'Present realities' and the need for a 'lived experience' perspective in Brexit agri-food governance

Damian Maye*, Hannah Chiswell, Mauro Vigani and James Kirwan

Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire,

Oxstalls Lane, Longlevens, Gloucester, GL2 9HW, UK (dmaye@glos.ac.uk;

hchiswell1@glos.ac.uk; mvigani@glos.ac.uk; jkirwan@glos.ac.uk)

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44-1242-714133; Fax: +44-1242-714395.

Accepted for publication in *Space and Polity*: 29-Aug-2018

‘Present realities’ and the need for a ‘lived experience’ perspective in Brexit agri-food governance

Abstract

Brexit poses a significant challenge to the future governance of the UK agri-food sector. Policy decisions that will be made in the next few years will initiate a major new phase of agrarian change and regulation. We are seeing signs of this already in agri-food policy discourse, including scenarios related to food and farming futures post-Brexit. Academic representations of Brexit and agriculture are also mostly futures-orientated. This is important analysis; however, Brexit processes are *active now*, rather than simply in the future, influencing the lives of farming families, farm employees, food chain actors and local communities. This paper examines how Brexit is being discussed *now* in two key agricultural sectors: cereals and horticulture. Regional newspaper articles are used to provide initial insights into the ‘present realities’ of Brexit and agriculture, by which we mean how producers, associated food chain actors and the public are engaging with Brexit now in terms of changes they are making to their livelihoods and expectations about future uncertainty in the present day. We conclude by making recommendations for future research to contextualise every-day, lived experiences of Brexit in agri-food governance.

Key words: Brexit; Agriculture; Cereals and Horticulture; Present realities; Lived experiences

1.0 Introduction

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has played a fundamental role in shaping the UK agri-food sector and its regulation since the UK joined the then European Economic Community in 1973 (Buckwell, 2016; House of Lords, 2017). Benefits of what is now the EU include membership of the Single Market (and the four freedoms) and the Pillar 1 (basic payment scheme) and Pillar 2 (environmental and rural development programme) annual payments that UK farmers receive. The UK referendum of 23 June 2016, which voted by a small margin in favour of leaving the European Union, poses a significant challenge to the future of the UK agri-food sector, including *inter alia* concerns about farm support, trade, food security, food standards, wages, labour and employment markets, health and environmental regulations. Some commentators regard Brexit as a significant opportunity to redesign a more efficient, targeted agricultural policy (e.g. Helm, 2017). We are seeing signs of change already through the Government’s ‘Health and Harmony’ (Defra, 2018) consultation, which proposes major reforms to farm support, with plans to phase out basic payments for farmers by 2024 (Lang et al, 2018: 15; initially 2022 was proposed (see Gove, 2018: 16)), replacing them with grants that pay farmers and rural stakeholders for the provision of public goods. Discussions about UK farming and the agri-food system are also active in a variety of fora, including formal parliamentary committees (e.g. House of Lords, 2017), industry, NGO and civil society network actions, reports and meetings (see the speech by the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, at the 2018 Oxford Farming Conference (4th January), for example, and parallel discussions at the Oxford Real Farming Conference), and coverage on social media platforms (e.g. Twitter).

Policy decisions that will be made in the next few years will likely initiate a major new phase of agrarian change and regulation. Given the likely projected impact on UK agri-food and its associated forms of governance, it is understandable that the vast majority of the debate to date has focused on food and farming *futures* post-Brexit (e.g. AHBD, 2017a/b). This is important analysis; however, Brexit processes are *active now*, rather than simply in the future. Brexit is already part of 'everyday life in multiple, disjunctive ways' (Anderson and Wilson, 2018: 291), influencing, in the case of the UK agri-food sector, the lives of farming families, farm workers, associated food chain actors, local communities, etc. The Brexit vote created disruption and uncertainty, as well as opening up possibilities, but now it is less about the vote itself as an 'event' and more about how people, groups and organisations relate to Brexit both now and develop in the present diverse post-Brexit futures (*ibid.*). For example, how does Brexit and agriculture happen and continue to happen two years on from the vote to leave?; how are farmers, growers, workers, food chain representatives and so on experiencing the implications of Brexit, now? This requires a conceptualisation of Brexit as an 'everyday lived experience' for many in the agricultural sector. In short, if the agri-food and rural policy debate focuses only on the future, it fails to recognise that how Brexit is experienced today can inform and enhance the development of future governance strategies. These 'present realities' are also part of 'future geographies' (Anderson, 2010), signifying logics, practices and anticipatory actions for post-Brexit agri-food futures.

To develop this 'everyday lived experience' perspective for Brexit agri-food governance, this paper does two things. Firstly, we examine academic and industry analysis of Brexit and agriculture to date. Economic issues dominate and the analysis is mostly futures-orientated (especially implications once we leave the EU). Nevertheless, the analysis covers useful agri-food governance themes which a lived experience can shed light on in terms of how it might be made better in the future. Secondly, we examine how Brexit is being discussed now in two key agricultural sectors: cereals and horticulture. Regional newspaper articles are examined to provide insights into the *'present realities' of Brexit*, by which we mean how producers, associated food chain actors and the public are engaging with Brexit now in terms of changes they are making to their livelihoods and expectations about future uncertainty. The 'present realities' of Brexit and agriculture thus constitute changes made in anticipation of the future and speculative expectations of the future made in the present day. The next section of the paper outlines the research strategy developed to examine 'present realities'. We then review academic and related industry and policy analysis of Brexit and agriculture to date, identifying four themes that although futures-orientated fit well with a 'lived experiences in agri-food governance' perspective. We then examine Brexit in relation to cereals and horticulture, firstly summarising important trade and socio-spatial contextual factors per sector before secondly examining the 'present realities' of Brexit reported in regional newspaper articles. We conclude with some recommendations for future research to further contextualise the 'everyday lived experiences' of Brexit and agriculture as a means to better inform future agri-food governance

2.0 Research methodology: capturing the 'present realities' of Brexit and agriculture

Brexit and agriculture, in general terms, covers UK agriculture and reported impacts and policy options, including related agri-food chain and trading patterns. For example, the UK is a net importer of agri-food products, whose main trading partner is the EU, with approximately one third of the UK's food currently coming from the EU (Lang, Millstone and Marsden, 2017). Understanding trade patterns and political economy relations is therefore essential. Analysis of the implications of Brexit for specific commodities across agricultural regions should also be considered, beyond economic impact analysis. Studies of agricultural subsidies and agri-environment schemes, for instance, show differential impacts dependent on the production systems and regions (farm size and tenure are other important variables) (Whitfield and Marshall, 2017). To reflect commodity differences and regional geography (Dwyer, 2017), we examine the geographies of Brexit and agriculture through a focus on cereals and horticulture, both of which are key agricultural sectors in the UK (AHDB, 2017a).

The commodity-level analysis of Brexit and agriculture covered three elements: i. post-Brexit futures; ii. geographies of production, trade and policy support at sector and sub-sector levels; and iii. lived experience. The first element is covered through the academic review, with secondary and primary data sourced to examine the final two elements, combining two datasets. Contextual factors are examined in terms of what EU membership and the 2013 CAP reform have meant for the two sectors in Great Britain (GB) to date. This is done using documentary sources, including national-level data from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department, and farm level data from the Farm Business Survey (FBS).[1] Regional newspaper articles are then analysed to examine how the 'present realities' of Brexit and agriculture are reported. Regional newspapers were chosen to show the geographical dimensions of Brexit and to examine the way Brexit is being discussed in the commodity sectors. Production value data was collected at the regional level to allow integration with the regional media data.

Regional media searches were performed using the Lexis Nexis database of UK regional newspapers for (i) *Brexit, farming* and *horticulture* and (ii) *Brexit, farming* and *cereal*. The search was limited to the previous 9 months (March 2017-December 2017) and included significant events such as the triggering of Article 50 (29th March 2017). Initially the searches yielded 156 meaningful articles[2]: 55 relating to cereals and 101 relating to horticulture. Although this disparity is an important finding (see below), in order to facilitate more meaningful numerical analysis, an additional search for *Brexit*, *farming* and *arable* was run, compiling the results (minus duplicates) with the cereal articles; this yielded a total of 212 articles. A thematic analysis of each article was then undertaken. Thematic analysis involved identifying and categorising the following variables: (i) the paper's region of origin; (i) the dominant topic/theme of the article (details of which can be found in Table 1, below); (iii) its outlook/stance (positive, neutral or negative); and (iv) the timeframe discussed (whether it was speculative in nature or concerned with 'present-Brexit' realities, i.e. issues that are happening now). Topic categories were initially determined by the research teams' understanding of Brexit debates, combined with the themes noted in the academic literature (see below) and guided too by the emerging data topics themselves. The review of academic literature thus informed coding of media sources at a meta-level, but it was important to code the newspaper articles inductively to reflect the media discourse in

[1] Where discussed, production value of cereals and horticulture is expressed in British pounds (£).
[2] Excluding duplicates, items from the Irish press and miscellaneous/erroneous articles.

comparison to 'expert' views represented through the academic analysis of Brexit and agriculture.

Table 1 Categorisation of 'Brexit agriculture' articles

	Description
Trade & production	Issues pertaining to relationships with the EU and beyond, and/or changes to domestic and international demand for British products post-Brexit.
Labour	Relates to labour, and in particular, the impact of Brexit on migrant workers' willingness or ability to continue to work in UK agriculture.
Finances & subsidy	Encompasses issues relating to financial support, particularly with reference to the continuation of agricultural subsidies and/or alternatives to this. Also includes general comments about the financial sustainability of agricultural or particularly sectors post-Brexit and strategies deployed/responses to this.
Environment	Relates to the environmental impacts of post-Brexit policy.
Generic	Combines any of the categories above in broadly equal measure, or as a part of a general discussion of the 'unknowns' and potential implications of Brexit that has no one particular dominant theme.

Regional newspaper articles and their content provide initial insights and examples of the 'present realities' of Brexit by examining how producers, associated actors and the public are engaging with Brexit now in terms of changes they are making to their livelihoods and expectations about future uncertainty in the present day. These data highlight the value of a 'lived experience' perspective to better inform post-Brexit agri-food governance in terms of how it is emerging in the ordinary situations of our day-to-day lives. By distinguishing the sources as either present- or future-orientated, it is also possible to develop a clearer understanding of Brexit's *current* implications in a context dominated by speculation and a concern for prediction. The results of the thematic analysis are presented in a series of choropleth maps and tables, with supporting qualitative analysis. We start the analysis by first reviewing how Brexit and agriculture is currently framed in the agri-food literature.

3.0 Brexit and agriculture in the agri-food literature: the primacy of economics and 'post-Brexit agricultural futures'

The academic and grey literature (i.e. key industry and policy documents) on Brexit and agriculture covers four main themes – these are all themes that a lived experience approach can help to shed further light on in terms of future agri-food governance. The first theme is *farm subsidies*. The CAP is the EU's biggest single item of public expenditure, currently taking up 40% of the total EU budget (it was 80% in 1957) (Helm, 2017). CAP support is significant for UK farmers (House of Lords, 2017). As Grant (2016, p. 12) reports, '[a]cross all farm types, the SFP Scheme accounted for 56 per cent of total income and agri-environment and other payments for a further 15 percent'. There are sectoral and geographical differences. At a sector level, hill livestock producers are particularly reliant on the SFP Scheme and agri-environment payments, as exemplified in Whitfield and Marshall's (2017) study of upland farmers in the Yorkshire Dales. Farms in the devolved regions (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) are also more dependent on SFP, as regions where extensive livestock grazing is the main production system (see Dwyer's (2017) analysis of Brexit implications for agriculture in Wales and AHDB's (2017b) analysis for Scotland). The current round of CAP funding will be in place until 2024 (Lang et al, 2018), so the debate is about what will replace it after 2024. Some argue that leaving the CAP could be a good thing, given the inefficiency and poor design of the policy (e.g. equity distribution criticisms of the current model, decoupled CAP payments have become capitalised in land prices), providing UK policymakers with an opportunity to develop new agricultural policy (Helm, 2017). However, there are concerns regarding competitive disadvantage with European competitors in terms of subsidies, as well as the value of maintaining direct payments post-Brexit to reduce farmer exposure to market volatility (Grant, 2016).

The post-Brexit farm subsidy debate centres mostly then around new future funding models, including a scenario whereby future farm subsidies only provide support for public goods (Defra, 2018; Gove, 2018). The second theme is *farm regulations*. The EU has long been critiqued for overly burdensome regulation and form filling. Campaigners in favour of Brexit argued that once outside the EU the UK could relax its farming rules, increase access to new technologies and avoid the ban on key agrochemicals (Matthews, 2016). Counter to this, there is concern among environmental groups about how environmental legislation affecting agriculture will apply once Brexit happens (as much of the legislation was brought into UK law as secondary legislation under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972) (Grant, 2016). The orientation is again to the future. Two aspects are notable here: firstly, the possibility to develop a UK regulation that is less restrictive regarding the adoption of productive inputs such as GM crops; and secondly, that the UK may decide to remove the ban applied by EU Plant Protection legislation on some plant protection products which were considered dangerous (e.g. three neonicotinoids were banned by the EU which oil seed rape growers were previously reliant upon (*ibid.*)). As such, at a political level there is strong support from environmental groups in the UK for strong regulation of agriculture. The level of access to the single market is the other object of analysis, as this will determine the degree to which the UK will need to meet EU farming and environmental rules (House of Lords, 2017). In his analysis of possible future outcomes, Grant (2016, p. 14) predicts that 'farmers should not expect a 'bonfire of controls' after Brexit'.

Trade and markets is the third theme. Alongside farm subsidies, this is the most debated Brexit agriculture topic, especially impacts on prices, trade costs, production and consumption as a result of changes to trade-related policy (Buckwell, 2016). Impacts on markets are presented using post-Brexit future trade/subsidy scenarios, typically going from the status quo to a World Trade Organisation (WTO)-default scenario (trade liberalisation), with UK-EU trade arrangements in between (e.g. AHDB 2017a; Buckwell, 2016; van Berkum et al., 2016). The consensus is that it is unlikely that any future UK-EU trade agreement will be as profitable as the current arrangement (i.e. membership of the EU) (Matthews, 2016). If a trade agreement is reached between the EU and the UK trade costs are still likely to rise, even if the reintroduction of tariffs on agri-food trade is avoided. The other issue concerns the process of starting trade talks with other countries around the world (Helm, 2017), which will mean the UK realigning itself with (WTO) links in order to maintain international obligations, and the consequent trade impacts this may have. In other words, future UK agricultural policy will need to be WTO-rules compliant and the UK will need to develop country-specific 'schedules' that contain commitments reflecting the Agreement on

Agriculture (tariff and non-tariff rate quotas) and domestic support and export competition (House of Lords, 2017).[3]

The fourth theme is *migrant labour and filling the labour gap*. Of the four themes identified in the literature, this theme is where greatest recognition of the 'present realities' of Brexit and agriculture is evident, recognising the current struggle facing some sectors of agriculture to fill vacant positions (e.g. the soft fruits sector), as noted in witness evidence provided in the House of Lords (2017) report, for example. Witnesses highlighted important differences between 'seasonal' and 'permanent' labour needs (meat processing and the veterinary profession, for example) and challenged simplistic distinctions between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' labour. That said, the overriding concern is the ability of a number of sectors of UK agriculture and related food processing to access manual and skilled workers in the future (Lang et al, 2017). Data from 2013 showed, for example, that 15% of the UK farm labour force was seasonal and 38 per cent of labour in UK manufacturing was made up of overseas workers (Lang, 2016). Preventing the free movement of labour post-Brexit it is predicted will severely impact the UK agri-food sector. As Lang et al. (2017, p. 45) put it, '[t]he prospect of ending EU free flow of labour strikes horror into many a farm and food enterprise. What will replace it?'. Some sectors are particularly susceptible, especially horticulture, but several other sectors too. Evidence submitted to the House of Lords Brexit Agriculture and Food inquiry (2017, p. 68) from Dairy UK suggested, for example, that non-UK labour accounts for about 11 per cent of the processing workforce; British Egg Industry Council data indicated that 40 per cent of staff on egg farms and 50 per cent of staff in egg packing centres were EU migrants; National Pig Association and British Poultry Council data indicate that one in five pig farms would struggle without migrant labour; migrant workers also make up around 60 per cent of employees in the British poultry meat industry. The key concerns then are about how agricultural sectors will be affected, as well as the need to understand the reasons for local labour shortage and how the labour gap might be filled through alternative recruitment or technological solutions (*ibid.*).

The analysis to date then is very useful in setting out possible *future impacts* of Brexit on agri-food. However, what is much less evident is an appreciation of the present realities of Brexit, including how Brexit happens now in relation to agri-food decision-making, activities and spaces. The impacts of Brexit are very much in the present, including *social impacts*, and sit alongside wider structural challenges. For example, Brexit aside, there are financial and structural issues facing UK farmers at the moment, particularly in terms of farm business incomes, price volatility, inequities in value distribution and an ageing farm population (Grant, 2016). The examples below provide initial insights into the 'present realities' of Brexit and agriculture and emphasise the need to consider 'everyday lived experiences' in agri-food policy discourse. We will return to this point in the concluding section of the paper.

4.0 Reframing Brexit and agriculture: geography, present realities and lived experiences

This section of the paper presents the results of secondary geographical data analysis on cereals and horticulture production, subsidies and trade with primary data (newspaper

[3] At the moment the UK is a member of the WTO in its own right, but the EU represents the UK at the WTO.

articles) analysis that reported the ‘present realities’ of Brexit. The analysis starts by first considering links between contextual factors for the two commodities and the geographical distribution of newspaper articles and then examines discourses and experiences that evidence ‘present realities’.

4.1 Cereal and horticulture production geographies and media representations of Brexit

References to cereals and Brexit in the regional media were concentrated in Scotland, Eastern England and the South West regions. This reflects the geography of cereals production (Figure 1), which when measured by production value is highest in Scotland and Eastern England. In Scotland the main cereal produced is barley and the main destination is malting, brewing and distilling (including Scottish whiskey), as well as animal feed markets (wheat, oats and rye are the other cereal crops). Eastern England is a renowned arable farming region in the UK, with a concentration of cereal production in its counties, including Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire and Suffolk. Wheat is the main crop grown and cereal cultivation is more or less continuous and usually supplied to flour mills or animal feed markets. The prevalence of cereal-related Brexit references in the South West – a region dominated by livestock farming – is less expected but reflects the importance of agriculture more generally in the region[4]. As a final note of context, the UK generally has quite high levels of self-sufficiency in terms of cereals/wheat.

[4] The South West has the most farms of any English region and over 1/5th of English farms are located in the region (FBS, 2017).

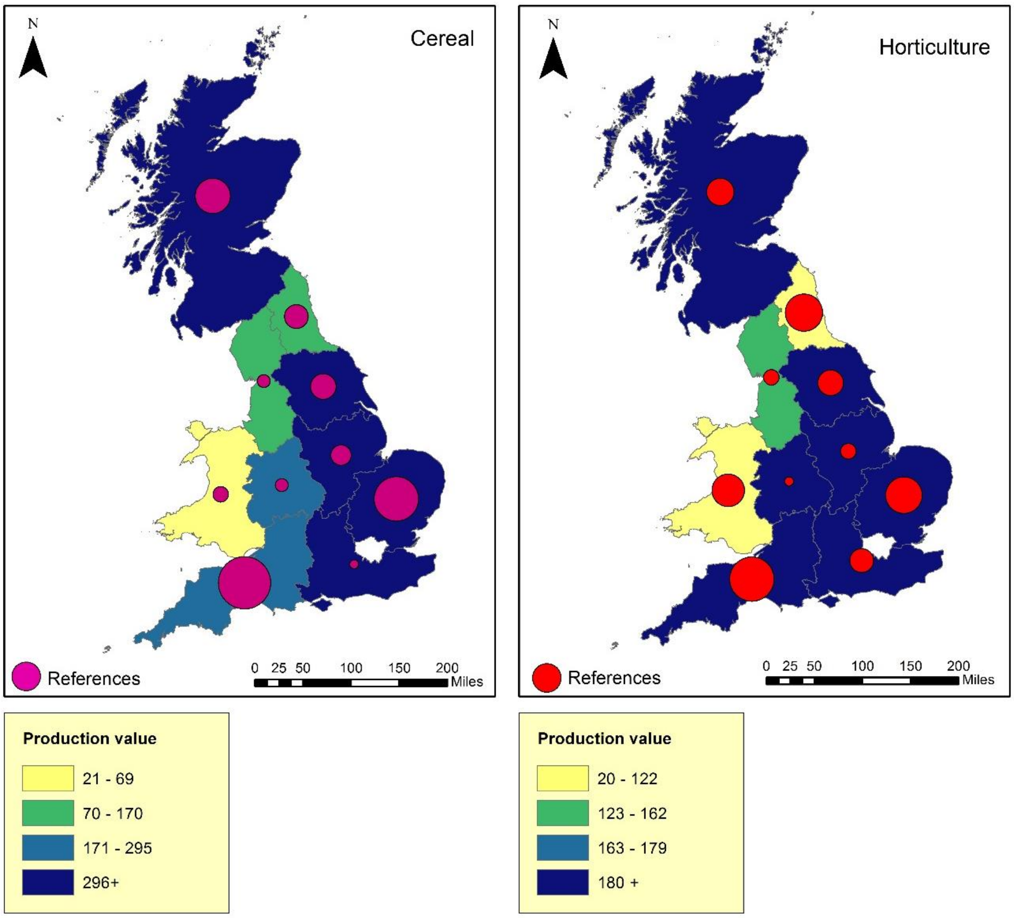

Figure 1 Production value of cereals and horticulture (2015) and regional media coverage of Brexit agriculture by GB region

The spatial distribution of horticultural articles related to Brexit is more diverse than cereals. This in part reflects horticulture's production geography. Horticultural products are regionally specialised (owing to variations in regional climatic and agro-ecological conditions), but the industry is generally more widespread (AHBD 2017a/b; Lang et al., 2017). For example, large flat arable areas in the eastern and northern regions mainly produce field vegetables, such as carrots, turnips and swedes, whilst soft fruits are the most important horticultural products in Scotland and Wales.

Table 2 summarises the thematic content of the newspaper articles in the two commodity sectors. There is overlap with the 'expert' discourse in some instances, particularly in relation to concerns about subsidies, trade and labour, but there is less emphasis on regulations in the media data, and the intensity and emphasis of specific themes, including impacts now and in the future, varies per sector. For example, horticulture articles tend to be linked with labour issues (Table 2), which is a very divisive and 'hot topic' that often extends to media headlines about 'Brexit and agriculture' generally, although linked specifically to horticulture and a few other key agriculture sectors that are dependent on migrant labour. This link between production geography and Brexit and agriculture coverage is further reflected if we compare Brexit-related cereal articles (Table 2). For cereals the coverage was more generic in nature about potential unknowns (41 per cent), with emphasis also on subsidy, in contrast to horticultural articles which were most concerned with labour issues now and in the future (35 per cent). This reflects production geography, with cereals farming typified by highly specialised monocultures, with a minimal reliance on labour per ha. In England, for example, cereal farms utilised an average of 0.735 AWU[5] of paid workers, compared with 5.44 AWU on horticultural holdings (FBS, 2017).

Table 2 Cereal and horticulture Brexit articles by topic[1]

		Topic				
		Trade & Production	Labour	Finance & Subsidies	Generic	Env.
Cereal articles	% Cereal articles	25.2	0.0	27.0	41.4	6.3
	% Topic	57.1	0.0	62.5	64.8	77.8
Horticulture articles	% Horticulture articles	20.8	34.7	17.8	24.8	2.0
	% Topic	42.9	100.0	37.5	35.2	22.2

[1] The association between cereal or horticulture article and the dominant topic classification is significant when $p<0.01$

Trade and production issues were comparable across the sectors, accounting for 25.2 per cent of cereal articles and 20.8 per cent of horticulture articles (Table 2). The emphasis of these articles tended to be on what impact Brexit would have on trade patterns and import/export relations (i.e. future-orientated, as per the academic analysis). This reflects current geographies of trade and GB's reliance on trade with the EU, although patterns of trade are quite different for the two sectors. In the horticulture sector, consumer demand is reliant on imports from the global market, particularly for out-of-season fresh products. Significantly, about 40 per cent of all horticulture imports are from the EU (AHDB, 2017a). For cereals self-sufficiency is higher. The EU is a key export market for GB barley and wheat, for example. GB cereals exports are highly variable from year to year because of seasonal variations of yields, quality and prices. In Scotland, sales of cereals to England and Wales are generally larger than exports to the EU and the rest of the world, but the EU remains a key market. The demand for maize and an incapacity to produce it due to unfavourable climatic and environmental conditions is why GB is a net cereals importer. In 2015/16, for example, about 70per cent of GB maize imports came from the EU (AHDB, 2017a), but large amounts of maize were also imported from Canada and Brazil.

Given that the EU is by far the main trade partner for GB in terms of both cereals and horticultural products, the risk of reduced access to the EU Single Market, for both exports and imports, is substantial, especially if tariffs are applied, and this 'present reality' is again reflected in the newspaper articles. In other words, the discourse is not surprising given the implications of leaving the EU Single Market and custom unions, which would mean renouncing a whole set of current trade agreements that are in place between the EU and a number of foreign countries. In other words, after Brexit the UK would need to quickly and effectively develop new trading relationships on international markets to avoid significant increases in the prices of imported cereals and horticultural products, as well as to avoid

[5] Annual Work Unit (AWU) is equivalent to the input of one person engaged in the agricultural activities of the farm business, on a full-time basis, for one year.

higher transactional costs associated with customs and border controls for exported goods (AHDB, 2017a).

4.2 Speculation, 'present-Brexits' and 'lived experiences' in GB cereals and horticulture

There is a strong futures aspect to the Brexit and agriculture discourse, not only in the academic and grey literature but also in the media articles, particularly in relation to trade and production issues, as reflected in the cereals and horticulture newspaper analysed here. For example, nearly 90% of cereal articles were categorised as either speculative or future-oriented (see Table 3), while just over 10 per cent were categorised as relating to or reporting on the present implications of Brexit. The present impacts of Brexit were therefore under-presented amongst the cereal-related articles surveyed, but of the 10 per cent that covered 'present-Brexit' issues they reported exclusively on either the decrease in farmland values or, more positively, on the impact the fall in sterling has had on farm incomes. Horticultural articles were also predominantly speculative in nature – reflecting the complex and likely lengthy period of Brexit negotiations that are still to be completed – but a far more notable percentage of articles were categorised as being 'present-Brexit' (22.8 per cent). The greater prominence of 'present-Brexit' in horticulture articles reflects the sector's high dependence on labour – particularly migrant labour – noted earlier.

Table 3 Cereal and horticulture Brexit articles by time frame[1]

	Time frame	
	Speculative / future	Present-Brexit
	%	
Cereal articles	89.2	10.8
Horticulture articles	77.2	22.8

[1] The association between cereal or horticulture article and time frame categorisation is significant when $p<0.05$

The spatial distribution of speculative versus present-Brexit articles across the two sectors is presented in Figure 2. This reinforces the idea that 'present-Brexit' issues are more widespread in the horticultural context than they are for cereals. Notably, even in regions where a high number of cereal articles were observed – such as Eastern England (21.6 per cent of references) and the South West of England (29.7 per cent of references) – articles were almost entirely speculative and future-orientated in nature. By comparison, evidence of 'present-Brexit' was far more prominent in the horticultural context, accounting for more than a quarter of references in half of the regions. With the exception of Wales, the prominence of 'present-Brexit' issues being reported in the regional media reflects the spatial distribution of horticulture's production value – in other words, in areas where production value is high, present-oriented Brexit horticulture articles were particularly evident. For example, 'present-Brexit' articles accounted for 57 per cent of articles in the South East of England, 29 per cent in the South West of England and one third in Scotland.

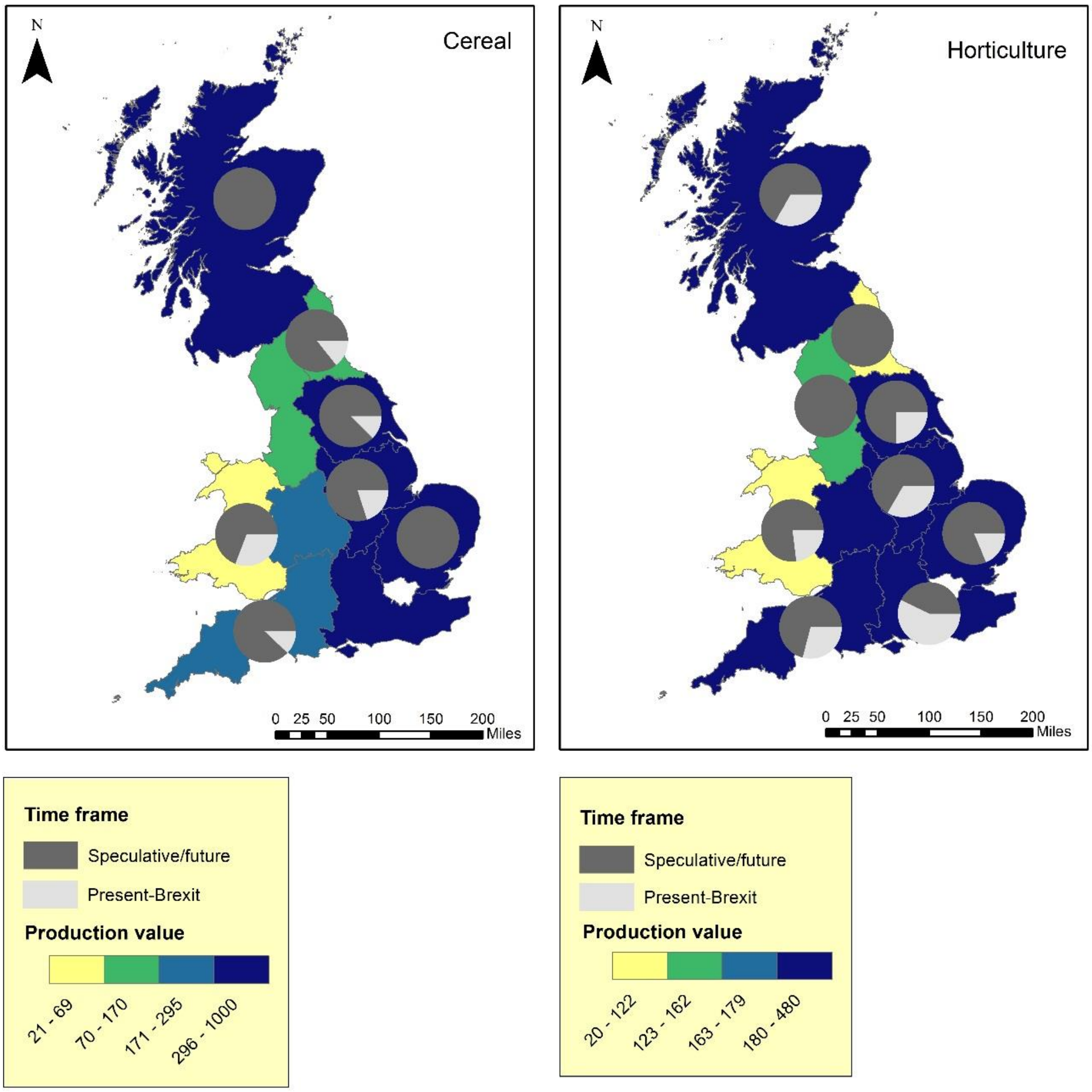

Figure 2 Production value and time frame of references by GB region[1]

[1]Note, all regions with an article count of 3 or less were excluded from this part of the analysis and therefore have no pie chart

To further develop this understanding of Brexit and agriculture as 'present realities', particularly the 'everyday lived experience' dimension, we turn now to some specific examples from the regional media, with a particular emphasis on what farmers and growers reported first hand. One article, dated 4th November 2017, reported how "Food is already 'rotting in the fields' of East Anglia due to a shortfall of seasonal farm workers" (Eastern Daily Press: November 4, 2017). Owing specifically to the poor exchange rate following Brexit, The Western Daily Press (4th November 2017) reported how "many migrant workers are not returning to work in fields […], choosing instead to work in Germany or France, where the exchange rate is more favourable". The article reported on Mr Simmons, an owner of Riviera Produce – one of the largest producers of cauliflowers, broccoli and cabbages in the UK – who claimed "it's getting more and more difficult by the week to be able to harvest because people are not coming here anymore. They have better opportunities in Germany where there is no exchange rate fluctuations and they are not so worried about their future”. In the same article, a daffodil producer claimed “a surge in anti-foreigner sentiments” inherent to the Brexit narrative was compounding recruitment issues.

The Yorkshire Post (June 24, 2017), The Journal, Newcastle (June 24, 2017) and The Western Morning News, South West (June 30, 2017) all reported on research by the NFU which found there were more than 1,500 unfilled vacancies on British farms in May. The emphasis across all three articles was on labour shortages happening now and suggestions that the trend would only worsen. Meanwhile, The Scotsman (September 21, 2017) reported how the soft fruit industry saw a 10-20 per cent shortage of seasonal workers from the EU this year. NFU Scotland’s horticulture commitmee chairman, and a soft fruit farmer himself, [name] claimed that “fewer workers were being attracted from the EU member states due to the UK’s poorer exchange rates and growing affluence in other parts of the continent”.

Although experiences of ‘present-Brexit’ were less evident within the cereal media search, there were nonetheless examples of present impacts amongst these articles (although generic in terms of the impacts described – e.g. cost of inputs). For instance, a farmer, cited in The Retford Times (November 8, 2017), noted how “the drop in sterling has increased prices of outputs (nice) and also costs of fertilisers, sprays and fuel (not nice)”. The (Newcastle) Journal (September 9, 2017) reported how “a lack of clarity over the post-Brexit landscape is negatively affecting the market”. The article cites an Estate Agent and Property Consultant from Strutt and Parker who reported that “farmland prices have fallen from their peak in late 2014/early 2015 due to weaker demand from farmers”. Similarly, the South West Farmer reported how, since the start of the official Brexit negotiations, “farmland values across England and Wales have fallen by over 10 per cent […] dropping back to 2012 levels”. A selection of other ‘present-Brexit’ news headlines are presented in Figure 3.

Fall in sterling helps boost farm incomes (The Western Mail: May 2, 2017)

Return to 2012 levels as farmland values drop 10% over past year (The South West Farmer: November 8, 2017b)

Farmland values fall by average of 10% in 12 months (The South West Farmer: October 11, 2017c)

Demand for farmland is continuing to decline (The Western Mail: August 29, 2017)

Denbighshire farmland sale provides litmus test of pre-Brexit confidence (Daily Post: March 23, 2017)

UK needs seasonal agricultural workers (East Anglian Daily Times: May 6, 2017)

Urgent action call over seasonal labour to stop food 'rotting in the fields' (Eastern Daily Press: May 6, 2017)

NFU fears harvest recruitment crisis looms as the number of seasonal workers from Romania and Bulgaria plummets (The Herald, Glasgow: June 23, 2017)

Scottish crops at risk without migrant labour, says NFUS (The Scotsman: June 21, 2017)

MP presses for seasonal work permits post-Brexit (Kentish Gazette: April 27, 2017)

Farmers threatened by fall in migrant workers (Medway Messenger: August 25, 2017)

Fall in access to migrants is hitting crops (Western Daily Press: November 4, 2017)

Figure 3 A selection of 'present-Brexit' headlines from regional UK newspapers

In terms of how 'post-Brexit' agriculture is being constructed, there was a significant difference across the articles pertaining to the two different sectors (Table 4). Firstly, just over one fifth of cereal articles were classified as positive in their outlook, compared with only 7.9 per cent of horticulture articles. And over half of the horticulture articles analysed were categorised as negative in outlook, compared with just 27 per cent of cereal articles. The relative negativity of horticulture articles, highlighted in Table 4, may reflect the prevalence of 'present-Brexit realities' amongst the horticultural industry. Unlike the horticultural sector, which has grappled with the potentially negative impacts of Brexit because of current trade patterns, cereal articles were more generalised, identifying Brexit as both a challenge and an opportunity. For example:

> "In the midst of Brexit, there is also so much change ahead with regard to regulations, policy and environment - it's a very exciting time for agriculture and technology." (South West Farmer: May 31, 2017)

> “Brexit is a tremendous opportunity to make changes to land use backed by the billions of savings the UK will make by leaving the CAP.” (The Scotsman: July 12, 2017a)
>
> “Whatever happens with Brexit or Scottish independence, if we are a strong brand and we innovate and invest in our people we will be in a good place and we will be more resilient.” (The Scotsman: August 24, 2017b)

Table 4 Cereal and horticulture Brexit articles by outlook[1]

		Outlook		
		Positive	Neutral/mixed	Negative
			%	
Cereal articles	% Cereal articles	20.7	52.3	27.0
	% Outlook	74.2	58.0	37.0
Horticulture articles	% Horticulture articles	7.9	41.6	50.5
	% Outlook	25.8	42.0	63.0

[1] The association between cereal or horticulture article and dominant outlook classification is significant when $p<0.01$

As Anderson and Wilson (2018, p.292) propose, “since the referendum … there has been a failure to understand the multiple, disjunctive ways that the European Union (or the act of exiting) was felt as part of the UK’s affective present”. The insights reported here affirms how Brexit is *not* exclusively encountered as a promise, nor as a threat; it is happening now and is shaping how farmers, growers and associated actors in the food chain go about their everyday activities, particularly within the horticultural sector (principally in relation to labour, where there are already labour shortages). Whilst Brexit futures are being decided, negotiated and worked-out behind closed doors, the realities of Brexit are surfacing in the everyday practice of British farmers, growers and agri-food chains. This influences approaches to investment and future plans, including a lack of response due to uncertainty or even denial that anything will change.

Concluding remarks

Disentangling UK agriculture’s economic and social relations post-Brexit will be complex. Analysis to date emphasises ‘Brexit agricultural futures’ (impacts on trade, changes to standards and regulations, impacts on future farm subsidy arrangements, threats to food security, etc.). We have argued here for the need to also examine the ‘present realities’ of Brexit and agriculture. This includes understanding how agricultural geographies are changing now as lived experiences in specific regions and communities. The data presented in this paper has provided initial insights to this approach, emphasising commodity-level geographies of production and trade and conceptualising Brexit and agriculture (in part at least) as an everyday process. Secondary data on production, subsidies and trading patterns were combined with primary data from regional newspapers to develop this perspective.

We conclude with the following three remarks. Firstly, in selecting two commodities – cereals and horticulture – we have argued that different agricultural commodities have specific production and trade geographies and by extension have specific Brexit impacts (both now and in the future). The secondary data and analysis of newspaper articles, for example, shows distinct agricultural production geographies and related political economic geographies of Brexit. The cereals analysis of newspaper articles was mostly concerned with future impacts, particularly changes to farm subsidy and land prices (as per the academic and policy discourse). The horticulture articles were speculative too, but less so, with the 'present realities' of Brexit particularly evident in relation to labour and employment issues (House of Lords, 2017; Lang et al, 2017), with a concentration of coverage in areas where horticultural production is more spatially clustered.

Secondly, within specific agricultural commodities and communities, Brexit is already part of everyday life rather than defined as a past and/or future 'event'. The current political emphasis is to establish a vision for British agriculture post-Brexit (Defra, 2018) and a lot of academic and agri-food industry energy is being employed to help with this task (see the excellent reports by Dwyer, 2017 and Lang et al, 2017 and 2018, for example). This is important work, but as these reports hint at, and we argue here, 'Brexit is already happening' and this also requires critical social science analysis and reflection. For example, how do politicians do agri-food politics now and how do farmers, food chain actors and environmental groups respond and reposition themselves over time. The Brexit White Paper (HM Government 2018: 16-19) proposes a new Facilitated Customs Arrangement to enable food and other goods to flow from the EU as they to do at present. A 'common rulebook for agriculture, food and fisheries products' is also proposed (ibid., 16), with the implication that changes may be more limited to agriculture and goods than services. However, this scenario creates an unhelpful fault-line between agricultural production and the services sector (Lang et al, 2018: 9). The two are interlinked parts of the food system, as shown here in relation to horticulture, and especially with regard to migration and mobility (labour) issues. Discourses also trickle down into everyday agricultural lives and spaces, influencing the perceptions and actions of farmers, farm families, farm workers and others directly and indirectly connected to farming, including those living in rural farming communities and public perceptions more generally. The regional newspaper articles examined in this paper are one example of how to capture these discourses, but like every secondary data source, they have their limitations, in the sense that they are media representations of very complex socio-political economic processes. Nevertheless, the 'everyday lived experiences' examples reported give initial insights into the 'present realities' of Brexit and agriculture and show very clearly that Brexit is happening now in terms of farm-level changes. There is evidence of denial too from some farmers that anything will change.

Finally, the analysis shows the potential that taking this approach offers as a complement to the mainstream agri-food Brexit discourse, which ironically is dominated by 'expert-led' voices. Having highlighted examples of Brexit and agriculture as it emerges in the pages of regional newspapers, more detailed and qualitative work is needed now to capture Brexit as it is lived. This argument extends beyond the specific case material related to agriculture. Across the whole Brexit debate futures thinking and accounts of everyday life need to brought into conversation more explicitly. It applies, for example, to other areas of the economy (services, manufacturing), to health or housing, or indeed a range of issues experienced in a rural or urban community. In this sense, 'a geography of Brexit might start by mapping how Brexit surfaces and becomes with everyday life and in everyday spaces' (Anderson and Wilson, 2018: p. 292).If future Brexit studies were to do this it would help to capture and legitimise a greater range of stakeholder perspectives, as well as revealing the unfolding impacts of Brexit now in ordinary life settings. There is also a need to connect different perspectives on Brexit and this can be done by using creative dialogue and innovative methods that go beyond representation i.e. animating the 'present realities' of Brexit as they unfold in places/regions and across different sectors of the economy over time. In Brexit and agriculture terms, such work might focus, for example, on experiences at the individual farm or local community level, or to capture the experiences of migrant workers following the referendum. There is an absence of migrant workers' voices in the agri-food policy discourse at present; we have heard from farmers and industry leaders on why migrant workers are no longer willing and/or able to come and work in the British horticultural industry, for exampe, but what about the workers themselves? There is thus much to be gained in policy terms by understanding changes happening now at different levels of the agri-food system, including the farm, the food chain, consumers, and local rural and urban communities. Place-based non-representational ethnographic methods (Vannini, 2015) could be employed, for example, to capture lived experiences to better understand the changes and impacts of Brexit that are taking place now. This could form part of longitudinal social science work that traced changing regional geographies of Brexit and agriculture over time, including also analysis of representations and framings (e.g. media and social media data). Longitudinal research from the post-referedum period to Brexit and beyond would also prove useful in contexutalising this process alongside the wider structural challenges the industry faces (recruitment, succession and the ageing farmer population, etc. – Grant, 2016). This would capture a sense of how Brexit co-relates with other farming work, beliefs, social identities, values and priorities. From a future geographies perspective, analysis of making-present diverse agricultural futures would also be valuable in analysing how Brexit scenarios are constructed and what it is the 'presencing' gives shape to in terms of underlying logics, strategies and modes of calculation.

Acknowledgements

This work was developed within the Horizon 2020-funded project, SUFISA (Sustainable finance for sustainable agriculture and fisheries; Grant agreement 635577). We are grateful to Katie Hickford for her help with the analysis of the newspaper articles and also acknowledge with thanks the constructive comments of the special issue editor, Mark Boyle, and two anonymous reviewers on a previous version of the paper.

References

AHDB (2017a) *Brexit Scenarios: an impact assessment* (Market Intelligence Report, October 2017). Retrieved from AHDB website: https://ahdb.org.uk/brexit/documents/Horizon_BrexitScenarios_11oct17.pdf

AHDB (2017b) *Exploring the implications of Brexit for agriculture and horticulture in Scotland* (Market Intelligence Report November 2017). Retrieved from AHDB website: https://ahdb.org.uk/documents/Horizon_November2017.pdf

Anderson, B (2010) Preemption, precaution, preparedness: anticipatory action and future geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34 (6), 777-798.

Anderson, B. & Wilson, H. F. (2018) Everyday Brexits. *Area*, 50(2), 291-295 http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/area.12385/pdf.

Buckwell, A. (2016) *Agricultural implications of Brexit*. http://ca1-fml.edcdn.com/downloads/WCF-Brexit-18.01.16-pdf.pdf?mtime=20160207094708

Daily Post. (2017, March 23) Denbighshire farmland sale provides litmus test of pre-Brexit confidence.

Defra. (2018) Health and harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit. Defra, London, February 2018.

Dwyer, J. (2017) *Thinking about a Welsh Agricultural Policy after Brexit: a report to the Welsh Assembly* (Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire). Retrieved from Welsh Assembly website: http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s54337/Paper%201%20University%20of%20Gloucestershire%20-%20ProfessorJanet%20Dwyer.pdf

East Anglian Daily Times. (2017, May 6) UK needs seasonal agricultural workers.

Eastern Daily Press. (2017, November 4) Urgent action call over seasonal labour to stop food 'rotting in the fields'.

FBS.(2017) *Data builder*. Retrieved from http://www.farmbusinesssurvey.co.uk/DataBuilder/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=Instructions (Accessed: 9 January 2018).

Gove, M. (2018, January) *Gove's look into the future*. *Proceedings of the 2018 Oxford Farming Conference*, Oxford.

Grant, W. (2016) The Challenges Facing UK Farmers from Brexit. *EuroChoices,* 15(2), 11-16.

Helm, D. (2017) Agriculture after Brexit. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy,* 33(1), 124-133.

HM Government (2018) *The Future Relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.* White Paper Cm 9593. July 12, HM Government, Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London.

House of Lords (2017) *Brexit: agriculture*. Retrieved from UK Parliament website: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldeucom/169/169.pdf

Kentish Gazette. (2017, April 27) MP presses for seasonal work permits post-Brexit.

Lang, T. (2016) *Food, Brexit and the Consequences: what can academics and the UK food movement do?* (Food Research Collaboration). http://foodresearch.org.uk/2016/07/food-brexit-and-the-consequences

Lang, T., Millstone, E. & Marsden, T. (2017) *A food Brexit: time to get real*. Retrieved from Euro Commerce website:

http://www.eurocommerce.eu/media/143037/FoodBrexitReport_LangMillstoneMarsden_July2017.pdf
Lang, T., Millstone, E., Lewis, T. and Marsden, T. (2018) *Feeding Britain: food security after Brexit*. Food Research Collaboration Food Brexit Briefing, London.
Matthews, A. (2016) The Potential Implications of a Brexit for Future EU Agri-food Policies. *EuroChoices,* 15(2), 17-23.
Medway Messenger. (2017, August 25) Farmers threatened by fall in migrant workers.
Retford Times. (2017, November 8) No title.
South West Farmer. (2017a, October 11) Farmland values fall by average of 10% in 12 months.
South West Farmer. (2017b, May 31) Insight into the future at Cereals.
South West Farmer. (2017c, November 8) Return to 2012 levels as farmland values drop 10% over past year.
The Herald. (2017, June 23) NFU fears harvest recruitment crisis looms as the number of seasonal workers from Romania and Bulgaria plummets.
The Journal. (2017, September 9) Two years of falling demand for rural demand.
The Scotsman. (2017a, August 24) Food story key to sector's success.
The Scotsman. (2017b, September 21) Scottish crops at risk without migrant labour, says NFUS.
The Scotsman. (2017c, July 12) William Loneskie: Thinking caps on now the end of the CAP's in sight.
The Western Mail. (2017a, August 29) Demand for farmland is continuing to decline.
The Western Mail. (2017b, May 2) Fall in sterling helps boost farm incomes.
van Berkum, S., Jongeneel, R., Vrolijk, H., van Leeuwen, M. & Jager, J. (2016) *Implications of a UK exit from the EU for British agriculture: study for the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Warwickshire, UK*. Lei Wageningen UR. Retrieved from NFU online: https://www.nfuonline.com/assets/61142
Vannini, P. (2015) Non-representational ethnography: new ways of animating lifeworlds. *Cultural Geographies,* 22 (2), 317-327.
Western Daily Press. (2017, November 4) Fall in access to migrants is hitting crops.
Whitfield, S. & Marshall, A. (2017) Defining and delivering 'sustainable' agriculture in the UK after Brexit: interdisciplinary lessons from experiences of agricultural reform. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability,* 15(5), 501-513.
Yorkshire Post. (2017, June 24) Concerns over hundreds of labour vacancies at harvest time.