

Embargoed until 06:00 on Sunday 13 January 2019

Dear Sirs,

As lead bodies representing Scotland's £14 billion farming, food and drink industry, we implore politicians of all parties to unite immediately and reject the option of a 'no deal' Brexit. Whilst recognising there is no political consensus yet on a future trade relationship with Europe, the potentially catastrophic impact of not reaching any deal is clear.

We are collectively hugely ambitious for the growth of our industry. However, even using the UK Government's own projections, we estimate the cost of No Deal to our industry would be at least £2 billion in lost sales annually. That is on top of the short-term chaos resulting from transport delays and labour shortages.

Indeed, our businesses are already bearing the cost of No Deal, having to spend millions of pounds in time and investment to mitigate the potential disruption that will stem from the UK crashing out of the EU.

We represent the people who farm Scotland's land and seas, and food and drink businesses that are the nation's largest onshore manufacturing industry, employing 120,000 people. The EU accounts for 70% of Scottish food exports annually and it is also the source of crucial inputs and supplies for our sector.

By Parliament rejecting a No Deal scenario, our industry effort can focus on shaping a future relationship with the EU that we can work with, not preparing for the fallout we can't. There is no tolerance for No Deal as an option. It must be rejected now.

Yours faithfully,

James Withers - Chief Executive – Scotland Food & Drink
Scott Walker – Chief Executive – NFU Scotland
Alan Clarke - Chief Executive – Quality Meat Scotland
David Thomson – Chief Executive – Food and Drink Federation Scotland
Julie Hesketh-Laird - Chief Executive - Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation
Alasdair Smith - Chief Executive - Scottish Bakers
James Graham - Chief Executive – Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society