



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2018-0219, 17 October 2018

Ending exploitation in supermarket supply chains

Summary

A Backbench Business debate on Ending exploitation in supermarket supply chains is scheduled for Thursday 18 October. The motion is in the name of Kerry McCarthy MP.

The text of the motion follows:

That this House is concerned about the practice of modern slavery and the exploitation of labour in the supply chains of supermarkets in the UK; notes that this debate is taking place in the same week as world food day and anti-slavery day; recognises the global leadership that the Government has shown in tackling modern slavery in supply chains in the Modern Slavery Act 2015; and calls on the Government to help ensure tangible steps are taken to protect the workers and farmers who provide our food.

You may watch Kerry McCarthy's representation to the [Backbench Business Committee](#), on 4 September 2018, [here](#). A [transcript](#) of the meeting is also available.

For background information see:

[Tackling modern-day slavery](#), Commons Library debate pack CDP-2018-0206, 4 October 2018

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. News and blogs

Salvation Army

[British victims of modern slavery double in a year](#)

17 October 2018

Oxfam

[What more should supermarkets do to respect workers' rights in their supply chain?](#)

10 October 2018

Home Office

[UK agrees principles for tackling modern slavery in supply chains](#)

25 September 2018

Environmental Justice Foundation

[Eliminating modern slavery from supply chains](#)

14 August 2018

The Conversation

[How to reduce slavery in seafood supply chains](#)

25 July 2018

The Conversation

[Child labour, poverty and terrible working conditions lie behind the sugar you eat](#)

27 April 2018

Devex

[On World Day Against Child Labour: is the UK Modern Slavery Act working?](#)

12 June 2017

1.1 Press

Guardian

[British public bought £14bn of goods made by slaves in 2017, claims report](#)

19 July 2018

Financial Times

[Thai Union: cleaning up an abusive supply chain](#)

22 April 2018

Guardian

[How did we let modern slavery become part of our everyday lives?](#)

2 April 2018

Times [Subscription]

[Modern slavery laws are improving business at home and abroad](#)

26 October 2017

Guardian

[The terrible truth about your tin of Italian tomatoes](#)

24 October 2017

Guardian

[Waitrose pulls its corned beef off shelves after Guardian reveals alleged slavery links](#)

6 June 2017

2. Parliamentary Business

2.1 Ministerial Statements

[Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

Victoria Atkins (The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability):

On 30 July, the Home Office announced plans to launch an independent review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The review is being led by the rt hon. Frank Field MP, the rt hon. Maria Miller MP and the rt hon. Baroness Butler-Sloss.

The introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the first legislation of its kind in the world, has helped to transform the UK's response to modern slavery. More victims are being identified and supported; more offenders are being prosecuted; and thousands of companies have published statements setting out the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery in their supply chains. The UK is determined to lead global efforts to tackle this barbaric crime and as the methods used by criminals to exploit vulnerable people evolve, and our understanding of this crime evolves, it is important to consider our legislative approach.

The aim of the Review is to understand and report on how the 2015 Act is operating in practice, how effective it is, and whether the legal framework for tackling modern slavery is fit for purpose now and in the future. In doing so, the Review will need to take into account any significant economic, social and technological changes since the 2015 act was passed.

The following provisions of the Act will be considered in the Review:

- section 3 on the meaning of exploitation
- sections 8-10 on reparation orders
- sections 40 to 44 on the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner
- section 45 on the statutory defence
- section 48 on independent child trafficking advocates
- section 54 on transparency in supply chains

The Review will gather evidence and seek views from relevant stakeholders across a range of sectors and interest groups. The findings and recommendations of the Review will represent the views of the reviewers, who will be supported by a secretariat seconded from the Home Office.

The Review will aim to report to the Home Secretary before the end of March 2019. Following approval, the Home Secretary will lay the report in Parliament.

A copy of the Review's terms of reference will be placed in the House Library and are available on www.gov.uk.

2.2 Debates

[Modern-day Slavery](#)

HC Deb 9 October 2018 c66-84WH

Extract, c82WH:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):

... ..

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central rightly raised transparency in supply chains, on which we have world-leading legislation. I recently chaired a meeting of the business against slavery forum, which draws together chief executives of some of the world's largest employers and organisations. We discussed what they are doing, what more can be done across business and how the Government can help with that. The forum includes organisations such as the Co-op, HSBC, Sky, Unilever, Vodafone, WPP, Barclays, BT, Associated British Foods and others, and there is real enthusiasm and energy in that group to help the UK tackle modern slavery.

However, too many businesses still fail to meet their basic legal obligation to publish transparency statements, or have shown that they are not taking serious action to tackle modern slavery. The Home Office will therefore over the next month write directly to the chief executives of 18,000 businesses considered to be in scope of the obligation. Those that persist in flouting their obligations can expect to face tougher consequences. The Government are also committed to tackling modern slavery in our own procurement. We are developing tools and guidance for contracting authorities in the public sector to help buyers mitigate against risks of modern slavery and to take action where modern slavery is identified.

... ..

[Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

HC Deb 26 October 2017 c479-514

Extract, c491-2:

Kerry McCarthy:

... ..

In 2015, The Economist described the supply chain transparency requirements in the Modern Slavery Act as "light touch", with only 12,000 commercial companies affected. The Government need to go further. Submission of a full and comprehensive statement should be legally binding on all companies, with penalties for non-compliance that go beyond naming and shaming, and greater criminal liability for cases

when practices of slavery or forced labour are found in a company's supply chain or products.

Specifically in relation to the seafood sector and the fishing industry, the Environmental Justice Foundation is calling for: transnational approaches for all countries—port, flag and coastal states—to ratify and implement fully the International Labour Organisation's convention 188 on work in fishing; all countries to implement legislation to prosecute national citizens engaged in human trafficking on vessels registered to another country; and retailers and the industry to establish effective transparency and traceability across their whole supply chain, including committing to independent, third-party and unannounced auditing of their supply chains.

Cheap products and services often come at an unseen cost. We need to ask ourselves: just how come prices in the shops are so low? If it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Such products have no place on British shelves. Such services should never be used. We all need to play a role in suffocating slavery at source by exercising vigilance.

[Modern Slavery \(Transparency in Supply Chains\) Bill \[HL\]](#)

Second reading

HL Deb 8 July 2016 c2223-57

2.3 Parliamentary Questions

[Slavery: Agriculture](#)

Asked by: Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to combat modern day slavery in agriculture.

Answered by: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Home Office

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority operates a licensing scheme to regulate businesses that provide temporary labour in high risk sectors in the agricultural, shell fish gathering and food processing and packaging sectors, to protect workers from exploitation. The scheme is underpinned by licensing conditions, which require businesses to comply with employment and other relevant law.

In addition, section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, requires all businesses operating in the UK with a turnover of £36 million or more to report on the steps they are taking to prevent and tackle slavery and human trafficking in their supply chains. While many businesses in the agricultural sector may not meet the turnover threshold, the legislation is having a knock on effect with many large businesses, including

supermarket chains, providing support and advice to smaller businesses in their supply chains to improve standards.

7 August 2018 | Written question | HL 9855

[Fairtrade Initiative: Supermarkets](#)

Asked by: Catherine McKinnell

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with UK supermarkets on the effect of Fairtrade certification on producers in developing countries.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department for International Development

DFID's Economic Development Strategy sets out the importance of growth and jobs for sustainable poverty reduction. Fair and ethical trade standards have an important contribution to make to this especially in combatting modern slavery and child labour. Officials are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders including business, standards organisations and NGOs on these issues. DFID has been a long term partner of Fairtrade and is currently supporting innovative new work under the Fairtrade initiative. This is a technology-based supply chain mapping programme that will help increase transparency of supply chains.

3 July 2017 | Written question | 1427

3. Organisations and further reading

[Tackling modern-day slavery](#), Commons Library debate pack CDP-2018-0206, 4 October 2018

Home Office, [Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015: terms of reference](#), 17 August 2018

Home Office, [Slavery and human trafficking in supply chains: guidance for businesses](#), 14 March 2018

Bills before Parliament 2017-19:

[Modern Slavery \(Transparency in Supply Chains\) Bill \[HL\] 2017-19](#)

Bills before Parliament 2016-17:

[Modern Slavery \(Transparency in Supply Chains\) Bill \[HL\] 2016-17](#)

Salvation Army, [Supporting adult victims of modern slavery: year seven report on the Salvation Army's Victim Care and Co-ordination Contract](#), October 2018

Rachel Wilshaw, [UK supermarket supply chains: ending the human suffering behind our food](#), Oxfam Briefing Paper, 21 June 2018

Robin Willoughby and Tim Gore, [Ripe for change: ending human suffering in supermarket supply chains](#), Oxfam Campaign Report, 21 June 2018

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, [The nature and scale of labour exploitation across all sectors within the United Kingdom](#), May 2018

International Labour Organization, [Wages and working conditions in and out of global supply chains: a comparative empirical review](#), 6 March 2018

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