



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tariffs, Trade and Chlorine Chicken: Fresh Concerns for UK Food Security

LONDON, 7 April 2025 – The UK food sector faces renewed pressure following the imposition of new US tariffs on imported goods and a growing debate over the potential arrival of chlorine-washed chicken. Industry leaders and retailers are warning that these developments could contribute to rising food prices and a return to patchy supermarket shelves unless the government acts to safeguard standards and supply chains.

The latest tariffs - announced by the US on a range of food items - are expected to increase import costs on several processed and packaged categories, including meat and dairy. Retailers fear this will not only hit margins but could lead to limited product availability if importers pull back or shift to more expensive alternatives.

At the same time, concerns are mounting over the potential trade-offs in food standards. The longstanding controversy surrounding chlorine-washed chicken - currently banned in the UK - has returned to the spotlight. With fresh negotiations on UK-US trade deals underway, consumer groups, farmers, and food safety advocates are calling for firm government assurances that UK food standards will not be diluted in the pursuit of international agreements.

“The UK consumer expects affordable, safe, and ethically sourced food. This means trade policy must not come at the cost of standards or security,” said Jill Maclean at the UK Food Council. “We risk compromising decades of progress in animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and consumer trust if we let substandard imports into the market.”

Retailers are already contending with inflation, supply chain bottlenecks, and staffing shortages. The addition of tariffs and food safety uncertainty could further disrupt already fragile systems - with some warning of empty shelves this summer if key trade issues are not resolved quickly.

The UK Government has yet to issue a statement in response to the new tariffs or confirm whether chlorine-washed chicken could be permitted under any future trade agreement.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- Chlorine-washed chicken is banned in the UK under current food safety regulations.
- The new US tariffs were introduced on 2 April 2025 and apply to a range of food and agricultural products.
- The UK Food Council is an independent body representing the interests of consumers, producers, and industry stakeholders across the British food supply chain.

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