

EDITORIAL

editorial@gff.co.uk

Editor & editorial director:

Mick Whitworth

Deputy editor: Michael Lane

Assistant editor:

Lauren Phillips

Reporter: Andrew Don

Art director: Mark Windsor

Editorial production:

Richard Charnley

Contributors:

Nick Baines, Bridget Cowan,

Clare Hargreaves, Patrick

McGuigan, Lynda Searby

ADVERTISING

advertise@gff.co.uk

Sales director: Sally Coley

Sales manager:

Ruth Debnam

Sales executives:

Becky Stacey, Maria Burnett

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GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Tel: 01747 825200

Fax: 01747 824065

info@gff.co.uk

www.gff.co.uk

Guild of Fine Food,
Guild House, 23b
Kingsmead Business Park,
Shaftesbury Road,
Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5FB
United Kingdom



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Marketing director:

Tortie Farrand

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Food industry lobbies as May triggers Brexit

BY ANDREW DON

Top speciality food importers and distributors have spelled out their requirements for trade negotiations following prime minister Theresa May's triggering of Article 50 and the Brexit process.

Their priorities will come into sharper focus in the run-up to next month's snap General Election as May seeks to return a strong Conservative majority to strengthen her hand in Brexit negotiations.

Duncan Hider, managing director of Hider Foods, told *FFD* getting trade deals should not be all about merely getting the best deal for the UK.

"We need to ensure other countries know we are open for business, keen to buy new and interesting commodities and foods, and pay a fair price for these, too."

He added: "Whether we voted for it or not, it [Brexit] is happening. The clearest picture and shortest timescale will provide the smoothest route. A clear vision, clearly communicated



Prime Minister Theresa May triggered Article 50 and the official process of Brexit last month

and moved forwards by the government is key."

Hider Foods has already reassured its foreign customers of the value the business placed on their relationships, he added. Some felt snubbed by the UK, but it was Hider's role within the sector to promote

the economic and quality opportunities within our food sector.

Jason Fisher, managing director of Anthony Rowcliffe & Son, said the general consensus was that food prices were going to rise which meant "we need to be on our game".

Fisher said he would like to see government negotiators prioritise the food industry to achieve minimal disruption on the movement of goods.

"We are seeing producers in this country and in Europe really pushing the boundaries, including innovation.

"We work with them and provide the insight and intelligence from being there in the market and would hate to see them repressed and stop any product innovation."

The comments came as major trade bodies urged the government to facilitate "a smooth and orderly Brexit" that ensures "frictionless" trade between the UK and the European Union.

A joint statement from the Food and Drink Federation, the National Farmers Union of England and Wales and the British Retail Consortium, addressed what the sector organisations said was the food supply chain's strategic importance for the UK.



The Countryside Alliance Awards, also known as the "Rural Oscars", were handed out at a ceremony at the Houses of Parliament at the end of March. Among the winners was South Yorkshire's Lawns Farm Shop (pictured above with Defra Secretary Of State Andrea Leadsom MP), which won the hotly contested Local Food & Drink Champion title.

The field of regional finalists also included Darts Farm and Ludlow Food Centre.

www.countrysideallianceawards.org.uk

Bird flu ban leads to farm shop egg giveaway

One farm shop owner is cock-a-hoop after Defra lifted restrictions last month on keeping poultry enclosed in high risk bird flu areas.

Matthew Carter of Greendale Farm Shop, near Exeter, had given away 24,000 surplus eggs to customers for free during the restrictions because he could not sell them as 'free range'.

Under the government measures, poultry in higher risk areas of England had to be housed or completely enclosed in netting because of the risk of catching avian flu from wild birds.

Carter told *FFD* he gave the eggs to his customers rather than sell them below

cost to supermarkets and discounters. The giveaway did see customers continue to buy eggs from the shop so lost revenue was limited to £4,000.

DEFRA said the risk of avian flu had not gone away and keepers must still take steps to prevent disease spreading.

