

AGRICULTURE HOUSE · KNIGHTSBRIDGE · LONDON SW1X 7NJ

01-235 5077



THE
NATIONAL FARMERS'
UNION

FROM THE PRESIDENT

S. A. GOURLAY

24 July 1986

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher, MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON, SW1

225/17.

Dear Prime Minister

A number of very important issues concerning agricultural policy are now under consideration and decisions which will be crucial to the long-term future of British farmers and growers need to be taken during the coming months.

The NFU has openly acknowledged the need for change in some CAP support systems and we have put forward constructive proposals in several areas. We have suggested a realistic and fair way of taking land out of production so as to deal effectively with the cereals surplus. We have proposed changes for beef which will bring the cost of intervention under control. We want to see the Common Market scheme for buying up milk quota effectively operated in this country. We have shown how farm woodlands could be developed to provide alternative forms of income for farmers and to take land out of agricultural production. We have tried to take a positive approach towards environmental questions in terms of both UK policy and the proposals put forward by the EEC Commission under the farm structures policy.

In taking this positive attitude towards policy changes there are two important conditions on which we insist. One is that there must be no discrimination against the UK.

Secondly we are determined that new policies should not cripple our industry financially and prevent it playing its proper part in our national life, and in particular as the chief creator of wealth in the rural economy.

I am sure from your speech at our Annual Dinner last February that you are aware of our thinking and share many of our objectives. But in view of the critical nature of these issues I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss them with you personally.

May I make one critical point related to your own words at our Annual Dinner when you said "the message that Michael Jopling will carry into Europe this year is that the policy must be firm but that it must also be fair".

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This sentiment was warmly welcomed by NFU members but cereal growers have been deeply disappointed by a decision taken by Michael Jopling to apply higher standards in the UK for the moisture content of intervention cereals than are applied in any other Community Country. The resulting reduction of about £1 per tonne in the market price may not seem large, but this is exactly the kind of back-door discrimination which we fear and which we hoped your words would eliminate.

I do hope you will agree to see me so that I can explain more fully our views on the various policy measures which we would very much like to see progressed during the UK's Presidency of the European Council.

A copy of this letter is being sent to Michael Jopling.

Yours sincerely
Simon Gourlay

S A Gourlay
President NFU