

## [Labour's progressive trade policy: Britain in the world \(Labour's progressive trade policy / Britain in the world / Policy Commissions / Labour Policymaking\)](#)

The UK's international trade policy is key to fostering economic growth. Following our exit from the European Union, many in the science sector, from businesses to researchers, feel trade policy and some of the regulation underpinning it is not fit for purpose. We do not yet have all the frameworks in place to enable trade and cooperation for science, for example, the UK still has not associated to Horizon Europe, a vital enabler of scientific collaboration.

We have set out below some trade policy ideas which aim to better secure the UK's supply chains and promote Britain's ambitious climate pledges.

The RSC is in a unique position to consult, and gather evidence from, our membership. We promote evidence-based science policy, which is key in achieving a green, progressive trading environment. We are addressing questions 3,4 and 7 with these points on supply chains and chemical regulation.

### Supply chains

- The RSC is calling for coherent and harmonised long-term policies to drive a circular economy that safeguards the UK's supply of the critical minerals needed for our transition to a low-carbon world. Many policies here are piecemeal, short-term, quick tick approaches; however, this leaves threats to the future of our economy. Policy should address the environmental and social impacts of primary extraction with clear and coherent environmental, social and governance (ESG) requirements at all points in the supply chain. The chemical sciences (including environmental chemists and chemical oceanographers) can contribute to better and more coherent environmental monitoring as part of ESG.

### Chemical Regulation

- Chemicals are a part of everything we do. The Royal Society of Chemistry's report with Cambridge Econometrics on the chemistry-using workforce found that chemistry knowledge, through 275,000 chemistry-using professionals in the UK, impacts the generation of an average of £83bn annually for the UK economy.
- Despite the role chemicals play in our everyday life, there is no regulatory body as there is for food and medicines. The current chemical management operations we use nationally are a 'sticking plaster' to making law post-Brexit work.
- The UK needs a new Chemicals Agency. This would reshape the operating model for chemicals regulation by building on what we already have, respecting the aspects of devolved decision-making, and pooling resources to improve the economic prosperity of the chemical sector, protect the environment and human health. This Agency would also be well placed to regulate on PFAS.
- Internationally, it is vital we build trading relationships and collaborate with partners, such as the EU on the use, manufacture and import of chemicals. This body would act as the national representative in chemical policy, providing trading partners with trust in our standards, and working to ensure that global chemical policy is beneficial to the UK market.
- When chemicals are used responsibly and at safe concentrations in products, they bring many benefits to our lives and significant economic returns. This is a key opportunity in prioritising the biggest chemicals issues facing UK such as pollution in air, land, and water and to promote the UK as a world class regulator.

- It is also important that the UK continues to show global leadership in supporting the United Nations Science Policy Panel on chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention. This can support global frameworks that help trade and the environment.
- Chemical Regulation: devolved.
- A National Chemicals Agency would provide a trusted brand. This body would act in a similar way the Foods Standards agency (FSA) and the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to ensure everyone in the UK feels confident that chemicals are well regulated in the same way as they do with foods and medicines.
- This would be a central point of authoritative contact and guidance for businesses and individuals to ensure the chemical sector thrives both economically and in the interest of our environment and human health. It would support not replace devolved decision making.
- Similar to the FSA, this body could support and inform local authorities to enforce regulations and to check the standards are being met.