

FOOD MINISTER TELLS TO “PREPARE FOR NO DEAL”

Senior minister warns wholesale sector to get ready for a disorderly exit from the European Union

Food Minister David Rutley has warned wholesalers to brace themselves for a disorderly Brexit, as FWD members continue their investments in preparations for 29 March deadline.

At a meeting with FWD prior to the 29 January vote in the House of Commons, Rutley stressed that no deal remained a real prospect as the UK's departure date looms ever closer.

“The minister urged all wholesalers to continue with their no-deal Brexit preparations,” revealed FWD Chief Executive James Bielby.

“He [Rutley] said government was working with businesses to help no-deal planning. But if any wholesalers are unclear about what they should be doing, let FWD know, as we have a direct route to officials leading on no-deal planning.”

Rutley also used the meeting to inform FWD that potential post-Brexit tariffs would be published “soon” and that the plan was for “low-to-no” tariffs wherever possible.

UNCERTAINTY

Despite the promise of those reassurances, the continuing uncertainty in agreeing the UK's exit from the EU is proving costly for wholesalers.

At the time of going to press, the terms of the nation's departure are still unclear, with MPs voting against leaving without a deal, but EU leaders saying it's inevitable if the UK doesn't back the current offer.

And with the prospect of a no-deal Brexit having a damaging impact on importing goods, Bidfood Managing Director Andrew Selley has spoken out about his business's preparations.

Speaking in an interview with *Channel Four News*, Selley explained that the uncertainty leaves companies with no option but to make their own decisions on how to tackle the issue, which means securing extra warehouse space to stock additional ambient and frozen

“We've got schedules of deliveries coming in, which we've had to start taking in because we can't just leave it all until the last minute”

products so they can continue to serve its customers in the event of a no deal.

STOCKPILING

“That's at a sunk cost to us and we can't get that back, and that's hundreds of thousands of pounds,” Selley, who is also FWD chairman, said.

“We've got schedules of deliveries



Stay updated with all the latest developments on wholesalenews.co.uk

LS FWD 0 DEAL”

of those products coming in over the next three months, which we've had to start taking in because we can't just leave it all until the last minute, like the government seems to be doing. If we have to go all the way to the end of March, then it will cost us millions of pounds.”

While Bidfood can call upon contingency funds, other wholesalers aren't so lucky and can only hope negative media speculation of a no-deal Brexit Britain is wide of the mark.

Without any concrete indication of how the UK will finally exit the EU, the risk and cost to businesses choosing to prepare for Brexit on their own

are getting bigger.

“I don't think anybody knows what's going to happen, as we've been saying for 12 or 18 months – what we just need is clarity,” added Selley.

“If we have clarity one way or the other, we can then plan, we can make our solutions and we know what we're doing.”

✉ *Email us your Brexit views to chris@thebrightmediaagency.com*



Selley (right) says the costs go up along with the Brexit uncertainty



CONFEX HIRE WILLIAMS AS NEW GROUP CHAIRMAN



Quick decision for ex-Landmark MD to take on role for Cotswolds-based buying group

Former Landmark Wholesale Managing Director Martin Williams said a deal to become the new chairman of buying group, Confex, happened “very quickly”.

Williams, who left his role at Landmark at the end of 2016, has been working as an industry consultant for the past two years – including a position as Associate Director of FWD.

While Williams will continue with his other commitments, he said it was an easy decision to add another one once he'd spoken to Confex.

“I've known the family for 20 years probably because of my role at Landmark and we've always got on well,” says Williams.

“They contacted me and

said they were recruiting this new position, outlined what they were looking for and asked if I'd be prepared to take it on.”

Williams took a couple of days to give the Cotswolds-based buying group, which is a member of Unitas, the thumbs up.

ADDING VALUE

“I felt it was something I could do from the time and role perspective,” Williams added.

“Although it's chairman, it's not massively different to what I did as managing director at Landmark, and I think I can add some value for them.”

Confex has also launched a free white-label app, which gives its members the ability to create their own digital presence with a tailored app – complete with their own branding – that is available on the App Store.

and by subscribing to our newsletter on the website