

Brock claims Brexit threatens food supply

UK's Brexit plans a threat to our food supply – Brock

Edinburgh North and Leith MP Deidre Brock claims that the UK's Brexit plans are a threat to our food supply.

The chair of the UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee, Professor Alan Manning, said on Wednesday that stopping EU workers coming here to work on farms would mean that the fruit and veg industry would shrink. He also suggested that was a price worth paying to increase UK productivity.

Speaking after raising the issue in the House of Commons, Deidre Brock, the SNP's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs spokesperson, said: "This year we saw the highest-quality fruit and veg rotting in the Scottish fields where they were grown because there were not enough workers to pick them. Brexit has already put EU workers off coming here and after we leave the EU next year it will be impossible for them to come.

"The idea that that is a price worth paying or that it would increase UK productivity is stupidity of the highest order. It would mean farms going out of business, Scotland's food production shrinking and food here getting more expensive. There are already too many people relying on food banks in this country and making food more expensive won't help them at all.

"I asked the UK Government about it and the answer I got was that some workers from elsewhere in the world would be allowed to come and work on farms for a season. That's just 2,500 workers to replace the 75,000 that were coming every year from the EU. On top of that no-one has any idea where these workers will come from since EU workers won't be allowed.

“Brexit is already a threat to our food supply because importers will get tied up in the chaos that’s coming to our ports. Now we face seeing the food that’s grown in Scotland not going to be available for people here to eat. Food rotting in the fields of East Lothian, Angus and Perthshire means empty shelves in our supermarkets. Farmers will go out of business and those that survive will grow less because there will be no point in growing crops that can’t be harvested.

“Professor Manning made clear that there was “no realistic prospect” of British people doing that work and that seasonal workers were all migrants but he didn’t think that farmers should get any special treatment.

“This is madness, it would be cutting Scotland’s food production, making food that’s still available more expensive and putting farmers out of business – just because some members of the Tory party want to stop people coming here from the EU. It makes no sense at all and would damage Scotland massively.

“It’s time the UK Government stopped and thought about this. Ending freedom of movement is the wrong thing to do for Scotland, wrong for our communities, wrong for our economy, and wrong for our food production. Scotland needs immigrants and seasonal workers.”