

Award-winning columnist and Shropshire-based producer Roger Evans is fed up with politicians talking about what may, or may not, happen post Brexit. And wonders if he should start wearing shorts.

Brexit bull****

It seems there's not a week goes by when there isn't a conference or meeting somewhere to discuss Brexit and its likely impact on UK agriculture.

What a complete waste of time. There's absolutely no point in looking for answers that don't exist. Even if Theresa May invited you to a one-to-one meeting at No 10 (which might be an interesting experience), it would still be a waste of time because even she doesn't have the answers you seek and is unlikely to have them for some time.

That doesn't stop the politicians. They have nothing to say but it doesn't stop them talking. I went to a meeting once that was so terrible, it reminds me of those politicians. I didn't speak once. Afterwards the chairman came up and said: "You didn't have much to say today, Roger." I replied: "Neither did any of the others."

Why listen to politicians? They are a bit like the jukebox in our pub. No one listens to it because it's full of crap records. Politicians are part of an industry that generates a lot of hot air, and they've never been so busy. It took a business man to bring a sensible response to the Brexit question. He used few words, but they said so much.

He spoke when the takeover of Vauxhall by Citroen/Peugeot was announced. I can't remember the chief executive's name, but I can remember what he said. He was asked about the future of the Vauxhall workers post Brexit. This is almost exactly the same question that those of us facing the end of agricultural support are asking. His answer was simplicity itself. He said: "If their performance is excellent, they have nothing to worry about." Compared with all the vague talk that we get from politicians, his 'one liner' spoke volumes.

What he also said, though he didn't need to say it, was if your performance is not excellent then start worrying. What he said mirrors the message for UK agriculture. My own guess, which is as likely to be as right as anyone else's, is that if your business needs support, then that support is almost certain to be linked to environmental benefits. It's a great message for politicians. "We stopped farmers destroying the environment and saved you money."

They know that you will probably produce less food, but they are not too bothered about that because they have already committed to buying lots of food with all those trade deals they are signing around the world. What you do need to watch out for is the growing number of politicians that find the 'New Zealand' solutions attractive.

They are quite taken with the idea of casting UK farming adrift without any support at all and letting it fend for itself. You can just imagine it: "Look at all the money we've saved you now." There's little points of detail, like the fact that it's easier to cut costs to the bone if grass grows all year round. No sheds needed, little silage to make, no muck to store or cart out. And detail like the fact that 50% of our milk goes onto shelves and is in demand all year around. But they haven't got time for detail, they are busy with the big picture.

We'll probably get a pick-and-mix solution. You'll either have to look for a job in a Vauxhall factory, or you'll need to start wearing shorts.

