Twitter Thread by Peter Foster



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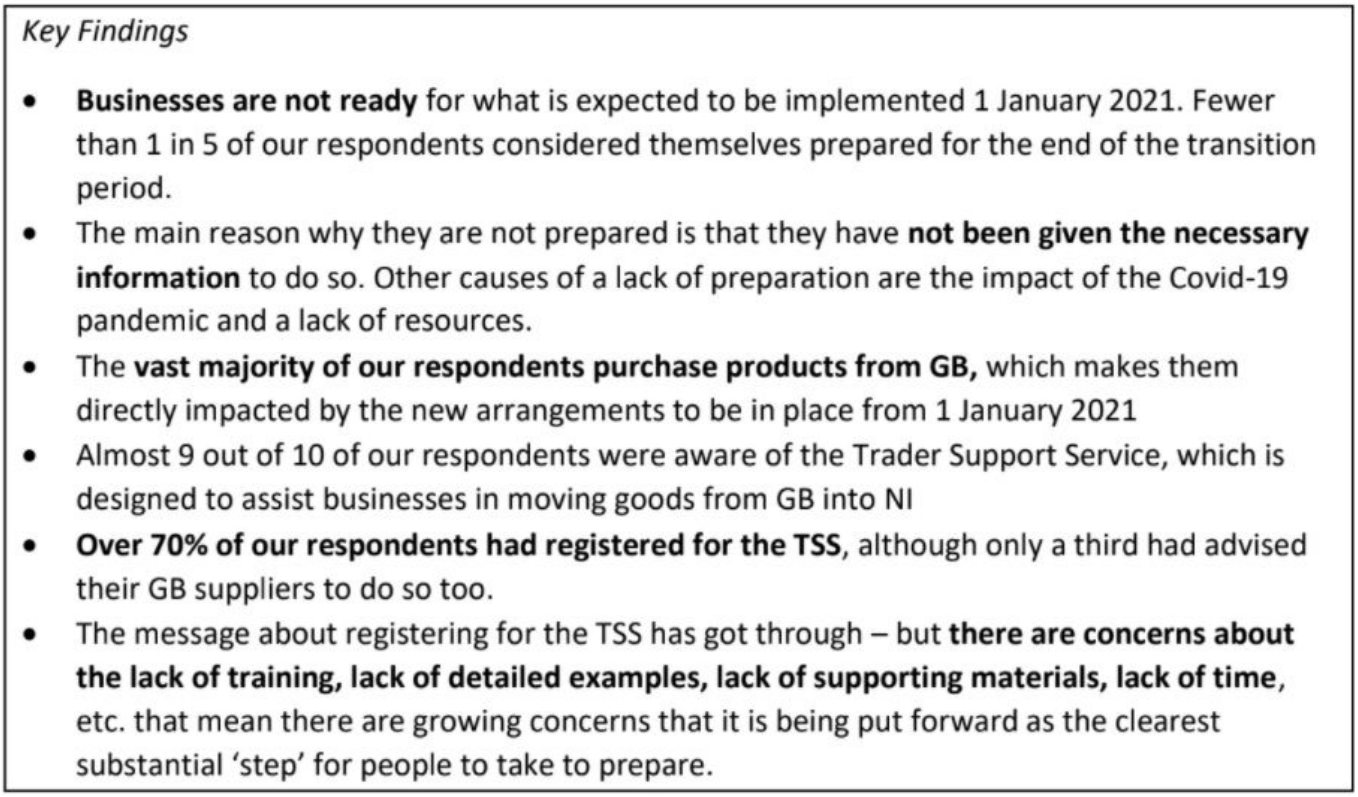
As #brexit talks drift towards the rocks, trade groups say plans for Irish Sea trade border after Brexit are 'in a mess' via, my latest via @FT ...this is an issue coming deal or no deal. Stay with me 1/

@FT So to recap, under Northern Ireland protocol negotiated in the Withdrawal Agreement all goods going from Great Britain to NI must confirm with EU customs code. To avoid new border in Ireland, that means trade border in Irish Sea - new paperwork, new systems. Operational Jan 1/2

@FT The problem is that because the FTA negotiations are stuck, the negotiations in the Joint Committee on how to implement the Protoocl (and @michaelgove is with @MarosSefcovic talking today) haven't yet born fruit. That means a LOT of uncertainty. /3

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic How much uncertainty? Well, as @MichaelAodhan tells me, a lot. Research by the Northern Ireland Business Brexit Working Group (NIBBWG) found only 20% of members were ready. And its not their fault: need info on tarifs, computer systems etc. And are not getting answers /3



Key Findings

- **Businesses are not ready** for what is expected to be implemented 1 January 2021. Fewer than 1 in 5 of our respondents considered themselves prepared for the end of the transition period.
- The main reason why they are not prepared is that they have **not been given the necessary information** to do so. Other causes of a lack of preparation are the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and a lack of resources.
- The **vast majority of our respondents purchase products from GB,** which makes them directly impacted by the new arrangements to be in place from 1 January 2021
- Almost 9 out of 10 of our respondents were aware of the Trader Support Service, which is designed to assist businesses in moving goods from GB into NI
- **Over 70% of our respondents had registered for the TSS**, although only a third had advised their GB suppliers to do so too.
- The message about registering for the TSS has got through – but **there are concerns about the lack of training, lack of detailed examples, lack of supporting materials, lack of time**, etc. that mean there are growing concerns that it is being put forward as the clearest substantial 'step' for people to take to prepare.

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan Now. The Government has earmarked £200m for the Trade Support Service run by Fujitsu and the Customs Clearance Consortium with @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 to help business process new paperwork...BUT even it cannot answer lots of Qs, and won't help with animal/SPS issues. /4

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 So. Take a look a this presentation by @ShankerASingham and TSS to @ManufacturingNI members last week....as M'fing NI boss Stephen Kelly tells me, his members just aren't clear what they need to do. This isn't necessarily anyone's fault... /5

https://t.co/vSgU5LlZ31

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI The problem is a lack of information because of constraints noted above...and which biz groups have been screaming at the government about. Take this letter from the NI Meat Exporters Association last week...which says they can't ready - deal or no deal. /6

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

03 December 2020

CC: Minister Edwin Poots

Northern Ireland's Meat Industry Needs Time to Implement New Arrangements

Dear Mr Gove

As the UK embarks on the most widespread and precipitous change in any policy impacting the UK internal market and trade in 100 years, we are writing to warn you, that as a result of a lack of timely clarity from government on a whole range of issues and irrespective of the outcome of the FTA negotiations, the NI meat industry cannot be ready at the end of the Implementation Period on 31 December.

With less than one month until the deadline, government cannot expect our meat industry to be ready for this change, while it continues to amend policy, write legislation, draft guidance, develop systems and negotiate with the EU. It is simply impossible for businesses to plan and adhere to rules and systems that continue to evolve. An honest recognition of this should be the starting point for discussions about how this situation needs to be addressed moving forward.

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI Because this is about real-world processes. Companies registering with the TSS, creating cleanses 'master data' sets and then interfacing with the govts CDS customs systems - which they have to do via TSS because it seems software interfaces aren't ready for others /7

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI If you look at the timelines on this NIMEA letter you can see how constrained the situation is - and why there is going to have to be some flexibility on both sides come January 1. Some form of phasing in or implementation period /8

Please find listed a number of fundamental issues that remain unresolved or where the existing (proposed) guidance is unworkable and businesses are seeking derogations:

- Trader Support Service will not go live until 21 December. The earliest that a test system will be available is 14th December, only 12 working days before the end of the implementation period. Until this happens, businesses cannot properly train staff
- unfettered trade to GB via Dublin port is of critical importance to NI processors serving the GB market and government has provided no guidance on how this will be delivered
- GVMS will not go live until 8 December, with full service not going live until 31 December, raising serious questions about the industry's ability to prepare to use this system, not to speak of the consequences of further delays and bedding-in problems
- industry is waiting on clarity on the delivery of export health certification for GB to NI trade, with significant concerns over the availability of certifying vets and there has been no announcement of financial support for industry to cover these new costs impacting UK internal market agri-food movements

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI The government has indicated it will take a "light touch" approach to the new enforcements...but for hauliers and shippers a 'nod and a wink' approach is a very difficult way to do business. Do you just take your chances at the border? /9

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI Because as @RHARichardB explains, supply chains work (particularly in food/supermarkets) on the basis that you DO catch that boat, because if you don't your perishable goods aren't going to be on the supermarket shelves on time. /10

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB Hauliers I'm talking to are shocked by the level of detail they are being asked for as part of the TSS service (basically everything about a customs code) which a lot are not equipped to provide.

At the same time Defra is unable to answer basic questions..../11

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB So for example "groupage". Simply. I go pick up a load of lamb, beef and chicken from three distro point. I get an export health cert for the lamb. Arrive at second stop. Then seal is 'broken', so how do I certify the lamb again - make sure it wasn't tampered with etc. /12

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB And then the same process with the chicken...

Leaving aside how chicken currently in cold storage will get a health certificate which it will need after Jan 1 if going to NI...but didn't when it was delivered?

It can be make to work, but its complex and needs time /13

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB The gov is trying best to negotiation a Retail Movement System simplification that will push checks to warehouse and create, for example a month-long validity 'conformity certificate' for meat products...but that wont help wholesalers or anyone shipping inputs/14

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB The point is that even as we do get clarity of which goods are 'at risk' of going into EU single market, business will need time to adjust.

Negotiators on both sides say a one-year 'implementation' period won't happen...but there will need to be flexibility /15

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB The TSS - which is offering inflated customs intermediary salaries of £40k+, compared to £25k - is also going to be put to the test in the coming months as it tries to process the movements of operators who are highly inexperienced in doing all this /16

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB And whatever happens with the deal, BOTH sides have a responsibility to the Good Friday Agreement and Northern Ireland to make this work in a way that doesn't make NI consumers & businesses pay too high a price for an "English" #Brexit - which is how some will present it /17

@FT @michaelgove @MarosSefcovic @MichaelAodhan @ShankerASingham @RobHardyFR8 @ManufacturingNI @RHARichardB There is a LOT of frustration and finger-waving going on out there at the moment (totally understandably) but there is a huge mutual interest - for the UK's Union and the EU's Union, which of course includes Ireland, to get this right. ENDS