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**Brexit-related food issues in the UK print media: setting the agenda for post-Brexit food policy**

Journal:	<i>British Food Journal</i>
Manuscript ID	BFJ-08-2019-0582.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Food, Brexit, food policy, Media, Newspapers, Agenda Setting

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to explore how Brexit-related food issues are being presented in the UK print media.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Using the news database Nexis UK, relevant articles were identified based on key search terms, 'Brexit' and 'Food' or 'Farm!' or 'Agricultur!'. The search criteria was set to include articles with three or more mentions of these terms. The search period was 6<sup>th</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2018.

**Findings:** The quality newspaper genre, and remain-supporting newspaper, The Guardian, in particular, dominated Food Brexit coverage. 17 distinct Food Brexit issues were covered, with food security and subsidies receiving the most coverage in leave-supporting publications and agriculture, trade and labour receiving the most coverage in remain-supporting publications. Dominant narratives and frames can be identified in the reporting, illustrating newspapers' tendency to promote certain viewpoints in support of their own standpoint on Brexit. In all publication types, political voices feature far more prominently than any other stakeholder group, highlighting the significant potential for this group to influence public opinion and the post-Brexit food policy agenda.

**Research limitations/implications:** The authors only examined newspapers over a limited time period. Reporting in other media and at different stages in the Brexit negotiation process may differ.

**Practical implications:** Media reporting on Food Brexit issues has the potential to influence post-Brexit food policy.

**Originality/value:** This is the first study to look at reporting on Food Brexit in the UK media.

**Keywords:** Food, Brexit, Food Policy, Media, Newspapers, Agenda Setting

**Paper Type:** Research paper

## Introduction

In June, 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU), a matter which has become commonly known as 'Brexit'. At the time of the referendum, the form that Brexit would take and the subsequent implications were unknown and these are still being negotiated today. Whilst many uncertainties remain, what is known is that the UK's food system is highly embedded in European policy and legislation, and that Brexit in any form will have major implications for UK food and farming (Lang & Schoen, 2016). Lang *et al.*, state that over "4,000 pieces of [UK] regulation and law are EU based" (2017: 14) and of these, 40% concern food and farming (2017: 68). Additionally, the Brexit process will include the review and re-negotiation of 759 treaties with 132 non-EU countries, many of which will concern food-related issues (McClean, 2017). Furthermore, 27% of food consumed in the UK (Lang & Schoen, 2016: 24) and 40% of fruit and vegetables are imported from Europe (Lang & Schoen, 2016: 27). Europe is also the UK's largest export market for food and agricultural products (The European Union Committee, 2017: 13).

Food and farming have therefore been forced on to the UK government's policy agenda and there are a myriad of issues requiring government attention. How much attention these issues get, and the prevalence of ideas about ways to address them, will determine how they are dealt with. The process by which different issues gain position on the policy agenda is known as agenda setting (Birkland, 2007: 63), which is widely acknowledged as a fundamental part of the policy-making process (Jann & Wegrich, 2007; Walt *et al.*, 2008: 310-312; Buse *et al.*, 2012). While the literature acknowledges the difficulty of pinpointing causal effect, it widely accepts that the ability of the media to draw attention to certain issues make them central to the agenda setting process. This is seen as particularly important as the news media is the main source of information about public affairs for most people (Cobb & Elder, 1983; Buse *et al.*, 2012; John *et al.*, 2013).

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10 Where issues feature more prominently in the media than others, they are likely to be perceived by  
11 the public as more important than those which receive less attention (Tuchman, 1978: 2; Russell,  
12 *et al.*, 2016). The media also have the capability to shape the opinions of the public through the  
13 framing they use, whereby a narrative is constructed in order to encourage a particular  
14 interpretation of an issue (Entman, 2007: 164).

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20 **Lang *et al.* use the phrase “Food Brexit” to refer to “both the process during the course of**  
21 **negotiations between the UK and the EU that will be related to issues of agriculture and food,**  
22 **as well as to the new policy regime that will cover the UK’s agricultural and food system post-**  
23 **Brexit” (Lang *et al.*, 2017: 7). ‘Food Brexit issues’ will be used hereinafter when discussing**  
24 **Brexit-related food and agricultural matters. Given the breadth of policy set to be affected by**  
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28 Britain’s departure from the EU, the ramifications of this for the future of British food and  
29 farming and the potential for the media to influence the new policy environment, the  
30 presentation of Food Brexit issues in the UK media is a valuable topic for analysis. As, to the  
31 best of our knowledge, there is an absence of any media analysis on Food Brexit issues  
32 specifically, this research will contribute to an understanding of how the agenda around  
33 Brexit and food is being set in the UK media in order to fill this knowledge gap. Three core  
34 research questions have been developed to respond to the aim of the research:

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41 1. Which Food Brexit issues are reported on in the UK print media, with what frequency and  
42 in which publications?  
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44 2. How are these issues framed across the different publications?  
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46 3. Whose voices are represented in the Food Brexit-related media discourse?  
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#### 48 **Methodology**

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50 This research is grounded in a constructivist epistemology in which it is understood that truth  
51 and meaning are constructed and can be done so in different ways, even in relation to the  
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Commented [PH1]: The term ‘Food Brexit’ is clearly defined here as including matters relating to agriculture. As such, I do not feel that it is necessary to use the term ‘agri-food’ in the title as suggested by Reviewer 1 in their first of two minor points.

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10 same phenomenon (Gray, 2014: 20). In accordance with constructivism, the theoretical  
11 perspective of interpretivism, in which the central premise is “to understand the subjective  
12 world of human experience” and how the “glossing of reality goes on” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011: 17  
13 – 18), is implicit in the focus of this research which seeks to establish the ways Food Brexit  
14 issues are presented in the media (including the “glossing of reality” through media framing).  
15 The research method employed was a media content analysis of the top ten national  
16 newspapers in circulation (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2018) (see Table 1). **Content analysis**  
17 **is a commonly used method for analysing media content, allowing for the analysis of both**  
18 **manifest, quantitative data and latent, qualitative data (Krippendorff, 2004). Quantitative data**  
19 **such as the number of articles published on each Food Brexit issue and the number of**  
20 **quotes from different stakeholder groups contributed to answering research questions one**  
21 **and three. Qualitative data, from the latent content on how issues were framed and any**  
22 **dominant narratives, contributed to answering questions two and three.**

**Commented [T2]:** Added in to deal with reviewers' comments that more detail needed on the methodology chosen.

### 33 **Newspaper selection**

34 **The analysis focussed on the UK print media, as the articles are available in an accessible**  
35 **format for study (Wells & Caraher, 2014: 1430). Whilst consumption of news via newspapers**  
36 **is in decline in the UK, print newspapers are read by one in four adults every day, with a**  
37 **combined daily reach of almost 13 million (Newsworks, no date-a: 3). As such, their potential**  
38 **to shape public opinion and the policy environment remains substantial (Robinson *et al.*,**  
39 **2012: 39). Furthermore, the newspapers to be included in the study have digital formats**  
40 **which add significantly to overall consumption figures of those news brands (Ofcom, 2017:**  
41 **29).**

**Commented [PH3]:** Why newspaper analysis was used (Reviewer 1, comment 2 in additional questions). This is also dealt with in the intro – the importance of media for agenda-setting.

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50 The range of newspapers selected fall under different categories: qualities (also known as  
51 broadsheets), mid-market publications and populars (also known as tabloids) (Newsworks,  
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no date-b: 6). They encompass a range of editorial styles, readership profiles and political orientations, as well as positions on Brexit. Based on a study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 'UK Press Coverage of the EU Referendum' (Levy *et al.*, 2016), and research by the National Centre for Social Research, 'Understanding the Leave Vote' (Swales, 2016), Table 1 illustrates the position of the different newspapers on Brexit, in terms of whether they are broadly in favour of leaving or remaining in the European Union. This is pertinent for the analysis of how Food Brexit issues are being presented in the UK print media to different audiences. By analysing the top ten national newspapers in circulation and their Sunday counterparts, a comprehensive overview of the different ways Food Brexit issues are being framed in different newspaper types, with different political orientations, can be captured to understand how the agenda around Food Brexit is being set.

**Table 1. Average circulation per issue for June 2018 and publication position on Brexit of newspapers included in the study.**

### **Search strategy and article selection process**

The search period was from 6<sup>th</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2018, having identified the Government's Cabinet meeting at Chequers on 6<sup>th</sup> July to agree on their Brexit white paper as a key event in the Brexit-related policy-making process. Taking the three months prior to this, the date range enabled the latest developments in, and framing of, Food Brexit issues to be captured.

This research was undertaken as part of a course of postgraduate study. As such, it provides a snapshot of reporting on Food Brexit issues. The authors recommend further research should take a more in-depth, longitudinal approach.

Using the news database Nexis UK, relevant articles were identified based on the search terms, 'Brexit' and 'Food' or 'Farm!' or 'Agricultur!'. In order to focus on the most relevant articles, the search criteria was set to include articles where there were '3 or more mentions'

**Commented [PH4]:** Why newspaper analysis was used (Reviewer 1, comment 2 in additional questions).

**Commented [PH5]:** Have added to deal with the 2<sup>nd</sup> minor point made by Reviewer 1 and also part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> comment made by Reviewer 3.

**Commented [PH6]:** This deals with the 1<sup>st</sup> comment from Reviewer 2 – that the timeframe of the studies is a little truncated. It highlights the reason for the limited scope of the study and makes recommendations for further research.

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10 of the key terms (and exclude newswires, websites and group duplicates) which generated  
11 309 returns. From the Nexis results pages, Irish editions, duplicates, and letters from readers  
12 were identified and removed. The remaining 257 results were sorted by relevance according  
13 to the frequency of the search terms. Any irrelevant articles, such as those focussed on  
14 alcohol, or those which did not deal with Food Brexit issues specifically were removed from  
15 the sample, resulting in a pool of 84 articles.  
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### 22 **Data collection and analysis**

23 In a preliminary analysis, the researcher read the 84 articles closely and, taking an inductive  
24 approach (Gray, 2014: 18), identified 17 different categories (see Table 2). This allowed the  
25 main focus of the articles to be understood through reading them and categorising them  
26 accordingly, rather than applying pre-defined categories. Where articles had a dual focus, the  
27 two issues were recorded separately. In addition to the article categories, all of the manifest  
28 data on the articles were recorded including the newspaper name, publication date,  
29 newspaper format, headline and word count. The leave or remain-supporting position of the  
30 newspaper in which the article was printed was also recorded.  
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37 To understand the framing of the issues and identify dominant narratives, further, more in-  
38 depth qualitative analysis was required. The six issues reported on most frequently  
39 (subsidies, trade, agriculture, food prices, labour and food security), were selected for further  
40 analysis. This selection process resulted in a pool of 63 articles for closer study. Drawing on  
41 Entman's definition of framing, the articles were critically examined to identify frame elements  
42 present, looking in particular, for how the issue was defined (especially in terms of any  
43 positive or negative slant), any suggested solutions or proposed courses of action relating to  
44 the issues, whether responsibility had been assigned to a particular stakeholder group or  
45 groups, and any other points of interest, such as use of language, which contributed to a  
46 certain presentation of the issue. Articles were manually colour-coded to identify different  
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Commented [PH7]: Added to help clarify how many articles were finally analysed, to deal with comment 3 from Reviewer 3.

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frame elements and analytic memos (Saldaña, 2011: 98) written on key points pertinent to the research questions.

Commented [T8]: Added to give more detail on the methodology.

**Findings**

84 relevant articles were published in the UK's top ten print newspapers during the selected date range. The quality genre overwhelmingly dominated reporting on Food Brexit issues during this time period, printing almost 80% of the total number of articles. Within this category, remain-supporting publications The Guardian and Observer were most prolific in their coverage, printing over a third of the total number of articles alone. 17 Food Brexit issues were identified in the print newspaper coverage. Table 2 broadly outlines what was covered within the different issue categories and gives examples of headlines to indicate how the issues were framed.

**Table 2. Food Brexit issues in the UK print media from 6/4/18 – 5/7/18.**

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11 In leave-supporting publications, 14 Food Brexit issues are covered. Those which do not  
12 feature are food safety, animal welfare, and fishing. Subsidies, trade and food security  
13 receive the most coverage, followed by food prices and agriculture. Reporting in the remain-  
14 supporting publications covers 16 issues. The most prominent issue is agriculture, followed  
15 by subsidies, trade and labour. Technology is not covered in the remain newspapers and  
16 there is very little coverage of the Irish border, food labelling and food policy.  
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23 Whilst the selection of, and salience given to, certain issues over others is a key aspect of  
24 the media's role in agenda setting, it is also important to look at how these issues are being  
25 framed. The six issues reported on most frequently in terms of number of articles published  
26 (subsidies, trade, agriculture, food prices, labour and food security), were selected for further  
27 analysis. Dominant narratives could be identified, namely, optimism about the opportunity to  
28 improve farming in Britain coupled with a concern that post-Brexit trade deals might  
29 undermine British agriculture; Brexit as an opportunity to reform agricultural subsidies but  
30 different views on how this should be funded; the impact of limiting freedom of movement for  
31 EU workers on British agriculture; the potential for increased port checks if the UK leave the  
32 customs union and both optimistic and pessimistic views on the impact of this on food  
33 security; the potential impact of trade deals on food prices and the health inequality gap in  
34 Britain.  
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#### 45 **Representation of Food Brexit stakeholder voices in the UK print media**

46 96 different individuals, institutions or organisations were quoted in the 63 articles analysed  
47 in depth. The different stakeholder voices were categorised as academics, CSOs, farmers,  
48 fisherfolk and agricultural workers, the agricultural industry, the retail industry, the logistics  
49 industry, the legal profession, political actors or research bodies.  
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12 The most frequently quoted group across all newspaper types, by a significant margin, were  
13 the political group, including senior level politicians, specific government departments and  
14 government spokespeople. It is interesting to note the complete absence of some  
15 stakeholder groups from the articles, such as public health professionals, the food  
16 manufacturing industry and the food service industry. The division of stakeholder quotes in  
17 leave- and remain-supporting publications is presented in Figure 1.

Commented [PH9]: Have added this line in + Figure 1 to address comment 4 from Reviewer 3.

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23 **Figure 1. Stakeholder groups quoted in Food Brexit newspaper articles in**  
24 **leave/remain-supporting publications from 6/4/18 – 5/7/18**

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26 Of the 20 named individuals most quoted, 14 of these were political and the remaining six  
27 were from the agricultural industry or from farmers. Notably, Conservative MP, Jacob Rees-  
28 Mogg was quoted in leave-supporting publications only and then Secretary of State for  
29 Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove, quoted primarily in remain-supporting  
30 papers, other than the Daily Telegraph.

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35 **Discussion**

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37 Leading academics on Brexit and food in Britain, Lang, Millstone and Marsden (2017), place  
38 significant responsibility in the hands of the British public to determine the outcome of Food  
39 Brexit. They contend that,  
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43 *The outcome [of Food Brexit] will depend on...what the public requires its*  
44 *politicians and negotiators to deliver* (Lang *et al.*, 2017: 8).

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48 However, in the same paper, the lack of information that has been made publically available  
49 by the UK government is highlighted, and the authors assert that “the British public has not  
50 been informed about its [the realities of a Food Brexit] implications” (Lang *et al.*, 2017: 4).

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10 They go on to argue that “the British media has a major role (and responsibility) to monitor  
11 what happens in the Food Brexit negotiations” (Lang *et al.*, 2017: 68).  
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15 These assertions demand further consideration, as it is commonly accepted that the media is  
16 not impartial and publishes information that has been selected and presented in a particular  
17 way (Buse *et al.*, 2012: 78; Wells & Caraher, 2014: 1428). Furthermore, these comments  
18 bring more general concerns about media plurality to the fore – that is the diversity of views  
19 available to citizens across the media (Foster, 2012; Department for Digital, Culture, Media &  
20 Sport, 2014; Ofcom, 2015) and the importance of media plurality to a properly functioning  
21 modern democracy. Foster (2012) articulates why media plurality matters:  
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27 *first, that all citizens can access a range and diversity of high-quality*  
28 *news, opinion, and analysis from different sources, and second, that no*  
29 *single media owner can exercise undue power and influence over the*  
30 *political agenda* (Foster, 2012: 5).  
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36 Many of the current concerns in this area stem from increasingly monopolised traditional  
37 mass media outlets, their continuing domination in the digital domain and the enormous  
38 influence of digital intermediaries or media gatekeepers such as Google and Facebook. In  
39 this context, the presentation of a diversity of views can be seen as increasingly important  
40 (Media Reform Coalition, 2019).  
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46 The findings of this study contribute to the media plurality debate, raising concerns about the  
47 range and diversity of opinion and analysis on offer in the UK print media. It found that the  
48 quality newspapers dominate Food Brexit reporting in the date range studied, in terms of  
49 both number of articles published and scope of Food Brexit issues covered. This can be  
50 attributed in large part to the stylistic differences between newspaper types, as the ‘quality’  
51 publications generally publish ‘serious’, longer pieces with in-depth analysis, focussing on  
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10 politics, current affairs and international news. Conversely, popular and mid-market  
11 publications usually feature shorter articles with much less in-depth reporting (Branston &  
12 Stafford, 2010: 198; Williams, 2010: 10). These publications tend to have a lower socio-  
13 economic audience whereas the readers of quality newspapers tend to be from higher socio-  
14 economic groups (Hilton, *et al.*, 2010: 943). The Guardian and the Observer, which  
15 dominated the Food Brexit coverage during this date range, are Britain's most left-wing  
16 national newspapers (Smith, 2017) and have a clear remain-supporting standpoint. This can  
17 be understood as a "knowledge gap", whereby information is "geared towards persons of a  
18 higher socio-economic status" and results in "a group of better-educated people who know  
19 more about most things, and those with low education who know less" (Hilton, *et al.*, 2010:  
20 943). It is critically important for policymakers to consider this in their development of post-  
21 Brexit food policy, particularly to ensure that poorer groups in society are not adversely  
22 affected by Food Brexit outcomes.

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32 Although the greatest number of articles were published in the 'quality' genre, there are  
33 significant differences in the circulation figures of the different publications, as shown in  
34 Table 1. Of the five publications with the largest audiences (with an average circulation of  
35 over 500,000 per issue) only one is a 'quality' newspaper. Further, only one of these  
36 publications has a remain-supporting position on Brexit. Whilst there is some similarity  
37 between the most prolific issues in terms of number of articles and reach, the higher the  
38 number of articles published on an issue does not necessarily equate to that issue reaching  
39 the largest audience. This is pertinent when thinking about the potential for the presentation  
40 of Food Brexit issues in the UK print media to influence post-Brexit food policy; those issues  
41 which are most prominent in the media are likely to be assigned a higher degree of  
42 importance (McCombs: 2011: 3), and could subsequently influence the policy agenda.

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51 As well as issue salience, the framing of Food Brexit issues by the media could influence the  
52 way that policy around that issue is shaped (Stromberg, 2004; Olper and Swinnen, 2013).

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10 This is particularly concerning when considering the potential implications of Food Brexit for  
11 public health. Food prices were framed as both a positive and negative potential outcome of  
12 post-Brexit trade deals in the Food Brexit reporting. Whereas the popular and mid-market  
13 publications, with lower socio-economic readership profiles, framed cheaper food imports as  
14 a potential positive outcome of Brexit, The Guardian (with a predominantly middle-class  
15 readership), present cheaper foods as a negative outcome that could exacerbate health  
16 inequalities; "...shoppers could be left in a two-tier system that means the better off buy more  
17 expensive, British goods while those who are poorer are left with lower standard cheap  
18 imports" (Butler, 2018a). Where the popular and mid-market articles equate cheaper food  
19 with ending the need for food banks, significant pressure is placed on the government to  
20 pursue the free market agenda that would make this possible. The Daily Star quote  
21 Conservative Member in the European Parliament (MEP), David Campbell Bannerman  
22 saying, "Leaving the customs union will benefit the poorest in society the most" (Donnelley,  
23 2018) and the Sunday Express state that "If tariffs...are cut and the savings are passed on to  
24 shoppers...basic groceries become more affordable for struggling families" (Tominey, 2018).  
25 The implications for public health are not a focus for these articles. It is worrying that the  
26 groups in society who might be adversely affected by post-Brexit trade deals, particularly in  
27 health terms where inequities between socio-economic groups are already prevalent, are not  
28 receiving information about the potential health outcomes through the media.  
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42 In all cases, where articles featured quotes, these were primarily from individuals whose  
43 narrative reinforced the broader position on Brexit of the newspaper it was featured in. In  
44 terms of the specific individuals, institutions or organisations whose voices were most  
45 prevalent, Conservative MP, Jacob Rees-Mogg and then Secretary of State for Environment,  
46 Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove were the most prolific, both of whom voted to leave the  
47 EU in the referendum. Whilst some representatives from CSOs, the agricultural industry and  
48 the farmer, fisherfolk and agricultural workers group were heard from, this was primarily in  
49 remain-supporting 'quality' newspapers and served to amplify negative reporting on the  
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10 impact of Brexit on UK food and farming. For example, an article about the potential impact  
11 of Brexit on agricultural labour in the Guardian quotes asparagus farmer, Andy Allen, “We  
12 are completely reliant on seasonal migrant workers. If we can't get that labour I'll have to  
13 pack up” (Weaver, 2018).  
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18 The complete absence of voices from the public health sector and food manufacturing and  
19 food service industries was particularly notable given the major implications of Food Brexit  
20 for these sectors. The way issues are presented in the media, including proposed solutions,  
21 can influence the way they are dealt with by policy makers (Cobb & Elder, 1983: 96;  
22 Stromberg, 2004; Olper and Swinnen, 2013). It is therefore essential for these actors to  
23 ensure that they clearly communicate the potential implications of Brexit and put forward  
24 clear arguments for policy measures that will ensure the best possible Food Brexit outcome.  
25 Furthermore, part of the responsibility of journalists in producing news media is to reflect a  
26 wide variety of views and perspectives (Costera Meijer, 2001; Deuze, 2005; Christians *et al.*,  
27 2010). This forms part of their professional ideology and it is therefore important that they  
28 seek views on Food Brexit from across the different food sectors.  
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37 The dominance of political voices found in the Food Brexit coverage is in keeping with the  
38 idea that “journalists typically prefer sources in positions of authority because of their  
39 perceived trustworthiness” (Coleman & Dysart, 2005: 8). It is also pertinent to note that  
40 politicians use the media as a tool to communicate with the public (John *et al.*, 2013: 153). In  
41 terms of influencing public opinion and the post-Brexit food policy agenda, this must be  
42 carefully considered as the interaction between politicians, media and public creates  
43 “complex chains of causation” (John *et al.*, 2013: 131). Agenda setting theory suggests that  
44 the media influence public opinion which in turn influences the policy agenda (Buse *et al.*,  
45 2012). However, if politicians are influencing media reporting, are they not playing a  
46 significant role themselves in setting the policy agenda to determine the outcome of Food  
47 Brexit? With this in mind, the assertion made by Lang *et al.* (2017), that the media should  
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10 monitor and report on Food Brexit in order to inform and equip the public to hold the  
11 government responsible for desirable Food Brexit outcomes, should be regarded with some  
12 scepticism. Furthermore, newspaper audiences choose to read publications that validate  
13 their own worldview and justify their prejudices (Williams, 2010: 6). The danger of this is  
14 where voices and messages are amplified in publications whose political positioning they  
15 share and serve to reinforce, they in turn, will only reach audiences who already broadly  
16 share their worldview.  
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### 23 Conclusion

24 The main policy implication arising from this paper is the potential agenda-setting influence of the  
25 media reporting on Food Brexit. The findings suggest that Food Brexit issues are presented  
26 differently to different audiences and that UK print newspapers select and promote the issues,  
27 frames and voices that reflect and reinforce their own political positioning. When considering the  
28 potential influence on the policy agenda, it is important to note the readership and reach of the  
29 different publications. As noted in the introduction, the prominence and framing of Food Brexit  
30 issues in the media can shape public opinion and subsequently affect the government's policy  
31 response. Further research should take a longitudinal approach (covering media reporting from the  
32 referendum campaign up to present day and across all media platforms) in order to capture any  
33 changes in narrative and framing over time, providing a sense of the direction post-Brexit food  
34 policy is taking. In particular, it would be useful to understand the role of digital and social media on  
35 agenda-setting with regard to Food Brexit, given the capacity for internet technologies to tailor  
36 news content to specific audiences, facilitating increasingly personalised news consumption and  
37 audience fragmentation (Tewksbury and Rittenberg, 2012; Feezel, 2018). This evidence could be  
38 used by policy makers, industry, CSOs and the research community to assess whether that  
39 direction is conducive to a policy environment that will facilitate the Food Brexit outcomes sought.  
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51 Whilst the evidence suggests that media bias and political influence play a significant role in  
52 the way that Food Brexit issues are presented in the UK print media, the news media are,  
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Commented [PH10]: Have added this text to deal with Reviewer 1, comment 5 - it aims to make the practical implications of the research clearer.

Commented [PH11]: Added to deal with comments 2 and 5 from Reviewer 2 that the impact of aggregators is only mentioned in passing and that further research could be carried out on communications via twitter, Instagram, etc.

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10 nonetheless, the main source of information for the public on Food Brexit issues. As such,  
11 those seeking to influence post-Brexit food policy must strive to get their voices heard and  
12 messages across as widely as possible. Using the evidence to identify gaps or weaknesses  
13 in the communication of key messages in the media, stakeholder groups can then develop  
14 strategies to improve this. Furthermore, opportunities for more joined-up messaging could be  
15 identified. Where different stakeholder groups share concerns about a particular Food Brexit  
16 outcome (albeit probably for different reasons), opportunities for collaborative  
17 communications could be explored. This could be of particular benefit where groups have  
18 more traction with certain publication types than others. As highlighted by Buse *et al.*,  
19 the "*prominence of an issue is a product of how well actors...construct a persuasive account*  
20 *of the issue and its solution, and take advantage of opportunities to draw attention to the*  
21 *issue"* (2012: 83). For a socially, environmentally and economically sound Food Brexit, an  
22 integrated approach to both communication and policy-making would be critical. If the public  
23 are ultimately responsible for holding policy makers to account, journalists have a  
24 responsibility to represent and interrogate a wide range of views and opinion from across the  
25 food sector in the news media. For their part, the food and agricultural industries, CSOs,  
26 government and the research community must work harder to have their voices heard in the  
27 media to better inform the public and, in doing so, lay the foundations for the policy  
28 environment required for the Food Brexit they seek.  
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**Table 1. Average circulation per issue for June 2018 and publication position on Brexit of newspapers included in the study.**

Publication	Category	Total Circulation in June 2018	Leave/Remain
The Sun	Popular	1, 368, 051	Leave
Daily Mail	Mid-market	1, 184, 205	Leave
The Sun on Sunday	Popular	1, 141, 107	Leave
Mail on Sunday	Mid-market	947, 204	Remain
The Sunday Times	Quality	623, 310	Leave
Daily Mirror	Popular	503, 224	Remain
Sunday Mirror	Popular	431, 641	Remain
The Times	Quality	410, 677	Remain
The Telegraph	Quality	357, 924	Leave
Daily Express	Mid-market	327, 755	Leave
Daily Star	Popular	320, 133	Leave
Sunday Express	Mid-market	284, 681	Leave
The Sunday Telegraph	Quality	279, 152	Leave
i	Quality	248, 234	Remain
Daily Star Sunday	Popular	202, 163	Leave
The Observer	Quality	162, 232	Remain
The Guardian	Quality	136, 139	Remain
Financial Times	Quality	63, 874	Remain

**Table 2. Food Brexit issues in the UK print media from 6/4/18 – 5/7/18.**

Food Brexit issue	Key points covered	Examples of headlines
<b>Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential to improve British agricultural practices post-Brexit and develop an integrated approach to farming to benefit public health, the environment and the UK economy.</li> <li>Concern about post-Brexit trade deals undermining British agriculture if British farmers are required to uphold certain standards but food imports are not required to meet the same standards.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Industrial-scale beef production is a sign of crisis in Britain's farming; Most farmers make a loss and rely on Brussels subsidies. Before it's too late we must decide the kind of meat we want to eat”</i> (Lawrence, The Guardian, 2018b)</p> <p><i>“Farmers warn EU deal failure may ruin them”</i> (Ungoed-Thomas, The Sunday Times, 2018)</p>
<b>Animal welfare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern that proposed shortcuts to pre-slaughter inspections would jeopardise animal welfare.</li> <li>Concern that animal welfare standards will be compromised in post-Brexit trade deals.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Gove opening door to food fraud, warn vets”</i> (Starkey, The Times, 2018)</p> <p><i>“Cheap bacon: how shops and shoppers let down our pigs; With Brexit looming our animal welfare”</i></p>

		<i>standards are vulnerable. We've got welfare reform wrong in the past - how can we get it right in the future?" (Levitt, The Guardian, 2018)</i>
<b>Fishing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brexit as an opportunity to improve fishing policy.</li> <li>• The impact of a hard Brexit and banning EU fisherfolk from British waters on fish prices.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Fishing for Benefits; The Scottish government should look past its Brexit bias and recognise that at least one industry stands to gain from the UK leaving the EU" (The Times, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>"Hard Brexit would mean more and cheaper British fish - but there's a catch. Exclusive: taking back control of UK waters would lower the price of British-caught fish, new analysis shows - but most of the fish we eat is imported" (Carrington, The Guardian, 2018)</i></p>
<b>Food labelling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brexit as an opportunity to enforce standardised traffic light nutrition labelling.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"CEREAL BOXES MISLEAD OVER SUGAR" (Poulter, Daily Mail, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>"UK urged to make 'traffic light' food labelling mandatory; Which? Says Brexit is chance to update law to help shoppers faced with bewildering array of nutritional data" (Smithers, The Guardian, 2018)</i></p>
<b>Food policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opportunity and need to develop integrated food policy post-Brexit, taking public health, farmer livelihoods, social equity and the environment into account.</li> <li>• The potential impact of further trade liberalisation on our food system.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Fresh start for food policy must put consumers at the top table" (Vicary Smith, The Daily Telegraph, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>"Food deals are the forgotten bread and butter issues of Brexit; Trade negotiations with the EU have descended into a political circus - yet the quality of what we eat is too important to overlook" (Baggini, The Guardian, 2018)</i></p>
<b>Food prices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential for the UK government to reduce tariffs on food imports if the UK leave the customs union, resulting in cheaper food prices and potentially ending the need for food banks.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"FOOD BANKS BUST; Brexit to slash grocery prices" (Donnelley, Daily Star, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>"Shoppers' main fear after leaving EU is rising price of food" (Bashforth, The Times, 2018)</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential for food prices to increase if tariffs are imposed on food imports.</li> <li>• Potential exacerbation of health inequities if lower income households can only afford cheaper, less healthy imported foods.</li> </ul>	
<b>Food safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional post-Brexit demands on local authorities resulting in decreased capacity to enforce food hygiene standards.</li> <li>• Concerns about a reduction in information sharing on contamination and disease outbreaks.</li> <li>• Concerns about the capacity of the UK's Food Standards Agency to assume additional responsibilities currently dealt with by the European Food Safety Authority.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"UK food risk after Brexit"</i> (Daily Mirror, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Local authorities fear Brexit threat to food safety standards"</i> (Connolly, i, 2018)</p>
<b>Food security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential disruption of food supply due to increasing checks at borders.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Revealed: plans for Doomsday no-deal Brexit; Food, petrol and medicines would run out"</i> (Shipman, The Sunday Times, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Brexit voices of doom like 'Project Fear on speed'"</i> (Swinford &amp; Yorke, The Daily Telegraph, 2018)</p>
<b>Food standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential for post-Brexit trade deals with the US and other countries to result in the UK importing products such as chlorine-washed chicken and hormone-treated beef.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Gove: I'll keep out US meat"</i> (Coates, Sunday Express, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Post-Brexit food standard 'overstated'"</i> (Hurley &amp; Jones, The Times, 2018)</p>
<b>Geographical indication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The debate about continued recognition and protection of regional specialities (such as stilton, feta cheese and Cornish pasties).</li> </ul>	<p><i>"There's only one Cornish pasty...EU urged to protect British food from imitation"</i> (Stone, i, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Brexit indigestion: row brewing over call for UK laws to protect likes of cognac and feta; EU demand for legislation to indicate origins of food and drink to be flashpoint in talks"</i> (Rankin, The Guardian, 2018)</p>
<b>Impact on food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The negative impact on food</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Hard Brexit could force part of</i></p>

<b>industry</b>	<p>manufacturing businesses if the UK leave the single market and customs union, due to tariffs on exports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The negative impact of the referendum result on the food service sector, with increased ingredient costs and less people eating out due to the decreased value of the pound.</li> <li>• The potential for the UK's food manufacturing sector to grow through the expansion of non-EU export markets.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Tilda's Essex mill to close; Withdrawal from customs union and single market would take heavy toll, executive says</i>" (O'Carroll, The Guardian, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Cheers, let's drink to success of Brexit"</i> (Sunday Express, 2018)</p>
<b>Irish border</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complexities of addressing a hard border on the island of Ireland for the agri-food industry, and the potential for technological solutions.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Ireland's open border is more than a symbol. It ensures people can eat; Dublin is thinking through the consequences of Brexit for real people, but Westminster's head remains buried in the sand"</i> (Lawrence, The Guardian, 2018a)</p> <p><i>"PROOF THE REMAINER ROW OVER EU CUSTOMS UNION IS CLAP-TRAP"</i> (Hardman, Daily Mail, 2018)</p>
<b>Labour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern about the future of British farming due to its dependence on migrant labour.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Don't cut off farm workers"</i> (Daily Express, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Forbidden fruit: berry growers warn Brexit could ruin sector; Wimbledon staple under threat as EU pickers stay away - and Brits refuse to plug the gap"</i> (Butler, The Guardian, 2018)</p>
<b>Public health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern that post-Brexit trade deals will result in imports of cheaper, unhealthy foods which could have a detrimental impact on public health.</li> <li>• The potential to make public health a central priority for British farming post-Brexit.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Big Brexit Sweetener"</i> (Daily Star, 2018)</p> <p><i>"Meat is crucial to balanced diet, Michael Gove tells farmers; environment secretary's vision for UK agriculture post-Brexit sees farmers playing a vital role in improving public health"</i> (van der Zee, The Guardian, 2018)</p>
<b>Subsidies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criticism of the current agricultural subsidy system as favouring wealthy landowners.</li> <li>• The potential for an improved subsidy system based on</li> </ul>	<p><i>"BREXIT WRECKER LORD AND HIS EU HANDOUTS; Meddling Duke of Wellington pocketed farming subsidies 'Arrogance of the Lords is unbelievable"</i></p>

	<p>environmental and public health outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional financial support needed for Scottish farmers due to the nature of the Scottish rural landscape.</li> </ul>	<p><i>EXCLUSIVE</i>" (Chapman <i>et al.</i>, Daily Express, 2018)</p> <p>"<i>Farmer subsidies overhaul in 2024</i>" (Johnson, The Daily Telegraph, 2018)</p>
<b>Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological innovations for improving agricultural efficiency to help farmers facing rising costs and subsidy cuts post-Brexit.</li> </ul>	<p>"<i>The robot farmers leaving tractors in the dust; A British start-up aims to raise yields dramatically using a range of AI-driven agricultural machines</i>" (Burn Callander, The Daily Telegraph, 2018)</p>
<b>Trade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The perceived risks and benefits of leaving the single market and/or customs union, including knock-on impacts on farmer livelihoods, British agriculture, the food manufacturing and service industry, food prices and food standards.</li> <li>• Concern and optimism about the UK's ability to deal with new responsibilities for policing trading practice and the logistical demands of increased border checks.</li> </ul>	<p>"<i>Lord Price: "UK has up to five years of bumps"; ex-trade minister is optimistic of an eventual good independent trading relationship after Brexit</i>" (Wood, The Guardian, 2018).</p> <p>"<i>Trade authority 'will not be ready for Brexit</i>" (Jones, The Times, 2018).</p>

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Figure 1. Stakeholder groups quoted in Food Brexit newspaper articles in leave/remain-supporting publications from 6/4/18 – 5/7/18

