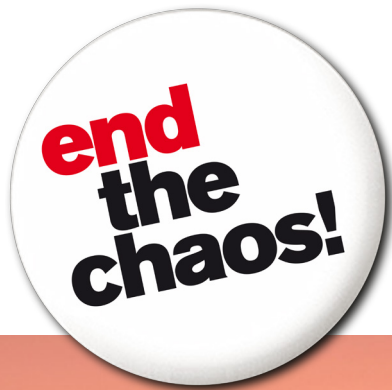


Brexit -

A battle of visions for UK food policy



Let the people decide



This is our summary of a presentation given by Professor Tim Lang, Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London and Emeritus Professor Erik Millstone, Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex.

Lang and Millstone say that for some the Brexit debate is a battle of visions for UK food policy. Taking back control is a myth, in reality after Brexit, the UK faces a choice over which set of rules to take. These rules will directly impact the UK's ecosystems, its food standards and public health.



Key Arguments

What's at stake with Brexit

❖ Security of the UK's food supply

- just in time supply chains are crucial to meet UK food needs
- if there are border controls, these chains will be threatened meaning fewer fresh perishables in the shops

❖ Workforce

- the food industry relies heavily on EU workers, both skilled (eg vets) and less skilled (eg fruit pickers)
- if fewer EU workers are allowed into the UK, the industry will face a significant shortage of labour and skills

❖ Costs

- 40% of food consumed in the UK is imported from the EU and EU trading partners
- the value of Sterling is likely to decrease after Brexit, meaning the cost of this food will increase

❖ Public confidence

- 78% of our food imports currently come from or via the EU, meaning we can have confidence most food we are eating meets UK standards
- if we replace these imports with food from elsewhere, we will no longer have that assurance

❖ Health standards and information

- as a member of the EU, the UK has helped to shape EU environmental controls and standards
- this ensures we do not eat chlorinated chicken or hormone injected beef etc
- and we can tell from the label what's in our food and its nutritional impact

❖ Food safety is higher in the EU

- cheaper food is typically produced to lower standards, therefore is less safe
- USA insists trade deals with them would require the UK to accept their significantly lower standards



UK food policy – more needs to be done on the following

❖ Ecosystems

- currently Government policy is very land focussed

❖ Sustainability

- UK food production is falling, most farms rely on EU subsidies

❖ Public health

- UK consumers currently top the league in the EU for ultra-processed diets, and obesity rates are increasing

❖ Labour decency

- all workers should be treated fairly wherever they are from

After Brexit, which of the following will the UK be?

❖ Atlanticist

- the UK decides to import the food it needs from the USA, produced and labelled to US standards

❖ Globalist

- the UK is fed from other non-EU countries, anywhere and everywhere

❖ Neo-colonial

- the UK buys its food from wherever land and labour are cheap enough to compensate for extra costs of lengthened supply chains

❖ Outer-European

- our food comes arms-length from the EU, eg as a member of the EEA, or as another neighbour of the EU such as Turkey, Morocco, Israel

❖ New European

- the UK remains a member of the EU, pushes for reform and continues to have 40% of its food supplied by the EU

❖ Bio-Regional

- the UK undergoes a radical restructure, develops a food policy driven by sustainability/ecological/public health concerns, to include more horticulture, less animal agriculture, shorter supply chains



Tim Lang (Centre for Food Policy)

t.lang@city.ac.uk

Erik Millstone (SPRU)

e.p.millstone@sussex.ac.uk

Food Research Collaboration

<http://foodresearch.org.uk/food-policy-briefings/>

**Food Brexit: time to get real
July 2017 overview**

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/newsandevents/2017/publications/food-brexit>