

Big 6 food retailers must guarantee worker safety



Call comes after major Tesco, Sainsbury and Marks and Spencer supplier admits social distancing 'impossible'

GMB, the union for food producers, has called for Government to convene an urgent meeting with the big 6 retailers and the Food and Drink Federation after a major Tesco, Sainsbury and Marks and Spencer supplier admitted social distancing was impossible in its factory.

The letter, sent to Secretary of State for DEFRA, ASDA, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco, M&S, Lidl and Aldi, comes after a Bakkavor manager was secretly filmed admitting **social distancing was not possible and threatening to sack staff who stayed at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.**



The union has also identified numerous employers refusing to pay essential workers full pay if they are absent due to covid-19 – in some instances workers are only paid Statutory Sick Pay (£95.85 a week) increasing the likelihood that workers who face losing money will come into work and risk spreading the virus.

GMB is calling for an urgent summit of the retailers, the Food and Drink Federation and Government to agree and implement minimum industry standards to reflect to the essential nature of the work.

Eamon O’Hearn, GMB National Officer, said:

"Food and drink workers are essential to ensuring our supermarket shelves are stocked and our communities stay fed. GMB is working successfully with a number of employers to take a lead on standards, but too many are not meeting the challenge.

"Employers cannot put profit and production over the safety of essential workers.

"Now is the time for the industry to step up to the plate and do everything possible to reduce the risk of the virus impacting on essential workers in our food supply chain."

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