



FROM THE PRESIDENT: MINETTE BATTERS

By email to Evan Davis, BBC



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Dear Mr Davis

I am writing to complain about the interview on yesterday's PM programme and the line of questioning that was taken. The interview was proposed to me by producers as a discussion around the Government's National Food Strategy, yet this simply acted as a pretext for an attack on the livestock sector and meat consumption.

While the Food Strategy was mentioned in the introduction, it was clear from the very beginning that the main focus of this segment was about reducing meat intake and an attack on Britain's livestock farmers. It is appalling that the Food Strategy wasn't even mentioned again until nearly six minutes into the discussion, when I myself had to bring the conversation back round to the topic I was invited on air to discuss.

My main objection to the interview was your comment on British farming's animal welfare standards:

"Yes but they're not good. Come on, let's be honest. You wouldn't want us to go around showing people pictures of what goes on in a farm would you?"

This statement was based on absolutely no facts or evidence and was frankly shocking to hear. Comments like these are hugely damaging to farming families across the country who make animal welfare their top priority. As I mentioned on the programme, hundreds of farmers across the country take part in Open Farm Sunday every year, which invites the public onto farms so they can discover more about farming in Britain and how their food is produced. This event took place only a couple of weeks ago with over 360 farms opening their doors to around 230,000 people. The fact that Britain is leading the way on animal welfare standards is widely recognised across government, with Defra Secretary Michael Gove describing British farming standards as "world-class". It is therefore wholly inappropriate for such unfounded claims to be broadcast on the BBC.

While I appreciate your public reply on Twitter that your "clumsy expression gave the wrong impression", it doesn't undo the fact that millions of people were fed a misleading and untrue

statement as fact. There will also be many people who listen to your show that don't follow you on Twitter, so I urge you to offer an apology to farmers on tonight's programme.

I note that you said you had been on farms before and would be interested to hear when the last time was. If it had been recently you would have seen first-hand the high levels of animal welfare that farmers in Britain adhere to, and understand that your comment portrayed a completely inaccurate picture of British farming.

I would like to reiterate my invitation for you to visit my farm and I truly hope you take me up on my offer. I would be more than happy for you to broadcast the programme from there.

I look forward to hearing from you and I hope to see you on my farm in the near future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Minette Batters', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Minette Batters
President

[Faint, illegible text]