

19<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Rt Hon Pat McFadden  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS  
United Kingdom



**DESIGNATING THE COLD CHAIN SECTOR AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, ENSURING ONE MINISTER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INDUSTRY.**

Dear Minister,

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. As the CEO of the Cold Chain Federation, I am eager to work with you and HM Government to support the country's growth, particularly in food and pharmaceutical security.

The cold chain sector is a cornerstone of the UK economy. In 2023, it contributed a staggering £14 billion in gross value added, supported 184,000 jobs, and generated £3.7 billion in tax revenue. The cold chain's primary role is to ensure the safe and efficient delivery of essential goods such as food, plants, and medicines across the nation. It is a critical service that all UK citizens rely on each day.

Cold storage is crucial element of the UK's cold chain, keeping products in safe storage until required for onward distribution to shops, restaurants and homes. Cold storage is the nation's buffer against shocks to the food system, without the reserve supplies kept safe in cold storage, the nation would be much more susceptible to shortages of products like meat, dairy, fresh produce and pharmaceuticals during times of crisis.

As already outlined, the cold chain sector in the UK remains a critical element in the safe and secure delivery of food and pharmaceuticals to the UK public. During the Covid pandemic, the CCF worked with the cabinet office to monitor and update the government on resilience and stock levels of food and pharmaceuticals.

I am writing with two requests:

- To arrange a meeting with yourself to understand how the UK Government might want a wider UK coordination of these facilities in order to manage the storage and delivery of essential food and medicines in the event of a UK-wide crisis or attack.
- Secondly, our sector crosses over multiple briefs and departments, which can lead to a piecemeal approach to the industry, especially when responding to a crisis. We ask the government to consider giving an existing ministerial portfolio specific responsibility for the cold chain sector.

Government statistics indicate that the UK relies on food imports for just over 40% of its needs (UK Food Security Index 2024). Recent figures gathered by the CCF suggest that over 60% of food and pharmaceuticals imported into the UK were done so under temperature-controlled environments.

[In a new report just released this week](#), The University of Birmingham's Centre for Sustainable Cooling called for Governments and policymakers to recognise cooling as critical national infrastructure (CNI) if humanity is to build resilience to the impact of climate change.

Our hundreds of specialist warehouses are strategically placed within the UK, and our members have vast access to temperature-controlled vehicles and maritime facilities. We are also in possession of capacity and supply levels.

Our sector is not alone in having suffered targeted cyber-attacks in recent years, and whilst these may in the past have affected profit/loss and privacy breaches, any major breach in the future may have significant societal risks attached.

Our footprint in the UK is unique in that all of the major elements of the food and pharmaceutical supply chain are housed within one not-for-profit trade body. We represent companies that have already created world-leading supply chains in terms of productivity and safety and are rapidly embracing sustainable operating solutions.

We do not seek major funding. We seek simply the opportunity to work in partnership to tackle some of the major issues of the day that affect the safe, sustainable, and secure delivery of food and medicine to the UK public.

The cold chain sector never missed a day at work due to COVID-19. It was a challenge, but every CCF member company and colleague worked 24 hours a day to deliver food and medicine to the UK public.

We delivered then, and we now need to understand how our unique network can work with government security planners and ministers to tackle wider and more persistent threats to our food and medicine supply chain in the future.

I hope you agree that the unique space that our sector occupies and the essential role it plays means that we must be recognised for the vital role we play in ensuring the UK public is protected in terms of food and medicine security and viability.

Yours



Phil Pluck