# British farmers face unannounced EU inspections under Starmer’s new trade deal



British farmers are bracing for a new era of scrutiny as Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer’s recent agreement with the European Union introduces unannounced inspections at UK agricultural sites. This agreement, part of a broader strategy to foster trade flow and reduce costs, grants EU agencies the authority to conduct random spot checks on farms, abattoirs, and food production facilities. Critics perceive this move as a significant retreat from the independence sought during the Brexit negotiations, arguing that it signals a return to Brussels’ oversight over UK agricultural practices.

The Prime Minister's decision to align with EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards aims to facilitate smoother trade relations, potentially bolstering UK exports. However, the arrangement has drawn sharp criticism for compromising British sovereignty. Opposition figures within the Conservative Party are vocal about their concerns, characterizing the agreement as indicative of a “rule-taker” mentality that undermines freedoms gained through Brexit. Victoria Atkins, the Shadow Environment Secretary, has echoed this sentiment, calling the deal a “horror show” for the fishing sector and warning that it places British farming at the mercy of foreign inspectors.

Although inspections by EU officials are not uncommon in international trade agreements—evident in arrangements with countries like Canada and New Zealand—the incorporation of these practices into a UK deal stirs political discontent. This unease is exacerbated by the prospect of inspectors armed with the power to impose sanctions on British businesses, an eventuality that many farming groups find daunting. The implications of this agreement extend beyond agriculture; British fisheries, for instance, face a controversial 12-year extension of EU access to UK waters, further fuelling frustration among those anticipating greater control over domestic fisheries.

Economically, the arrangement is positioned as a pathway to increasing UK exports to the EU, with forecasts suggesting a potential rise by over 10% in some sectors. Proponents of the deal maintain that easing agrifood trade barriers will accelerate post-Brexit recovery. In tandem with this push for economic revitalisation, the agreement seeks to simplify the export process for British farm and fisheries products, aiming to mitigate the bureaucratic obstacles that have plagued exporters since the 2020 transition period.

Meanwhile, the backdrop of this new agreement is one of significant operational shifts. Following the introduction of the £23 million Brexit border control facility at Sevington, Kent, discussions are now underway regarding its future, given the expected reduction in border checks. Originally built to handle potential no-deal scenarios, these sites, now dubbed ‘white elephants,’ reflect the evolving landscape of UK-EU trade relations. With insufficient inspections calling the necessity of these facilities into question, many are urging the government to reconsider its investment in maintaining them.

As the UK and EU engage in a reevaluation of their post-Brexit relationship, broader implications for security and economic cooperation are emerging. The latest agreement signifies a notable shift towards better engagement with Europe, underscored by a new security and defence partnership aimed at enhancing collaboration in military and cyber capabilities. This strategic realignment underscores the UK’s recognition of the need for stronger ties with its principal trade and security partner, a sentiment reiterated by analysts who stress the value of constructing cooperative frameworks amidst growing global uncertainties.

Ultimately, while the Labour government frames this new era as one of pragmatic diplomacy and economic rejuvenation, many in the farming and fishing industries are left questioning the true cost of re-engagement with the EU. As fresh inspections loom, the balance between compliance and sovereignty remains a contentious point in discussions of Britain’s future relationship with its European counterparts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2058870/british-farmers-eu-spot-checks-brexit> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/66763def-d141-465d-ba96-31399071bf3b> - The UK government is attempting to sell or repurpose the £23 million Brexit border control facility at Sevington, Kent, following a new EU-UK trade agreement that is expected to significantly reduce the need for border checks on plant and animal goods. Originally built in 2021 to handle lorry inspections in the event of a no-deal Brexit, the Sevington hub and 40 other such facilities are becoming redundant. Discussions are underway with Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover, while port officials and local authorities, like Portsmouth City Council, are demanding compensation for the £120 million collectively invested in these 'white elephant' Border Control Posts (BCPs). Many BCPs have barely been used due to delayed implementation and partially functional UK border systems. The British Ports Association has criticized the government for directing ports to build the costly facilities with inadequate funding support, and the Cabinet Office has pledged to work with ports to implement forthcoming changes. The government anticipates reduced border checks starting in 2026, with a potential veterinary agreement with the EU by late 2025.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/e494af42-acd3-4775-a844-62b619ceb091> - At a historic summit hosted by UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, the UK and EU have agreed on a significant post-Brexit reset aimed at deepening economic and defense cooperation. The UK has granted EU fishing boats access to its waters for an additional 12 years, a move expected to face domestic criticism. In exchange, the UK secured an open-ended veterinary agreement to ease export conditions for British farm and fisheries products to the EU. The summit also includes the signing of a new defense pact between the UK and EU leaders. Economically, the new agreement could boost UK exports to the EU by 10%, with specific sectors seeing growth of over 25%. However, the deal faces political challenges in London, especially among UK fishing communities and Conservative critics.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/04bf9ddc-1abf-4641-a4e3-f9b5f2689ebb> - Nine years after the Brexit referendum, the UK’s new agreement with the EU under the Labour government marks a modest but symbolically significant step towards closer cooperation. The centerpiece is a security and defence pact that formalizes collaboration in military training, cyber and space security, infrastructure resilience, and hybrid threats. This agreement also opens the door for UK participation in the EU's €150bn Security Action for Europe procurement fund. Economically, the deal includes a veterinary agreement to ease agrifood exports and aligns emissions trading systems, potentially adding £9bn to the UK economy by 2040. However, the UK has accepted dynamic alignment with EU rules in certain areas and extended EU fishing access to UK waters for 12 years, prompting criticism from rightwing parties as a loss of sovereignty and a betrayal of the fishing industry. While the Labour government has maintained red lines against rejoining the single market or customs union, the deal reflects a shift towards more pragmatic relations. With Europe facing rising security challenges, the agreement serves as a foundation for a deeper realignment, recognizing the UK's need to foster stronger ties with its principal trade and security partner.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/7e7f481e-92dd-4d95-b46e-1d6adb911b70> - The UK and EU have announced a reset of their post-Brexit relationship through a three-part agreement aimed at improving economic ties, security cooperation, and energy integration. Key components include a new security and defence partnership, improved trade in agrifoods and electricity, and a veterinary agreement reducing red tape on agricultural exports. While Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer claims a potential £9bn annual economic boost by 2040, analysts note the gains would only marginally offset Brexit’s 4% long-term GDP impact. The agreement includes a controversial 12-year extension of EU fishing access to UK waters, a trade-off for securing improvements in food trade. The UK will also work towards rejoining the EU's internal energy market, which could save consumers €44bn annually. The security pact reestablishes institutional cooperation, including regular high-level meetings and potential UK involvement in the EU’s €150bn arms fund. Gains in youth and professional mobility remain uncertain, with limited commitments on work exchanges and no progress on touring artist visas. Despite some economic and diplomatic progress, the reset does not reverse the fundamental Brexit trade and regulatory realignments.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/1d301451-72cc-4eb0-a9c9-1d0f6930b520> - Britain and the European Union are engaged in high-stakes negotiations over key elements of their post-Brexit relationship ahead of a landmark joint summit at Lancaster House in London. Central issues under discussion include fisheries access, food trade, and youth mobility schemes. The summit will see the signing of a new security and defence partnership between UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and EU leaders Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa. However, talks in Brussels have extended late into Sunday, with disputes still unresolved. The EU has proposed a 10-year extension for EU fishing rights in UK waters in exchange for a permanent deal to ease agrifood trade, a major UK request. British concessions would involve regulatory alignment and EU contributions, which have drawn political criticism at home. Additionally, the EU is pressuring the UK to accept a wider youth mobility scheme, including improved access for EU students and musicians. While some progress has been reported, final agreements may be delayed or left for future negotiations. The final terms are expected to be revealed on Monday, with both sides aiming to highlight unity despite lingering tensions.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/706810a8-1d62-4ac6-85a8-888e036f46e3> - UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer is poised to finalize a veterinary trade agreement with the EU at a key summit in London, aiming to reduce food trade barriers and lower supermarket costs. The deal, however, would require the UK to accept dynamic alignment with EU food safety and animal welfare regulations without having voting rights. While Downing Street highlights the benefits of economic and security cooperation, including boosted trade and reduced bureaucracy, critics argue it undermines Brexit-era sovereignty. Conservative MPs, including Kemi Badenoch and Alex Burghart, have voiced strong opposition, citing a loss of UK legislative control. The agreement may also include provisions for improved youth mobility and student access to UK universities, while reiterating Labour’s commitment not to rejoin the EU customs union or single market. The summit will also address a broader UK-EU reset, including a new defense partnership and talks on extending fishing rights and e-gate use for smoother travel. Starmer defends the deal as a strategic international engagement that benefits jobs, security, and consumer costs.