prices and a higher cost of living will hit our members hard. High tariffs would make some UK exports too expensive and

uncompetitive, meaning some businesses would close. Unite's campaign to keep access to the Single Market and to keep trade tariff-free is essential to defend jobs.

Q) What alternatives are there to EU membership?

A. Unite analysis shows that none of these models to full EU membership, such as the 'Norwegian' option, are suitable for the UK. Tariff-free access to the Single Market must be secured, allowing a government with the political will to keep all that is positive about the EU, while also retaining the right to intervene directly in support of our industries.

As the government's cowardice to confront the steel crisis shows, state intervention is a question of political will. It is Unite's job to pile on the political pressure to make sure that will is exercised. Any new free trade deals must not be based on the failed models of TTIP or CETA. Workers' rights must be guaranteed, there must be no ISDS secret courts, which let companies sue national governments for allegedly discriminating against their business; and there must be strong trade defence mechanisms to prevent the illegal dumping in the UK of goods or materials from other countries.

Safeguards Against Exploitation : Labour rights and migrant workers

Unite works for all our members, however they voted in Brexit and whatever their country of origin. We know that over the years employers have used any difference between one group of workers and another – men and women, agency and permanent, young and old, race and different ethnicities, migrant workers – as a chance to pay less and try to drive a wedge between them.

Whether it's between women and men, agency and permanent, young and old, workers of different ethnicity, or workers who've migrated to the UK, these employers use 'divide and rule' to run a race to the bottom on pay and conditions.

So with Brexit and the future for migrant workers, Unite's response is very clear. No to divide and rule, no to a race to the bottom, yes to

a rate for the job. We will fight for strong collective bargaining rights so that unions are free to negotiate pay and conditions for all workers. Employers can recruit from outside the UK only with a trade union agreement or if they are covered by collective bargaining for their industrial sector.

We support all our members, and we will carry on supporting them wherever they work after Brexit, whether it's the rights of UK workers in the EU, or the rights of EU workers in the UK.

The Brexit vote highlighted a divided nation, including in the workplace. Keeping workplaces divided helps the Tories and employers to keep all of us down. Solidarity, not hatred



Brexit: next steps

The real power of our union is our strength in the workplace. We must organise to use this strength to protect our members from the impact of Brexit

So as a union our next steps on Brexit include:

- Unite will be lobbying the governments of Westminster and the devolved countries to make sure our collective voice is heard.
- We are part of an international labour movement, and our response to Brexit includes working with trade unionists around the world. For the Food, Drink and Agriculture sector this includes linking up with European trade unions through our affiliation to EFFAT and globally through the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF).
- Discussing the impact of Brexit at your next union branch meeting can help a campaign for your employer to publicly pledge to retain all workers' rights, standards and protections.

Brexit must not be something our union simply watches from the sidelines. We have a unique role to play in protecting and advancing the interests of our members.

Brexit Check

Unite has launched a new 'Brexit Check' website to monitor the impact of Brexit and provide the resources you need for your workplace.

Visit Unite's new 'Brexit Check' website for more information

Visit www.brexitcheck.org

Defend your workplace: Make your voice heard

Our strength as a trade union comes from our organisation in the workplace. It is vital that we use this strength to protect our members from the possible impact of Brexit.

You have the right to disclosure. Demand that your employer shares information about their planned response to Brexit, including plans for future investment.

If you have pay talks or other negotiations planned, demand that your employer publicly pledges to retain all working rights, terms and conditions, including access to European Works Councils. Can you organise a branch or workplace meeting to discuss the impact of Brexit at work and how to organise our response?

Brexit on our terms

As a Unite member in FDA, the future of Brexit has a special impact on you. Whether 'hard' or 'soft', Brexit will affect food safety, supply chains, inflation, pay and conditions, and the future of thousands of jobs.

Unite wants a Brexit on our terms, not the Tories' terms. They had no plans for Brexit, and their current vision offers a bleak future for workers.

Our terms are:

- A clear industrial strategy
- Training for a high-skill, high-pay food industry
- Keeping laws on food safety
- Union rights so we can defend pay and conditions.

And protection for UK food jobs against disappearing overseas as companies dodge higher costs from a Tory-led hard Brexit. Unite's positive plan for Brexit builds on our values of decent work, fair pay and strong working rights.

**Not yet a member of Unite? Join today: www.unitetheunion.org/join
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