



**Friends of
the Earth**

Fix the Food Chain Campaign guide - writing back to your MP

If you've taken our Fix the Food Chain press for change action, you will have asked your MP to sign parliamentary petition Early Day Motion (EDM) 845. This is an opportunity for MPs to demonstrate their concerns about the impacts on climate change, forest loss and communities of the UK's factory farming system. You can see the text of the EDM and the latest list of MPs that have signed it here:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=37920&SESSION=899>

If they haven't already, your MP should soon write back to you to address your concerns, let you know whether they plan to sign the EDM, and to explain their reasons if they decide not to. It's really useful for us to see what MPs are saying on the issue, so please forward your MP's reply to richard.hines@foe.co.uk or send it to Food Team, Friends of the Earth, Devonshire House, 37 York Place, Leeds, LS1 2ED.

This short guide gives tips on how to respond to your MP's reply. We have suggested tips on the various responses you might get, but you will still need to tailor your response depending on exactly what your MP says. It is important to engage your MP in a dialogue so that they are made aware that this is an issue their constituents concerned about.

A personal letter picking up on their points will have a real impact and mean your MP will have to give the issue further thought in order to reply to you. In particular if they have said they will not sign the EDM, your reply could change their mind and help build even greater support for its demands.

My MP responded positively and said they'd sign EDM 845.

Great – it's really important to thank them for signing the EDM. We have produced a draft letter below, but this will be much more effective if you just use it a guide and give your version a personal touch.

One way you could do this is to check whether they came along to our bucking bronco stunt in April, and if so you could thank them for doing that too. Find out if your MP was involved at: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/images/food_chain/

Dear _____ MP,

Thank you for signing Early Day Motion 845. I am delighted that you share my concerns about the damaging impacts on climate change, biodiversity loss and communities of intensive livestock production - and the need to address the UK's impact whilst supporting farmers.

Please can you raise my concerns with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Hilary Benn, to ask what the Government is planning to do to assess and tackle the environmental and social impacts of Britain's intensive meat and dairy industry both here and overseas. In particular I would like him to address:

- Our dependence on imported animal feeds and the role they play in deforestation and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with it.
- How Government will take steps to make sure that meat and dairy being procured by the public sector isn't contributing to these problems.
- The use of agricultural subsidies to support the intensive meat and dairy industry, rather than to support small farmers and planet-friendly farming.

On this final point, Friends of the Earth have released new research which reveals that £700 million of taxpayers' money is spent propping up damaging intensive livestock production each year. The report is available at:

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/feeding_the_beast.pdf

Please can you send me a copy of his response.

Yours sincerely,

My MP responded positively, but would not sign the EDM because they are a Government Minister, a whip, or simply because they don't ever sign EDMs.

By convention Ministers, Whips and Parliamentary Private Secretaries do not tend to sign EDMs. However, if they've responded positively you could still thank them for their reply and ask whether they agree with the sentiments expressed in the EDM. If they do we can register this as their support. You can also send them a link to our new report as detailed above.

Some MPs choose not to sign EDMs for other reasons. You could always check to see if your MP has signed any other EDMs here: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/MemberList.aspx>. If they don't sign any EDMs, again, ask if they would support the sentiments expressed in EDM 845.

My MP was quite receptive to the issue, but would not sign the EDM due to concerns about the impact on farmers.

We have already seen a few MPs (in particular Conservatives) refuse to sign the EDM because of the potential impact that changing the system would have on farmers. The following points may help with your reply:

- You agree that farming needs to thrive in this country, but that it must be as sustainable as possible and not lead to the destruction of habitats and livelihoods overseas.
- EDM 845 also calls for a sustainable and thriving livestock industry.
- EDM 845 does not call for a sudden ban on imported feeds – that would be disastrous even for the many farmers who are trying to farm as sustainably as possible.
- The current system is not working for UK farmers. Fluctuating commodity prices mean that an over-reliance on imported feeds leaves farmers vulnerable to price rises.
- It calls for Government action to investigate the UK's role and whether our farming industry has become over-reliant on imported soy feed, and to bring forward the necessary measures to reduce the UK meat and dairy industry's impact on global greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss – and that this action should at the same time bring about a thriving and sustainable farming industry.
- Given this, please reconsider signing the EDM.

My MP did not respond positively at all.

Some MPs will for one reason or another not think that this is an issue that should be tackled, and that action to address it might either be pointless or harmful.

Respond with a reasonable tone, expressing your disappointment that they don't share your concerns. Deal with their reasons for not sharing signing the EDM one by one to make sure that you cover all their points. If your arguments are robust enough you might just win them over.

Answers to many of their points can probably be found in our "What's feeding our food?" report at http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/livestock_impacts.pdf. If you get really stuck on any of them please contact richard.hines@foe.co.uk.