



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Steve Reed OBE MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

28 November 2024

Dear Steve,

I am writing to express the urgent need for the extension of the current Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme beyond its scheduled closure on 31st December 2025. Its closure will have a disastrous impact on the many Producer Organisations (POs) across the UK. Many of them are based in my constituency Faversham and Mid Kent, and they all help contribute to jobs in the area as well as the UK's food security.

POs are an incredibly effective way of producing food – by joining many individuals together, farmers can share knowledge, risk, and techniques, as well as gain better bargaining power when it comes to agreeing on prices with supermarkets and exports. Over the past 27 years, the scheme has been a driving force behind advancements in UK horticulture. For example, apple yields have more than doubled from 20 tonnes per hectare to over 50 tonnes per hectare.

Overall, the current scheme, which costs the Government £40 million annually, supports a horticultural sector producing £9 billion worth of goods and accounts for 50% of the UK's fruit and vegetable production. I believe this represents clear value for money, especially as the Producer Organisations match funds – this shared investment means that they are working to achieve value for money for the taxpayer.

POs can operate in cycles as long as 16 years; long-term security and certainty are crucial for their success. Any scheme that does not take this into account, risks the future of horticultural businesses across the UK, the livelihoods of small growers, and the nation's food security – which is especially important given the growing challenges posed by climate change and geopolitical instability.

I strongly urge the Government to extend the current scheme and to support and sustain the UK's horticultural sector. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely

Helen Whately MP  
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent