

The preliminary steps towards a UK/US trade deal are currently being taken. Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox MP has [recently opened preliminary discussions](#) with US officials to consider potential opportunities and risks for the negotiations. Much press emphasis has been placed on chlorine-washed chicken, but there are a host of other regulatory divergences that could undermine UK food standards:

1. Chlorine-washed chicken (BANNED IN THE EU)

In the US, instead of preventing infection in chickens across all stages of rearing and slaughter, the American poultry industry has resorted to acid washes to eliminate bacteria at the end of the meat production chain. Essentially, chemical washes hope to make up for inadequate hygiene on farms and abattoirs. In contrast, the European Union (EU) has chosen another approach to fighting meat-borne bacteria through the landmark [‘farm to fork’ approach](#). This approach requires steps all along the production chain to ensure food sold to consumers is safe.

2. Hormone-treated beef (BANNED IN THE EU)

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [allows](#) a number of steroid hormone drugs for use in beef production. Cattle producers use hormones because they allow animals to grow larger more quickly on less feed, thus reducing production costs. [Hormone treated beef has been banned in the EU since 1989](#). The [2003 EU scientific review concluded that the hormone estradiol-17 \$\beta\$ was carcinogenic](#) and that there was insufficient data to adequately assess the health risks of five other common beef hormones. As a result, [the EU amended the ban](#) to permanently exclude estradiol-17 β and provisionally banned the five other hormones. This decision resulted in the US bringing a successful [World Trade Organization \(WTO\) case](#) against the EU in 1998. The EU initially paid a retaliatory tariff to the US to maintain the ban. In 2009, the EU moved to allow [some imports of high-quality \(non-hormone treated\) US beef](#) under a tariff-rate quota and the US tariff was suspended. In 2017, the [US took steps to reinstate retaliatory tariffs](#), which are ongoing.

3. Ractopamine in pork (BANNED IN THE EU)

[An estimated 60-80 percent of US pigs are fed the beta agonist drug](#), ractopamine, prior to slaughter. The treatment [increases protein synthesis](#), resulting in increased muscle fibre size, weight gain, improved feed efficiency, and increased carcass leanness. When used, it yields approximately [three kilograms of additional lean pork and improves feed efficiency by 10%](#). Ractopamine has been found to [cause](#) serious disability in animals, including trembling, broken limbs and an inability to walk. [Ractopamine has been banned by the EU since 1996](#).

4. Chicken litter as animal feed (BANNED IN THE EU)

In the US, chicken litter (a rendered down mix of chicken manure, dead chickens, feathers and spilled feed) is marketed as a [cheap feed product](#), particularly for cattle. [The cost of chicken litter is lower than corn and soy](#) due to the high levels of industrial broiler chicken production in the US. In the US, the use of poultry litter in cattle feed is unrestricted. The use of chicken litter has [been banned in the EU](#) since 2001 following the outbreak of foot and mouth disease and BSE. [These diseases were attributed to the inclusion of animal protein](#) in industrial animal feed.

5. Atrazine-treated crops (BANNED IN THE EU)

Atrazine is estimated to be [the second most heavily used herbicide](#) in the US with [73.7 million pounds](#) used in 2013. It was applied on more than [half of all corn crops, and up to 90 percent of sugar cane](#). Atrazine is a [potent endocrine disruptor](#) and [reduces immune function in](#) both wildlife and laboratory rodents. The chemical has also been found to [possibly induce breast and prostate cancer](#). Despite these findings, the EPA still allows its use in US agriculture. [The EU banned atrazine due to its public health risks and its polluting impact on waterways](#).

6. Genetically modified foods (RESTRICTED IN THE EU)

The US has wholeheartedly adopted genetic engineering. In the US, [88%](#) of corn and [93%](#) of soy are genetically modified. New gene-edited products are reaching the market, such as [the non-browning Arctic Apple](#). In the EU, GM is widely rejected. The EU protocol for approval, known as the precautionary principle, requires that products be found safe for human health and for the environment. To date, the EU has approved only one GM crop for cultivation (a maize variety with weevil resistance). That said, [imported GM animal feed is common across the EU](#). Under EU legislation, Member States have the right to ban GM crops inside their territory. [Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have now banned GM crops](#). The U.S. Trade Representative [recently stated](#) that the US is considering bringing a WTO case against countries that currently have import restrictions on GM products.

7. Brominated vegetable oil (BANNED IN THE EU)

In the US, the synthetic additive [Brominated vegetable oil \(BVO\)](#) is used in many citrus drinks (e.g. Mountain Dew) to keep flavour evenly distributed. However, BVO is also [used as a flame retardant](#). Public health concerns have been raised since chemically similar flame-retardant chemicals disrupt normal hormone function, leading to problems with [brain](#) development in children, [fertility](#), [thyroid](#) function, and possibly [cancer](#). [It is banned in EU since 2008](#).

8. Potassium bromate (BANNED IN THE EU)

Potassium bromate is approved by the FDA to strengthen dough and promote rising in baked goods. It has been found to be a [possible carcinogen](#) by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). [A 1999 study](#) found that potassium bromate caused kidney and thyroid tumours in rats. This finding by the IARC led the EU, Canada, China, Brazil amongst other countries to ban the use of bromated flour. While [the FDA has urged bakers to voluntarily discontinue use](#) of the dough conditioner, it continues to approve the use in the US.

9. Azodicarbonamide (BANNED IN THE EU)

[Azodicarbonamide](#) (ADA) is used as a bleaching agent for cereal flour and a dough conditioner in baking. During baking, ADA [breaks down](#) to form a number of different chemicals. One of these chemicals, semicarbazide (SEM), has been found [to increase the incidence of tumours in lab rats](#). [The EU currently bans ADA from use](#). Due to increased public pressure, some US companies have recently begun to voluntarily remove ADA from their products with the sandwich chain [Subway announcing](#) in 2014 that it would discontinue using the dough conditioner.

10. Food colourants (BANNED IN THE UK, REGULATED IN THE EU)

In the United States, products that include [Yellow 5 and 6, Red 3 and 40, Blue 1 and 2, Green 3 and Orange B](#) are available for purchase and do not require labelling. In 2008, these artificial colourings were [taken off](#) the UK market due to health concerns. The UK banned these food dyes following a [2007 double-blind study](#), which found that eating artificially coloured food appeared to increase children's hyperactivity. While banned in the UK, the EU requires mandatory warning on foods that include these colourants.

Trade Bill must guarantee parliamentary scrutiny of all future trade deals:

Any future trade deal between the UK and the US needs to properly protect UK consumers and maintain the current high food safety standards. We need to maintain a safe, nutritious food system that encourages sustainable and environmentally-minded agriculture. To achieve this objective, the Soil Association has been working with the [Trade Democracy Coalition](#). The coalition urges the Government to establish a process that:

- Establishes broad principles for all trade policy (aligned with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#));
- Requires UK parliamentary approval of negotiating positions before the start of formal proceedings;
- Requires impact assessments, which are publicly available;
- Includes full and meaningful public consultation, including public hearings;
- Makes negotiating texts publicly available and allow for meaningful adjustments;
- Requires full parliamentary debate, with the potential to amend terms, and vote on all trade agreements.