

Poorest households least likely to want lower standard food available in the UK

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BRITAIN'S poorest households are the least likely to want low standard food to be available as a result of new trade deals, research by Which? has found.

Many top Conservatives, including leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg, have consistently touted cheaper food as one of the key benefits of Brexit.

And last month, one senior Tory MP was reported as saying the 'once-in-a-lifetime' chance to sign an agreement with the USA was being 'hijacked by a bunch of Waitrose protectionists'.

But the consumer group's latest survey, carried out in June, showed only one in 10 (11 per cent) of people from lower income households wanted access to cheap, low standard food, compared to one in six (16 per cent) from more affluent households.

Speaking at the Westminster Food and Nutrition Forum event, Sue Davies, head of consumer protection and food policy at Which?, said: "In this survey, we delved into how [views on standards] varied across different income groups.

"What was particularly interesting, but not surprising, was those in the lowest income groups were the least likely to think lower standard food should be available in the UK.

"This is interesting, because it is often presented as better-off people who want food standards protected, whereas in reality, it will be the people who cannot afford anything else who will be forced to have the food produced to lower standards."

Other findings from the survey – the third of its kind carried out by Which? – showed 95 per cent of people wanted existing food production standards to be protected in trade deals, with around three quarters believing there should be a ban on imports of low standard food.

"When we asked about some of the production methods which are particularly controversial, such as hormone-treated beef and chlorinated chicken, there is clearly a majority of people – around eight in 10 – who would be uncomfortable eating those," Ms Davies said.

Respondents to the survey were also concerned they would not be able to make an informed choice about the food they eat outside the home, with 89 per cent saying restaurants, cafes and takeaways should let customers know if the food they serve has been produced using these methods.

Worries about hormone-treated beef and chlorinated chicken being sold in hospitals were also expressed by 65 per cent of the public.

Article written by Abi Kay, Chief Reporter, Farmers Guardian