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The UK Groceries Code Adjudicator, Christine Tacon, visited Brussels last week to highlight the UK as an example of a country that has built better food supply chains.

Christine was speaking at an event titled 'A Fair Food Chain For All' organised by the EU farmers organisation Copa of which the NFU is a member.



Read the storify from the event

Food chain issues are a priority for Copa, led by the Chairman of their food chain working party, NFU President Peter Kendall.

The event took place at a crunch point for EU discussions taking place to improve relations between farmers, processors and supermarkets. It set out clearly what could be done to remedy problems in the food supply chain. Christine spoke to over 100 delegates, including MEPs, in the European Parliament and provided a brief history of the UK experience and the powers that she has in adjudicating and monitoring the Groceries Supply Chain Code of Practice.

Fairness in supply chains and cutting out so called 'unfair trading practices' between retailers and their direct suppliers is an issue across Europe.

Christine spoke on a panel with representatives from Spain, Portugal and Norway. They discussed experiences in their own countries, and Irish MEP Mairead McGuinness provided thoughts on the topic from the European Parliament perspective.

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In Portugal, the government has passed a new law on supply chain relations. And the Norwegian government has a plan to tackle unfair trading and is seeking a political consensus. A Spanish farmer also highlighted practical examples of the difficulties facing rice farmers due to the dominant position of other players in the supply chain.

Christine Tacon said: "Passing excessive risk up the supply chain, and unfair trading practices, have become a global problem in food to varying degrees. I am starting to make progress in addressing this in the UK, working with the retailers, and am delighted that other countries are interested in our experience. It makes sense for us to have a common code of practice and to share learnings. The conference was conducted in this spirit and I congratulate the organisers."

A voluntary initiative on enforcement of good trading practice rules is now in place in the EU but without the backing of farmer groups. Attention is now on the European Commission who is due to publish an impact assessment on the way forward for food supply chains in early 2014. In the meantime, there is considerable interest from across Europe in the UK and the work of the supermarket adjudicator in her efforts to work with in the sector to create a 'fair food chain for all.'

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A fair food chain for all

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