

Brexit Threats: Tory MP Suggests Using Possible ‘No-deal’ Food Shortages in Ireland to Drop the Backstop

Ireland would be hit hard in the event of a no-deal Brexit; a Brexiteer has argued this should be used as leverage to get a better deal.

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As UK Prime Minister Theresa May has just five days to try to rally support for her Brexit deal, a Tory MP has suggested using the possibility of food shortages to Ireland in the event of a no-deal Brexit to encourage the EU to drop the backstop.

A government report, [leaked to the Times of London](#), has indicated that there could be food shortages in Ireland in a no-deal Brexit scenario, and the economic impact on Ireland would be worse than in the UK.

This is based on the large number of food exports from the UK to Ireland (more than half of the total food imported to Ireland comes from the UK). In the event of a no-deal, trade rules would revert to World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, but the UK would have to apply to become a member of the WTO to implement these rules.

At a Brexit event for local authorities held in Dublin this week, economist Dan O’Brien echoed those sentiments, adding that the threat of food shortages and supplies in a no-deal scenario shouldn’t be underestimated.

According to today’s article, the UK government report have indicated that there would be a 7% drop in GDP for Ireland, while the equivalent drop would be 5% for the UK.

Tory MP Priti Patel has told the paper that these warnings should have been used as leverage against Ireland to encourage them to drop the backstop.

“This paper appears to show the government were well aware Ireland will face significant issues in a no-deal scenario. Why hasn’t this point been pressed home during negotiations? There is still time to go back to Brussels and get a better deal.”

Patel [resigned](#) as International Development Secretary last November after holding 12 meetings with Israeli groups and officials outside the proper protocol.

Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon [reacted to the story](#), saying that

“The sheer moral bankruptcy of the Tory Brexiteers is on full display today.”

Threatening Ireland's food supply ☹☹☹☹...as a descendent of people fleeing county Mayo, it amazes me that these expensively educated brexiteers have literally learned nowt about the history of these very isles.

— Tom Blenkinsop (@TomBlenkinsop) [December 7, 2018](#)

Ex-Labour MP Tom Blenkinsop, who is of Irish heritage, also reacted to the story, saying:

“...It amazes me that these expensively educated Brexiteers have literally learned nowt about the history of these very isles”.

[The backstop, a guarantee that there will be no hard border on the island of Ireland](#), is seen as being unnecessary and restrictive by Brexiteers, as it could lock the UK into an indefinite customs arrangement that would stop them striking new trade deals with other countries.

This would mean Northern Ireland would stay “aligned” to the regulations of the customs union if there is no other solution that would avoid infrastructure along the Irish border.

If there are different regulations or tariffs between the two jurisdictions, which would have to occur if the UK want to become more competitive than they are currently in the EU, then that would suggest products need to be checked as they go across the border.

Prominent British politicians, including the former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees Mogg, have indicated that they would scrap the backstop if it were up to them (important to note if there is a Tory party leadership challenge).

DUP deputy leader Nigel Dodds also indicated that the provision to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland should be scrapped, chanting “bin the backstop” to applause at his party's conference.

Meanwhile, as May's deal looks set to be rejected by the House of Commons in next week, there are reports in the UK media that she is looking at the possibility of a second referendum if the deal does fail.

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Featured image: Priti Patel speaking at a fringe event organized by Brexit Central, during the Conservative Party annual conference. (Source: Empics Entertainment)

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