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*Please reply to Bob Kennard at the above address,
or by email to: bob@sustainablefoodtrust.org*

Tuesday 5th August 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

The existence of a network of smaller abattoirs enabling thousands of family farmers to supply meat and other livestock products to a growing number of customers, either directly or via retail and catering outlets, represents a huge national asset.

We note that 'the UK Government would prefer animals to be slaughtered close to the point of production'.¹ However, the statistics tell a different story.

Decades of rationalisation and consolidation in the meat industry have taken a severe toll on this sector. A third of all small abattoirs closed between 2007 and 2017 and a further 6 (10%) have closed in the past twelve months. Without urgent Government action, this vital resource will no longer exist in a few years' time and journeys to slaughter will inevitably increase for a large number of animals currently slaughtered locally.

To reverse this decline, we urge the Government to develop a plan of action which:

1. Ensures that all farmers producing meat for local markets have access to adequate slaughtering facilities within economically viable distances.
2. Explores the means by which regulatory and other barriers to the survival of local abattoirs can be addressed without compromising food safety, animal welfare or the public good.
3. Establishes a working party to advise on the means of achieving these objectives.

¹ Defra's consultation, 'A Call for evidence on controlling live exports for slaughter and to improve animal welfare during transport after the UK leaves the EU', page 2, point 9

Increasing consumer demand for quality meat of local provenance has been one of the few recent growth areas in an industry which has seen overall demand for red meat fall, especially amongst younger age groups. As such, the closure of yet more small abattoirs would have a severe impact on farm shops, farmers' markets, traditional local butchers and many pubs and restaurants, which rely on small abattoirs to supply them. It would also remove an important source of skilled local employment, and prevent graziers in sensitive wildlife areas using specialised indigenous breeds from adding value to their animals by trading on the locality of their production.

Morale is low in the industry making it very difficult for some to undertake further capital investment. We need a culture where small abattoir owners can see a sustainable future, and where in areas of unfulfilled demand, new businesses, including on-farm mobile abattoirs, can become established and flourish. We therefore urge you to do all you can to assist us in maintaining and expanding this important resource.

Yours sincerely,

Signed by:

Bristol University Veterinary School
Campaign to Protect Rural England
Compassion in World Farming
Country Land and Business Association
Countryside Alliance
Eating Better
Family Farmers' Association
FARMA – The Farm Retail Association
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace
Guild of Fine Food
Guild of Food Writers
Livestock Wise
Master Chefs of Great Britain
National Craft Butchers (formerly
NFMFT)
National Federation of Women's
Institutes
National Federation of Young Farmers
Clubs (National Agriculture and Rural Issues
Steering Group)

National Sheep Association
National Trust
Organic Farmers and Growers
Pasture Fed Livestock Association
Q Guild of Butchers
Rare Breeds Survival Trust
Royal Academy of Culinary Arts
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Animals
Scottish Crofting Federation
Scottish Craft Butchers/SFMTA
Scottish Islands Abattoir Association
Slow Food UK
Soil Association
SUSTAIN
Sustainable Food Trust
Tenant Farmers Association