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Brazilian beef still leaves bad taste in Brussels

Press release by SNP MEP Alyn Smith

SNP Member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee **Alyn Smith** has today (Tuesday) hailed a decision by the Agriculture Committee to haul the European Commission back to the floor of the full Parliament in Strasbourg to justify the continued refusal to ban Brazilian beef imports on grounds of lack of traceability.

The committee has decided to table, via Spanish MEP Esther Herranz Garcia, an oral question, which obliges the Commission to send a Commissioner to Strasbourg to justify, in full debate, the position of the Commission. The move comes as the latest escalation of frustration amongst MEPs after the latest Foreign and Veterinary Office inspection to Brazil found that of the twelve farms randomly selected from the 1500 authorised to export to the EU, three had major faults in their standards and three had minor faults. The crux of the question asks: "could the Commission guarantee that the 1500 Brazilian establishments allowed to export their production comply with Community requirements?".

Smith said:

"This issue just refuses to go away, because we will continue our efforts to make sure our farmers have confidence that imports to the EU meet the same high standards we rightly enforce at home. I remember the first battle of the Brazilian beef, and we sent the Commission homeward to think again then, and am sure we will this time too.

"It seems ironic that at a time when we are being forced to implement new standards of traceability for sheep that the standards the beef industry has adopted are so relevant to this trade dispute, but I see a day coming when lamb importers will have the same issue to deal with. The principle, and the rules are clear. Our consumers and simple equity demand that anyone seeking to import to the EU meet our standards, same as our producers have to. The latest mission to Brazil found half the farms did not, with half of them exhibiting major flaws and half minor.

"The Commission seems to think that not perfect but good enough, I disagree and see little point in having high standards for our producers if we allow substandard imports to undermine them. The key point is traceability, and the lack of faith in the robustness of the Brazilian system. By the Commission's own findings, into just twelve farms remember, the Brazilians are not coming up to scratch.

"I was instrumental in the first ban we forced the Commission into, and am pleased to say the Brazilians sharpened up their act because they knew we were willing to use the sanctions available to us. If we need to dust of the trade ban again then so be it. We can look forward to an interesting debate in November."

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