



House of Commons
International Development
Committee

The World Food Programme and Global Food Security

Tenth Report of Session 2007–08

Volume I

Report, together with formal minutes

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 15 July 2008*

HC 493-I
Published on 23 July 2008
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£0.00

International Development Committee

The International Development Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for International Development and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

Malcolm Bruce MP (*Liberal Democrat, Gordon*) (Chairman)
John Battle MP (*Labour, Leeds West*)
Hugh Bayley MP (*Labour, City of York*)
John Bercow MP (*Conservative, Buckingham*)
Richard Burden MP (*Labour, Birmingham Northfield*)
Mr Stephen Crabb MP (*Conservative, Preseli Pembrokeshire*)
Daniel Kawczynski MP (*Conservative, Shrewsbury and Atcham*)
Ann McKechin MP (*Labour, Glasgow North*)
Jim Sheridan MP (*Labour, Paisley and Renfrewshire North*)
Mr Marsha Singh MP (*Labour, Bradford West*)
Sir Robert Smith MP (*Liberal Democrat, West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/indcom

Committee staff

The staff of the Committee are Carol Oxborough (Clerk), Matthew Hedges (Second Clerk), Anna Dickson (Committee Specialist), Chlöe Challender (Committee Specialist), Ian Hook (Committee Assistant), Sarah Colebrook (Secretary), Alex Paterson (Media Officer) and Miguel Boo Fraga (Senior Office Clerk).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the International Development Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 1223; the Committee's email address is indcom@parliament.uk

Footnotes

In the footnotes for this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12'.

Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
Summary	3
1 Introduction	5
Our inquiry	5
The global food crisis	6
The World Food Programme's response	7
DFID's response	7
Structure of this report	8
2 The WFP—origins and transformation	9
From food surplus to food assistance	9
Responding to the 'new face' of hunger	10
Social protection	10
'In-kind' food donations	12
The WFP as a humanitarian actor	13
Darfur and southern Sudan	14
Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF)	15
Zimbabwe	16
Hunger and malnutrition	17
The WFP's wider 'Enabling Development' activities	17
Nutrition	18
3 The current food crisis	24
Causes of the food crisis	24
Increased demand	24
Energy prices	25
Biofuels	25
Decreased supply	27
Export restrictions, stockpiling and speculation	27
Rising food prices: trends	27
The appropriate response from the WFP, DFID and the international community	28
The WFP's response	29
DFID's response	31
The international community's response	33
4 Food security in the 21st century	35
The relationship between the WFP, FAO and other agencies	35
Making the system more effective: rethinking the architecture	37
UN system coherence	37
One lead UN agency on hunger	38
Reprioritising agricultural development	39
Donor support to agriculture	39
New opportunities to drive agricultural development	40

Supporting farmers in the current food crisis	41
Genetic modification	42
5 Conclusion	43
List of conclusions and recommendations	44
Annex A: The Committee's visit programme in Ghana	50
Annex B: The Committee's visit programme in Rome	51
List of acronyms	52
Formal Minutes	53
Witnesses	54
List of written evidence	54
List of Reports from the Committee in the current Parliament	55

Summary

Hunger and malnutrition are long-term problems facing the world. Recent food price rises have greatly exacerbated the difficulties poor people face in accessing nourishing food and have dragged up to 100 million people back into poverty.

Analysis of the causes of the global food crisis is complex and outcomes are uncertain. But it would be sensible to prepare for higher prices in the medium term. New technologies such as biofuels and genetically modified crops offer challenges and opportunities to developing countries.

The World Food Programme's (WFP) 'pipeline' of emergency food has never been more important. It does crucial work at the frontline of humanitarian emergencies and in building the resilience of communities to deal with long-term hunger.

Up to 20 million tonnes of food may be needed to feed new groups of people being pushed into poverty by food price rises. Significant increases to the WFP's budget are likely to be needed in order to secure this additional food supply. The usual annual total of US\$3 billion in voluntary contributions may need to double to US\$5–6 billion. The Department for International Development (DFID) should do all it can to compensate for rising prices when disbursing funds to the WFP and encourage other donors to do the same.

Malnutrition is responsible for one-third of child deaths. Yet nutrition is under-funded and under-emphasised by the international community and the UN system. We are shocked that DFID lacks both a specific nutrition policy and measurable targets for assessing progress in reducing malnutrition. This must change.

The establishment of the UN Taskforce and its Comprehensive Framework for Action on food security are positive steps. The Framework needs to be agreed and implemented quickly whilst ensuring specific country needs are met as a priority. The UK's proposed International Partnership on Agriculture and Food is a logical next step in taking forward the Taskforce's work.

Agencies such as DFID and the WFP must look beyond the current crisis and address long-term drivers of food security. DFID should re-focus on agriculture. Its new support for research should be accompanied by efforts to assist poor farmers in entering markets.

Reforms to the UN system are another important factor in improving future responses to food insecurity. There is scope for far greater integration of the work done by the three Rome-based UN agencies. Identifying the WFP as the lead UN agency on hunger would contribute to a more coherent international approach.

1 Introduction

Our inquiry

1. The World Food Programme (WFP) was established in 1962 as a UN agency with responsibility for reducing the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition globally. It is estimated that over 850 million people, most of whom live in developing countries, do not have enough food to eat.¹ At the 1996 World Food Summit, the international community committed itself to halving the number of hungry people in the world by 2015. This objective was reiterated in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1, which has the targets of halving the number of people living in poverty, achieving full employment and halving the proportion of people living in hunger by 2015.²

2. Whether the MDG hunger target will be met remains highly uncertain. One in three people in sub-Saharan Africa lacks access to sufficient food. Although the share of undernourished people in the global population has decreased, in three regions—sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Western Asia—the absolute number of undernourished people has increased since 1990.³ Most countries in these regions will miss the 2015 MDG target on current trends.⁴ Others, including Ghana, Botswana, Brazil, Chile and El Salvador, are on-track to meet MDG 1 within the deadline.⁵

3. We decided to undertake this inquiry in early March 2008 as part of a series of inquiries assessing the work of the Department for International Development (DFID) with multilateral agencies. Our inquiry has proved timely in light of the recent rapid food price increases. These have greatly exacerbated the already grave situation facing many people in the developing world. The G8 Summit in Japan warned on 9 July 2008 of the danger that high oil and food prices could have “serious implications for the most vulnerable.”⁶ Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank, has said that the world food crisis could push 100 million people into poverty, reversing the gains made in poverty reduction over the last seven years.⁷

4. Whilst taking account of the current food crisis, we have kept our focus on a short and fairly narrow inquiry into one particular agency, the WFP, and on how the UK can best support both the agency and the wider issue of achieving global food security. Our report is informed by: the two evidence sessions that we held between April and June 2008; the two visits that we carried out to Ghana in March 2008 and to the UN food agencies’ headquarters in Rome in May; and the written evidence that we received from a wide range of development organisations and individuals. We would like to thank all those who gave

1 Ev 51

2 Progress towards the hunger target is measured using two indicators: the proportion of the population who cannot meet their minimum calorie requirements; and the prevalence of underweight in children under five. For further details see www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

3 Ev 37

4 MDG 2007 Progress Chart, online at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007-progress.pdf>

5 Q 17

6 ‘Concern at sharp rise in oil price’, *Financial Times*, 9 July 2008

7 Speech to Rome World Food Security Summit, 6 June 2008

evidence to us, in person or in writing, and the DFID, WFP and other staff who made our visits so interesting and useful. We would also like to thank those who took part in informal discussions with us over the course of the inquiry.

The global food crisis

5. Chronic hunger and malnutrition were profound problems for the world before the food price rises of 2007–08 began. The origins of the current crisis lie not in a global lack of food—there is enough food in the world to meet demand—but in a long-term lack of access to food for many people.⁸ Poverty and inequality sit at the heart of hunger: poor people often cannot afford to grow or buy food, and the resources needed to get access to food are inequitably distributed.⁹ The term “food security” attempts to convey the range of pre-conditions needed to combat and prevent hunger. The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has summarised these as “physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets people’s dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”¹⁰ There is therefore a difference between hunger—a lack of food *per se*—and malnutrition—a lack of nourishing food or proper nutrition.

6. Poor people’s lack of access to food is being exacerbated by current price fluctuations. The cost of eating nourishing food is becoming yet more unaffordable. The scale of food price rises has been so steep in 2008 that even wealthy countries such as the UK are feeling the impact. The UK Government has undertaken an analysis of the domestic impact of current food price rises led by the Cabinet Office. Its final report was delivered to the Prime Minister on 7 July 2008. One of its key messages was that global food production must increase to meet the needs of the world’s “growing, wealthier population”.¹¹ We will return to this issue in Chapter 3.

7. It is in developing countries that people’s lives are being endangered by the crisis. A “perfect storm” of factors has conspired to send wheat prices spiralling by 122% and rice by 250% since 2000.¹² The crisis has contributed to the threat of famine in countries such as Ethiopia, where the increasing cost of food imports has combined with drought, crop failure and conflict to double the number of people needing emergency assistance to 4.6 million.¹³ Four African countries—Lesotho, Somalia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe—are classified by the FAO as having “exceptional shortfalls” in food production and supplies.¹⁴ There have been food riots in countries as diverse as Egypt, Malaysia and Yemen. In Haiti, where up to 75% of food is imported, riots during April 2008 forced the resignation of the Prime Minister.

8 Ev 60

9 Ev 37

10 FAO, *Trade Reforms and Food Security: Conceptualising the Linkages* (2003), Chapter 2.2. Online at <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4671E/y4671e06.htm>

11 Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, ‘Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century’ (July 2008), Executive Summary p.vii, available online at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/food_policy.aspx

12 WFP, *2007 Food Aid Flows* and Ev 34

13 ‘Ethiopia pleads for £167 million aid after crops fail’, *The Guardian*, 14 June 2008

14 FAO, *Crop Prospects and Food Situation No.2* (April 2008), online at www.fao.org

8. What has made an already severe situation much worse is the confluence of short-term 'shocks' and more long-term structural factors.¹⁵ The supply of food has been constrained by prolonged under-investment in agriculture and by climatic changes leading to both droughts and floods. Stocks of cereals, especially wheat, are currently at their lowest levels since the early 1980s.¹⁶ This situation has coincided with increasing demand for food as a result of general population expansion and sustained economic growth rates in some rapidly industrialising countries, notably India and China, where increasing amounts of meat and other foods are now being consumed. Rising oil prices and a range of other factors, including urbanisation, trade barriers, biofuel production, export restrictions and market speculation, have also contributed to the food crisis. We return to these causal factors and what agencies such as DFID and the WFP can do to address them below in Chapter 3.

The World Food Programme's response

9. In February 2008, the WFP announced a \$500 million shortfall in its emergency funding (later raised to a \$750 million shortfall) due to the price rises and called for urgent additional funding. The agency aims to feed 73 million people this year in around 80 countries. The fact that the price of food purchases has more than doubled since June 2007 decreases the WFP's purchasing power: 50% of the agency's budget is given in cash and this now buys only half the food supplies it did a year ago.¹⁷ As a result, food aid deliveries declined by 15% over the course of 2007, dropping to 5.7 million tonnes—the lowest level since records began in 1961.¹⁸ The WFP's call for extra funding was eventually met on 23 May by a \$500 million donation from Saudi Arabia and \$250 million from other sources.¹⁹ Additional funding pledges were made at the Food Summit held by the FAO in Rome from 3–5 June 2008.

10. The WFP launched a new four-year Strategic Plan on 13 June 2008 which its Executive Director, Josette Sheeran, told us represented "a revolution in food aid".²⁰ The Plan aims to deliver aid more flexibly and in a way that supports local markets and prevents, as well as responds to, hunger.²¹ Chapter 2 of our report will explore the WFP's evolution and its response to the food crisis in more detail.

DFID's response

11. Through direct contributions and via its funding to pooled international emergency funds, DFID is the WFP's fourth largest donor, with an average annual contribution of £60 million over the past five years.²² This supplements DFID's longer-term support to food

15 Ev 35

16 Ev 58

17 Ev 86

18 WFP, *2007 Food Aid Flows*

19 Reuters AlertNet, 28 May, 'Saudi donation closes funding gap', online at <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/cab05416552c6130b56e96e48cf3417a.htm>

20 Q 8

21 WFP News Release, 13 June 2008, 'WFP Strategic Plan Charts Revolution in Food Aid'

22 Ev 39 and Ev 90

security in poor countries, which includes social protection programmes such as those we heard about during our visit to Ethiopia in 2007. Such programmes provide a mix of cash and food ‘transfers’ to poor people to help protect them from food price fluctuations.²³

12. But, as we will discuss in Chapter 3, we are concerned that vast swathes of people going hungry are not reached through the current portfolio of donor support. 850 million people regularly do not eat sufficient food to meet their nutritional requirements. The WFP feeds 73 million, less than one-tenth, of these people.²⁴ Our concern is who is meeting the needs of the remaining 775 million people. Clearly the ultimate responsibility for people’s needs lies with their national government; however, the international community—and especially influential donors such as DFID—must do more to reduce hunger and malnutrition, which has been termed the “forgotten MDG” by Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank.²⁵

13. As Save the Children said in their written evidence, food aid is only part of the solution: it is a “blunt instrument which is useful in certain circumstances, but poorly adapted to tackling food security, chronic malnutrition and their underlying causes.”²⁶ As well as exploring how the “blunt instrument” of food aid can be used to best effect, our aim in this report is to stimulate thinking on the part of DFID and the WFP about how to respond more effectively to the structural barriers, including poor nutrition and insufficient agricultural development, that have prevented millions of people from accessing nutritious food for many years.

Structure of this report

14. We begin our assessment of global food security in Chapter 2 by casting the spotlight on the WFP itself. We will explore how the agency has evolved from a food surplus agency distributing excess supplies to become a flexible food assistance agency capable of responding to the current food crisis. We will look at the WFP’s role both as a humanitarian actor—providing an emergency “pipeline” for food and logistics in crisis situations—and its longer-term ‘enabling development’ activities including improving nutrition. In Chapter 3, we look specifically at the current food crisis: at its causes, the trends in its development and the appropriate response from the WFP, DFID and the international community. Chapter 4 looks ahead to how the processes and structures that underpin global food security could be strengthened or revised to reflect the changing global context. This will include specific discussion of, firstly, the current UN approach to food security and, secondly, the need to reprioritise agricultural development in light of the current food crisis.

23 Ev 36

24 Ev 49

25 World Bank, ‘High food prices: a harsh new reality’, www.worldbank.org

26 Ev 73

2 The WFP—origins and transformation

From food surplus to food assistance

15. The WFP was established in 1962 as an agency distributing surplus food supplies to development projects such as supplementary feeding for mothers and children. The use of food not just as emergency assistance but as a tool to promote economic development had been trialled through the post-Second World War Marshall Plan for the rehabilitation of European economies.²⁷ The surplus food that was accumulating in the USA and Europe by 1960 led the UN General Assembly to decide to establish a distribution agency for surplus supplies. Twenty years later, by the early 1980s, WFP operations were well-established and extended across 114 countries.

16. Since the 1980s the agency has gradually shifted its operations towards providing emergency food aid rather than simply supplying surplus food to schools and communities. Many aid agencies believed that the food aid delivered in the 1960s and 1970s may have provided a temporary relief from hunger but did not facilitate durable hunger reduction. Moreover, many believed the distribution of food surpluses to have had negative short-term side effects, such as harming local farmer livelihoods.²⁸ Agencies also pointed to a lack of strong evidence on the positive impact of the use of food aid in development. The thinking has now moved towards giving emergency food assistance, with development gains—such as improving child nutrition or incentivising school attendance—as a by-product.²⁹

17. In the 21st century, the WFP describes itself as a “pipeline” that delivers emergency food—and, increasingly, cash—to areas of need, with the “last mile” of micro-level distribution handled by the agency’s huge network of over 3,000 partners (non-governmental organisations including the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement).³⁰ The WFP’s reach into remote areas is extensive, and often critical given that the agency is the only development actor in particular locations. It is often responsible for supplying the infrastructure to reach rural communities: road-building, storage, air transportation and truck-driving are just some of the many services the agency operates. The WFP also manages the UN’s Humanitarian Response Depots (UNHRD). During our visit to Ghana in March 2008, we visited the UNHRD hub for emergency supplies in Africa. This is one of five regional hubs that respond to emergencies and support other humanitarian organisations in their responses.

27 James Ingram, ‘Bread and Stones: Leadership and the struggle to reform the United Nations World Food Programme’ (South Carolina: BookSurge, 2006), p.11

28 Ev 69

29 Ev 68

30 Q 26

Responding to the 'new face' of hunger

Urban hunger

18. The WFP is having to adapt quickly to a changing global context of food assistance. Soaring food prices in 2007–08 is one aspect of this: the (linked) rise in fuel prices is another. These and other causes of this current crisis will be examined in Chapter 3. The current food crisis is said to be characterised by a “new face of hunger”: an increased—and increasingly urban—number of people who will enter the category of acute hunger because rising food prices mean they can no longer afford basic foodstuffs. Historically, the WFP’s operations have focused more on feeding the rural poor than people living in urban situations.³¹ So assisting urban populations who now cannot afford the food on the shelves of shops and markets represents a new challenge for the agency. The number of people living in these centres is also expanding due to the process of urbanisation. 2007 marked the point at which for the first time more of the world’s citizens were living in urban than rural areas. With increasing numbers of people living in cities, there are likely to be fewer food producers contributing to supply and more food purchases taking place. This cycle, unless broken, is likely to perpetuate the rising cost of food and push more people living in urban contexts, and especially slum areas, into hunger.

The poorest communities

19. Over the course of the inquiry, we heard how people living on the poverty line—in both rural and urban areas—are being pushed back into poverty by food price rises. Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the WFP, told us, “There is a whole new group of people who would not have been identified even six months ago as acutely hungry [now] requiring an urgent intervention.”³² Poor people typically spend a high proportion of their incomes on food purchases, often 50–80%.³³ The WFP told us that food prices have at least doubled since June 2007; for people living on a dollar a day, this is likely to impose catastrophic constraints on their purchasing power.³⁴ As UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, has commented:

“Inevitably it is the bottom billion who are hit hardest: people living on one dollar a day or less. When people are that poor and inflation erodes their meagre earnings, they generally do one of two things: they buy less food, or they buy cheaper, less nutritious food. The result is the same—more hunger and less chance of a healthy future.”³⁵

Social protection

20. The WFP told us that it has begun a process of adaptation to the “new face of hunger”, as set out in its new four-year Strategic Plan (launched on 13 June 2008). This involves

31 Q 77

32 Q 10

33 Ev 49

34 Ev 86

35 Ev 87

becoming a more flexible agency, assisted by the fact that the proportion of the WFP's budget supplied as cash, rather than 'in-kind' as food, has recently increased and now stands at 50%.³⁶ This increases the scope for flexibility in tailoring different responses to different situations. As Josette Sheeran told us, in contexts with ongoing problems with food availability and access or famine such as Darfur, it is supplying food that is important: cash is no use if markets are empty of food. However, in situations where food is available—for instance, in Mozambique following the 2007 floods—cash transfers to vulnerable people can be a very effective way of meeting their needs, whilst also supporting local farmers and markets.³⁷ These food and cash transfers are a form of social protection: they provide targeted or universal support to eligible poor or vulnerable households.

21. Ms Sheeran admitted that transfers were a new approach for the WFP and that it would take time to develop the appropriate modes of deployment:

“We are asking our Boards for a more flexible toolbox where we could consider targeted vouchers, of which we have limited but some successful experiences [...] We need to be able to develop the programmatic strength to be able to deploy that toolbox as needed.”³⁸

The WFP also told us they were aware that cash programmes were likely to take months to establish properly, and that in the meantime they were working urgently to monitor existing cash transfer schemes and determine which of these could be scaled up.³⁹

22. Gareth Thomas MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, was supportive of the use of transfers. He told us that there was increasing evidence to suggest that these transfers of cash—also known as 'safety nets'—provided an effective way to prevent hunger, especially in ongoing famine situations where the resilience of vulnerable communities needed to be built up over time.⁴⁰

23. For example, in Ethiopia DFID has supported the Productive Safety Net Programme, which was set up in 2005 with other donors including the World Bank, European Commission, USA, Canada, Ireland, Sweden and the WFP. The Programme aims to provide poor households with enough cash and/or food income to meet their immediate needs and thereby avoid household assets such as cattle being sold to buy food. Up to 7.2 million people who previously depended on emergency support have been reached.⁴¹ During our visit to Ethiopia in February 2007, we heard from a number of sources of the significant impact the programme was having on the lives of the poorest people. Research suggests that three-quarters of households surveyed under the Programme were consuming more and better quality food; and that three in five people who had received money through social protection schemes were not having to sell assets to get them

36 Q 11

37 Q 11

38 Q 11. The 'toolbox' referred to by Josette Sheeran refers to the flexible range of approaches, interventions and resources needed by the WFP in order to respond to the changing global context of food security.

39 Ev 88

40 Q 78 and Q 80

41 Ev 36–37

through particular food shortages.⁴² In March 2008 DFID approved an additional payment of £23 million for the first phase of the Programme, increasing the UK's total contribution to £93 million since 2005.⁴³ Annual DFID funding will now rise to £30 million per annum.⁴⁴

24. However, critics of social protection schemes say that if donors, rather than governments, provide cash or food directly to citizens, lines of state accountability can suffer. Alex Evans from New York University's Center on International Cooperation told us that it was too soon to see social protection schemes as a panacea to food price rises: "Better answers are needed to questions about the potential inflationary impact of some social protection measures, the best combination of cash and in-kind transfers, what kind of targeting and conditionality works best and so on."⁴⁵

25. We are gravely concerned that millions of people are being pushed into acute hunger by rising food prices. We recognise that it is the poorest of the poor, those living on a dollar a day or less, who are being hit the hardest. We welcome the WFP's broadening of its activities from food aid alone to food assistance, and its associated increasing use of cash and food transfer schemes. These social protection schemes offer a flexible and effective approach to building up vulnerable communities' resilience to food insecurity over time. We encourage DFID and the WFP to continue to evaluate the different elements within social protection packages—the right balance of cash and food and the best techniques for targeting transfers—to ensure that an optimal package can be provided. We commend DFID's decision to increase its funding for the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia to £30 million per year. We encourage both DFID and the WFP to explore options for replicating lessons from the Ethiopian scheme elsewhere.

'In-kind' food donations

26. The expanding use of cash rather than food has reinvigorated the debate about the practice of giving 'in-kind' donations to the WFP.⁴⁶ The WFP has been engaged in a process of seeking to increase its use of local procurement in developing countries, which assists in boosting agriculture and livelihoods in these source countries.⁴⁷ 80% of its cash budget is now spent locally in the developing world, a 30% increase over 2006.⁴⁸ However the USA, the WFP's largest donor, still gives nearly all its donations in kind as food.⁴⁹ The food donations are US-produced and shipped in US vessels. Receiving donations in this form, from the USA and from other donors who continue the practice, restricts not only

42 Q 78

43 'A safety net against famine in Ethiopia', 12 June 2008, DFID website. Online at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/africa/ethiopia-food.asp>

44 Ev 37

45 Ev 51

46 'Boom challenge for food aid policy', *Financial Times*, 7 February 2008

47 Ev 85

48 Ev 88

49 Ev 50

the WFP's ability to give assistance in the form of cash, but its capacity to procure food supplies locally.⁵⁰

27. The USA reportedly told the WFP that it is facing a 40% increase in food commodity prices compared with 2007, and will hence "radically cut" the amount it gives away.⁵¹ **The rapid rise in commodity prices has put huge strain on the purchasing power of both food agencies such as the WFP and poor people globally. We believe that it would be of deep concern if the USA were to follow up on suggestions that it might reduce the amount of aid it provides to the WFP because of rising prices and costs. We also believe that the USA should review its practice of giving nearly all its support 'in-kind' as food, given that cash donations are of much more value to the WFP than food donations in developing the flexible "toolbox" that it now requires.**

The WFP as a humanitarian actor

28. The WFP plays a central role in running the UN's food assistance operation in crises worldwide. The WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency with a work programme of US\$5.4 billion over 2008 and 2009 covering 162 operations in 78 countries.⁵² Under the UN inter-agency cluster approach to humanitarian emergencies, introduced in 2005 as part of the Humanitarian Reform Agenda, the WFP leads the logistics cluster. It also participates in the nutrition, protection and early recovery clusters, and is the global food aid sector lead.⁵³

29. The WFP works in a wide range of humanitarian crisis situations resulting from conflict (for instance, Darfur), natural disasters (such as Burma post-Cyclone Nargis) and economic hardship (for instance, Ethiopia). There has been a high incidence of extreme weather events in recent years: Josette Sheeran told us that today the WFP is responding to four times the number of natural disasters than it did in the 1980s.⁵⁴ In 2006, the agency reached 63.4 million people caught up in humanitarian disasters and in 2008 they hope to reach 73 million.⁵⁵

30. By operating in these contexts, the WFP can reach remote and isolated populations which other agencies cannot. However, in doing so WFP staff have increasingly faced dangerous situations. For example, seven WFP staff have been killed in Sudan since September 2007.⁵⁶ In May 2008, the head of the WFP's office in north-western Kenya, a major relief hub for southern Sudan, was killed by gunmen. In June 2008, gunmen in

50 For further discussion of the USA's practice of donating food rather than cash, see International Development Committee, Third Report of Session 2005–05, *The WTO Hong Kong Ministerial and the Doha Development Agenda*, HC 730–I, Paragraph 51

51 Ev 50 and Julian Borger, 'Feed the world? We are fighting a losing battle, UN admits', *The Guardian*, 26 February 2008

52 Ev 34

53 The basic premise of the cluster approach is that the accountability, predictability and reliability of responses can be improved by identifying organisational leaders (or 'cluster leads') for areas in which gaps in provision have been identified, which will support the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators in ensuring a coordinated response. For further details, see International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2005–06, *Humanitarian Assistance to Natural Disasters*, HC 1188.

54 Q 22

55 Ev 88 and Ev 34

56 Q 15

southern Somalia shot and killed a WFP-contracted truck driver, the third WFP driver to die this year. A number of ships have been attacked by pirates off the coast of Somalia (80% of WFP food for Somalia arrives by sea). The WFP has said this entire supply route is under threat unless a replacement is found for the Dutch navy frigate that had been providing escort services until the end of June 2008.⁵⁷ Yet the presence of the WFP in such countries is crucial: experts fear the number of people requiring food assistance in Somalia this year could reach 3.5 million people—nearly half the country's population.⁵⁸

31. The Minister was very supportive of the WFP's emergency work and told us that the WFP was an effective cluster lead for logistics.⁵⁹ Oxfam noted the WFP's "strong and effective relationship" with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).⁶⁰ Alex Evans of New York University said that "much remains to be done" in terms of strengthening the coherence of the global humanitarian system and that the WFP has "much to contribute here."⁶¹ The WFP's collaboration with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is particularly important during emergencies as OCHA oversees the cluster system and the overall response. Supporting OCHA to fulfil its leadership role on emergency action is an important role for the WFP.⁶² We will look in depth at the relationship between the WFP and other UN agencies in Chapter 4.

32. The WFP deserves credit for its role at the centre of the UN's response to humanitarian emergencies, including its leadership of the global food aid sector and the logistics cluster. We acknowledge the difficult and often dangerous job that WFP employees do in difficult environments, especially conflict-prone and conflict-affected states. Priority must be given to ensuring coherence with other UN agencies in line with the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda. The WFP should continue to support the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its role in overseeing the co-ordination of emergency responses.

Darfur and southern Sudan

33. The WFP's largest operation has, for the last four years, been in Darfur and southern Sudan: currently more than a quarter of the WFP's resources are concentrated in these two areas and five million people are fed there each day.⁶³ The WFP described its work in internal displacement camps and villages in conflict-riven Darfur as "the difference between life and death", particularly during the peak of the hunger season.⁶⁴ In southern Sudan, the WFP manages a US\$250 million road-building programme. It is hoped that this will provide easier access for the WFP as well as helping restart local markets and the

57 Q 16 and BBC News Online 26 June 2008 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7474877.stm>

58 WFP News Releases: 9 May 2007, 'Gunmen kill WFP head of sub-office in north-western Kenya' and 13 June 2008, 'WFP-contracted driver killed by gunmen in southern Somalia'

59 Qq 94–95

60 Ev 69

61 Ev 50

62 Ev 50

63 Qq 7–8

64 Ev 89

private sector.⁶⁵ Given that southern Sudan is now relatively peaceful, the WFP is implementing a transition arrangement with a view to the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) soon being able to meet people's needs themselves. For example, consideration is being given to transferring the road-building programme to the GOSS's transport ministry, and school feeding is being integrated into national education programmes.⁶⁶ The Sudan Recovery Fund, to which the UK has pledged £70 million over the next few years, is helping to fund this handover process.

Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF)

34. £123 million of UK aid funds were spent in Darfur and southern Sudan in 2007–08 of which £9.7 million (8%) was spent on food security. The food security expenditure was split between the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) in Sudan and DFID Sudan's NGO bilateral programme.⁶⁷ The level of DFID's support to pooled international funds for humanitarian response such as the CHF is increasing in parallel with a decreasing level of direct funding to the WFP itself.⁶⁸ CHFs are being piloted in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and will be introduced in the Central African Republic and Ethiopia during 2008.⁶⁹ DFID believes that common funds allow the UN Emergency Relief and Resident Humanitarian Coordinators on the ground "to allocate funding to agencies best placed to respond to humanitarian need."⁷⁰

35. DFID monitors the expenditure of its funds in Sudan using its direct relationships with UN agencies (including the WFP) and the NGOs it supports. The Minister told us, "We have a series of opportunities to road test and evaluate the effectiveness of their own internal systems for making sure money gets to where it is supposed to get to."⁷¹ He was clear that the WFP's work had been of critical importance in Darfur and southern Sudan, saying "They are keeping people alive who would not otherwise be alive."⁷² **We believe the WFP deserves credit for its ongoing lifesaving work in Darfur and southern Sudan. We were particularly pleased to hear that conditions are improving sufficiently in southern Sudan to allow key WFP programmes such as road-building and school feeding to be handed over to the government. We welcome DFID's funding of the Sudan Recovery Fund and the contribution this will make to the transition process. We believe DFID's increased contributions to pooled international emergency funds such as the Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are an effective way of helping ensure a coherent UN approach in crisis situations such as Darfur.**

65 Ev 89

66 Q 109

67 Ev 46

68 Other international pooled funds include the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which was launched in 2006 to complement existing humanitarian funding by providing a rapid response to disasters and emergencies.

69 Ev 39

70 Ev 39

71 Q 107

72 Q 108

Zimbabwe

36. A growing hunger crisis has been developing in Zimbabwe for some time. The WFP feeds about 2.4 million Zimbabweans annually—usually prior to the country’s May harvests. Yet this year, the WFP has warned that an estimated two million people will go hungry during the summer of 2008, potentially rising to more than five million (almost half of the population) by January 2009. Long-term food insecurity in the country has worsened significantly over the course of President Robert Mugabe’s rule, due to: the impact of land seizures; recurring poor harvests of maize and wheat; persistent droughts; the impact of HIV on the farming community; and rocketing economic inflation. This grim situation is at risk of deteriorating further due to the suspension of food aid by Mugabe’s government in June 2008.⁷³ It ordered aid groups and NGOs to suspend field work indefinitely, accusing them of conspiring with the opposition party to topple Mugabe in the delayed presidential run-off election of 27 June.⁷⁴ The ban has accompanied a wave of violence and intimidation by pro-government militias.

37. Much of the UN’s aid to Zimbabwe is channelled through NGOs. The WFP has said that the government order is likely to halt the food distributions carried out on its behalf.⁷⁵ UN OCHA estimates that around 1.5 million people are currently being affected by the suspension of NGO activity: if the ban continues into July and August this number will rise.⁷⁶ As well as food aid, the ban will hamper the distribution of anti-retroviral drugs to the 15% of Zimbabwean adults who are HIV-positive. On 3 July, DFID announced £9 million funding in support of the WFP’s work in Zimbabwe. The Secretary of State called on the Zimbabwean Government to lift the ban on food aid and said if it continued the WFP would implement contingency plans to ensure the food aid is effectively distributed.⁷⁷ As Josette Sheeran told us, in relation to the many conflict areas in which the WFP works, “It is unacceptable to use food as a weapon; it is unacceptable to politicise food; it is unacceptable to block access to food for those who are cut off against their will from the basic access and ability to feed their families.”⁷⁸

38. We are deeply concerned about the hunger crisis in Zimbabwe. The ban on food aid imposed by Robert Mugabe’s government in June 2008 will halt or hamper delivery of vital WFP supplies to millions of people. The disastrous state of Zimbabwe’s economy and agricultural sector is likely to leave innocent citizens without any source of food and condemn many to starvation. We urge the UK Government to continue to press for the food aid ban to be revoked as soon as possible so that the Zimbabwean people can receive the humanitarian assistance they so desperately need.

73 ‘Zimbabwe aid ban puts many in peril’, BBC Online 6 June 2008 and ‘Five million face hunger in Zimbabwe, UN says’, 18 June 2008, *The Guardian*

74 ‘Zimbabwe aid ban puts many in peril’, BBC Online 6 June 2008

75 ‘Aid orgs: Zimbabwean order puts AIDS patients at risk’, 6 June 2008, Associated Press

76 HC Deb, 18 June 2008, 1046W

77 DFID Press Release, 3 July 2008, ‘UK pledges £9 million in food aid to Zimbabwe’

78 Q 16

Hunger and malnutrition

The WFP's wider 'Enabling Development' activities

39. As well as working in emergency situations, the WFP also supports what it calls wider 'Enabling Development' activities such as school feeding and nutrition. Many of these activities endure from 'food aid' activities the WFP carried out in the 1960s and 1970s before the shift towards emergency food assistance. Eighty per cent of the agency's efforts are now concentrated on emergency work leaving only 20% of its programme focused on these wider development activities.⁷⁹

40. The development work sustained by the WFP produces some positive results. Twenty million children were fed in schools in 2006 due to the WFP: a majority of schools assisted reported an improvement in pupils' classroom behaviour and attention span.⁸⁰ The WFP also runs mother and child health and nutrition programmes, for instance by providing fortified foods that deliver essential micronutrients. Successful schemes include a pilot project in a refugee camp in Zambia where local mobile mills provide fortified cereals and which led to height and weight improvements in refugee children, and a reduction by half of anaemia and vitamin A deficiency.⁸¹ However, a 2005 evaluation of the WFP's Enabling Development activities found mixed results, particularly in regard to health-related outcomes.⁸²

41. Donor funding for the WFP's non-emergency food aid activities has been on a declining trend. DFID states:

“The UK does not support WFP's non-emergency food aid activities. This is partly because of concern over the appropriateness and effectiveness of these interventions, and partly because DFID delivers its support to health and education through budget support, sector programmes or global funds.”⁸³

The Minister was clear that DFID believes the WFP's emergency work to be more important than its wider development work.⁸⁴ He said, “Our sense is that WFP has got a particular leadership role to play on responding to the immediate humanitarian needs, as opposed to developmental needs.”⁸⁵ DFID's preference is for activities such as school feeding to be built into longer-term education programmes rather than carried out by the WFP.⁸⁶ The Department says that focusing more narrowly on emergency work would imply the need for “careful reconsideration of the organisation's role in the more general provision of food transfers such as school feeding or food-for-work.”⁸⁷

79 Ev 76

80 Ev 89

81 Ev 89

82 Ev 41

83 Ev 41

84 Q 88

85 Q 93

86 Q 93

87 Ev 43

42. Lawrence Haddad of the Institute of Development Studies thought that the WFP's development work was a crucial part of its portfolio and that it would be inefficient to disconnect the linkages between development and emergency work:

“The institutional, professional and financial boundaries between emergency and relief—constructed in the mid 70s—need to be torn down. It is clear that development actions which proceed as if risk is an infrequent visitor will only lead to more risk, and that emergency work that is not cognizant of the road map it is inadvertently laying down for development will not necessarily generate good enough development pathways. If it were allowed to, WFP could be playing a greater preventative and developmental role than it is now.”⁸⁸

Josette Sheeran highlighted that responses to the current food crisis need to be developmental as well as emergency-focused, so that the resilience of communities to hunger can be built up and the agricultural sector strengthened.⁸⁹

Nutrition

43. One particular issue that convinced us of the need for the WFP to continue with development, as well as emergency, work is that of nutrition. Ensuring that food is not only available but is nutritious is central to the achievement of the MDGs. As the International Food Policy Research Institute has said, malnutrition reduces people's ability to learn, work, and care for themselves and their family members.⁹⁰ Studies on nutrition show that countries that do not invest in nutrition sustain financial losses in terms of people's wages, with a direct negative impact on GDP.⁹¹ Yet food aid is often deployed on the basis of meeting people's minimum calorie requirements, rather than providing nutrition, especially in emergency situations.⁹²

44. A quarter of all children in the world are malnourished.⁹³ Early malnutrition can cause recurring problems throughout a child's lifetime. There is a “golden interval” for nutrition: from pregnancy to two years of age. After this, under-nutrition will have caused irreversible damage for future development towards adulthood. Children who fail to receive the right nutrients suffer symptoms such as stunted growth and severe wasting. Vitamin A, zinc, iron and iodine deficiencies are the major global priorities. Vitamin A deficiency is associated with more than half a million deaths of children under-five globally each year.⁹⁴

88 Ev 61

89 Q 27

90 International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 'Agriculture, Food Security, Nutrition and the Millennium Development Goals', p.7. Online at <http://www.ifpri.org/PUBS/books/ar2003/ar03e.pdf>

91 Q 17

92 Save the Children UK Briefing Paper, 'Running on empty – Poverty and Child Malnutrition' (2007), p.3

93 Save the Children UK Briefing Paper, 'Everybody's business, nobody's responsibility' (2007), p.1

94 WHO, 'Ten Facts on Nutrition', online at <http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/nutrition/en/index.html>

45. Four-fifths of under-nourished children live in just 20 countries.⁹⁵ Many of these countries are in Africa, but the highest share, 45%, of malnourished children, is found in South Asia.⁹⁶ Malnutrition increases dramatically, and kills most rapidly, in emergencies, but it is a feature of everyday life for millions of children: in the poorest parts of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Burma, Save the Children found that up to 80% of households are too poor to feed their children a healthy diet.⁹⁷

46. Malnutrition accounts for one-third of child deaths.⁹⁸ Yet historically nutrition has been neglected by donors. Only \$250 million is spent on nutrition aid globally, compared with the \$3 billion spent on HIV/AIDS.⁹⁹ Whilst HIV/AIDS led to 380,000 child deaths in 2006, malnutrition is responsible for 1.5-2.5 million children dying annually.¹⁰⁰ A recent series on under-nutrition in *The Lancet* called the global nutrition system “fragmented and dysfunctional”.¹⁰¹ Save the Children said their own experience bore this out, citing “a myriad of international actors with overlapping remits but none with the key purpose of ensuring the efficacy of international donors, development organisations and governments in reducing malnutrition.”¹⁰²

47. We visited the malnutrition ward of the Princess Marie Louise Children’s Hospital in central Accra. Here, children with severe malnutrition are treated free of charge. The Hospital also provided vitamin A supplements to all children, with positive effects. Ghana has made significant progress in reducing the incidence of hunger and malnutrition over a number of years and the WFP is in the process of closing down most of its operations there. However, in 2007 malnutrition accounted for only 2.6% of admissions to this hospital but was responsible for 13.2% of deaths. This points to the importance of early interventions in preventing deaths.

DFID and nutrition

48. Save the Children were critical of DFID’s own prioritisation of nutrition. Research commissioned by the NGO in 2007 from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) found that DFID had no identifiable nutrition strategy, no internal nutrition champion and that it does not measure the direct nutritional impact of its work.¹⁰³

49. Chronic malnutrition interventions and policies are often classified as “direct” and “indirect”. Direct interventions focus on immediate responses that can improve the quality of individual food intake, such as: growth monitoring and promotion; micronutrient supplementation; targeted food aid; treatment of malnutrition; behaviour change; and

95 Richard Horton, ‘Maternal and child undernutrition: an urgent opportunity’, *The Lancet* Volume 371, Number 9608, 19 January 2008

96 Ev 59

97 Save the Children UK Briefing Paper, ‘Running on empty – Poverty and Child Malnutrition’ (2007), p.2

98 ‘Malnutrition causing a third of child deaths’, 17 January 2008, *New Scientist* Issue 2639

99 Ibid

100 Ibid

101 Ev 73

102 Ev 73

103 Ev 73 and Save the Children UK Briefing Paper, ‘Everybody’s business, nobody’s responsibility’ (2007)

support to breastfeeding. Indirect approaches support wider improvements such as food availability, access to clean water and proper sanitation, improved education and economic growth.¹⁰⁴ The IDS research rated the UK more highly (fourth out of 11 donors) for its indirect than its direct (sixth out of 11) bilateral investment in nutrition interventions.¹⁰⁵

50. Save the Children told us that “we have no assurances that indirect investments will impact on child nutrition.”¹⁰⁶ Whilst indirect approaches clearly make a contribution to improved nutrition, direct approaches are very much needed to provide targeted, immediate responses to malnutrition. When we questioned the Minister about this, he accepted that “we could give higher profile to the work on nutrition” and told us that he had set up a policy team on nutrition.¹⁰⁷

51. We believe that DFID does not give nutrition the attention or resources it deserves. Malnutrition kills up to 2.5 million children a year—around five times more than the number of children dying from HIV/AIDS. The effects of malnutrition in children under two years old endure throughout their lives. Malnutrition is easily passed on to the next generation by expectant mothers who are malnourished. Yet it is entirely preventable, and often at very little cost. The fact that DFID does not have a nutrition policy, even if it does now have a policy team, is not satisfactory. Indirect policies focusing on wider sectoral approaches to health and social development make a necessary but insufficient contribution to combating child malnutrition. We recommend that DFID adopt more direct policies to combat malnutrition and give greater support to proven interventions such as support to breastfeeding and micronutrient supplementation.

Hunger, malnutrition and the MDGs

52. A further concern is that DFID has no measurable target in place for nutrition. DFID’s progress on its objectives and targets is measured against its Public Service Agreement (PSA) and monitored by HM Treasury. Neither the 2005-08 PSA nor the 2008-11 PSA include an indicator on nutrition. This is a key omission. The PSAs are built around the MDG targets (see Box 1). MDG 1, as we described earlier, has three targets: firstly, to reduce by half the number of people living on a dollar a day; secondly, to achieve full employment; and thirdly to reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Yet as Box 1 shows, DFID chooses to measure the achievement of MDG 1 simply by the first target, poverty reduction.¹⁰⁸ Nor do any of the other MDGs have a specific hunger or nutrition target (for instance, MDG 4 seeking to reduce child mortality). The logical corollary of this is that DFID believes hunger can be solved through wider poverty reduction: that poverty strategies will translate directly into a reduction in hunger and malnutrition. As we have already made clear, this indirect approach is a risky strategy. As

104 Lawrence Haddad, Johanna Lindstrom and Andy Sumner, ‘Greater DFID and EC Leadership on Chronic Malnutrition: Opportunities and Constraints’, Institute of Development Studies (2007), pp.7–8 and Q 90

105 Save the Children UK Briefing Paper, ‘Everybody’s business, nobody’s responsibility’ (2007), p.5

106 Save the Children UK Briefing Paper, ‘Everybody’s business, nobody’s responsibility’ (2007), p.5

107 Q 90

108 DFID, PSA Delivery Agreement 29, pp.5–6

Josette Sheeran told us, “Food security is not necessarily a natural outgrowth of economic growth and development. It actually requires separate strategies.”¹⁰⁹

53. We are very concerned that DFID does not have a measurable target for malnutrition. The Department’s decision to measure progress towards MDG 1 using a poverty indicator alone, rather than including indicators for hunger and nutrition, implies it believes that wider poverty reduction strategies are sufficient tools with which to combat hunger and nutrition. This is far from proven. We recommend that DFID add a new indicator under MDG 1 in the 2008-11 PSA to enable its work on nutrition and hunger to be properly targeted and measured.

BOX 1: PSA 29 TARGETS AND INDICATORS 2008-11

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Indicator: Proportion of population below \$1 (purchasing power parity) per day

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

Indicator: Net enrolment ratio in primary education

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Indicator: Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

Indicator: Under-five mortality rate

MDG 5: Improve maternal health

Indicator: Maternal mortality ratio

MDG 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Indicator: HIV prevalence among 15–49 year people

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Indicator: Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source

MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Indicator: Value (in nominal terms), and proportion admitted free of duties, of developed country imports (excluding arms and oil) from low income countries

The WFP and nutrition

54. The WFP works in a number of ways to include nutrition interventions in its operations. Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the WFP, told us that this was a critical part of the WFP's work. She explained that adding a drop of vitamin A to a school feeding cup costs just two US cents but makes the difference in meeting a child's nutritional needs.¹¹⁰ She said the WFP was "very busily" looking at all its interventions to see how nutritional impacts could be incorporated.¹¹¹ Nutrition falls under the agency's strategic objective of reducing chronic hunger and under-nutrition, with the main tools to achieve this listed as: mother-and-child health and nutrition programmes; school feeding programmes; programmes addressing and mitigating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other pandemics; and policy and programmatic advice (see Paragraph 40 above).¹¹²

55. Josette Sheeran emphasised to us that nutrition very much required a team effort across the UN.¹¹³ The WFP's main partner on nutrition is UNICEF. The agencies work together at three levels:

- general food distribution by the WFP;
- targeted food aid in humanitarian emergencies (focused on pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under five);
- medical responses for severe cases of malnutrition, for instance therapeutic feeding used in cases such as *marasmus*, where the child is severely emaciated, and *kwashiorkor*, where the child has dangerous swelling of the face, feet and limbs due to lack of protein.¹¹⁴

56. Responsibility for nutrition is currently fragmented across the UN with no obvious institutional home although it is supposedly co-ordinated by the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition. A recent article in *The Lancet* said there are at least 14 UN agencies working on nutrition, including the WFP, UNICEF, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the FAO and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).¹¹⁵ As Save the Children highlighted in their evidence, the WFP mainly focuses on the symptomatic relief of hunger, rather than the root causes of malnutrition.¹¹⁶ **DFID and other donors have given nutrition insufficient priority. It is fragmented across different UN bodies, with no agency taking overall responsibility. We believe that it is therefore vitally important for the WFP to continue its nutrition activities. A huge opportunity exists at the point of delivery of food aid: adding micronutrient supplements and working with breastfeeding mothers are just two examples of the essential nutritional interventions that the WFP factors into its work. As an agency working at the point of delivery in humanitarian emergencies, it is**

110 Q 22

111 Q 22

112 WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2011), 13 June 2008

113 Q 23

114 UNICEF, 'Nutrition Security and Emergencies', online at http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_emergencies.html

115 Saul S.Morris et al, 'Effective international action against undernutrition: why has it proven so difficult and what can be done to accelerate progress?', *The Lancet* Volume 371, 17 January 2008, pp. 608–621

116 Ev 72

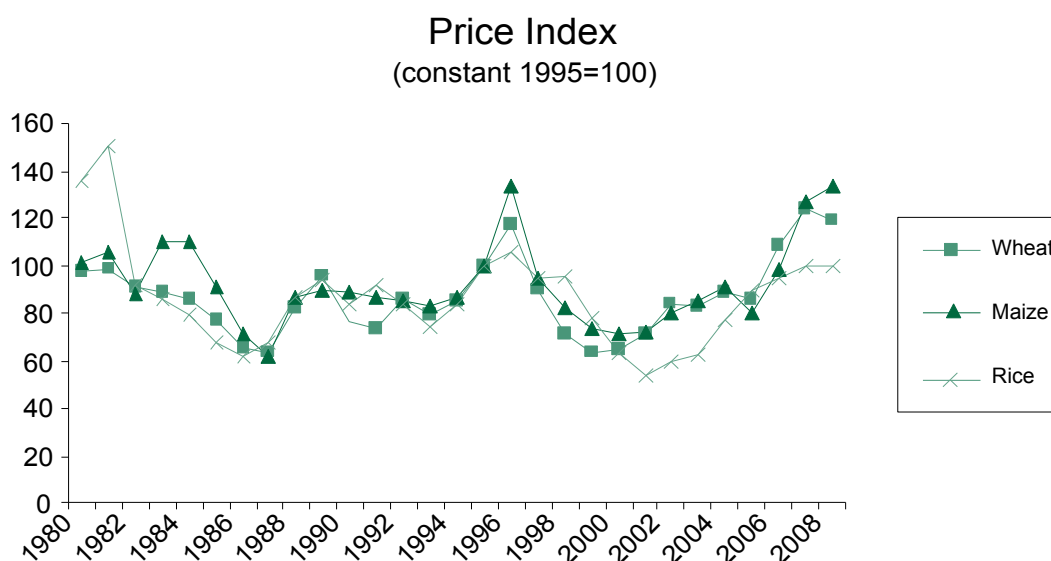
essential for the WFP to raise its profile as a major implementation agency for nutrition-focused work.

57. We were surprised that DFID was not more supportive of the wider development activities undertaken by the WFP, of which nutrition is one. Long-term development work such as nutrition and agricultural development builds the foundations for communities' survival in emergency situations. Failing to use the interface between development and emergency work is a missed opportunity as well as an inefficient use of resources. We recommend that DFID expand its funding for the WFP to include the agency's essential development work, especially on nutrition which is currently under-funded and under-emphasised by the international community and the UN system.

3 The current food crisis

58. As we have described, a combination of short-term ‘shocks’ and more long-term structural factors have triggered steep rises in food prices in recent years. Food and commodity prices have been rising steadily since 2001: between 2000 and 2007, wheat prices increased by 122% and maize by 86%.¹¹⁷ In the last year the rises have become sharper. It is worth noting, however, that prices are still relatively low from an historical perspective: average commodity prices in 2008 (adjusted for inflation) are similar to 1996 levels, despite the recent rises (see Graph 1 for food price trends).¹¹⁸

Graph 1: Food Price Trends



Source: Department for International Development, Ev 35

59. In this chapter we explore the reasons behind the current food crisis and look at possible outcomes. We will then move to look at appropriate responses from the WFP, DFID and the international community.

Causes of the food crisis

Increased demand

60. Historically, annual growth in demand for food has been about 1.5%. But demand is rising, chiefly due to population expansion and sustained economic growth rates in some developing countries, notably India and China, and now stands at 2%. The world’s current population, 6.7 billion, has doubled since 1970 and is predicted to be 9.1 billion by 2050. In order to meet increased demand, it is estimated that food production will need to increase by 50 per cent and oil production by 30.5 billion barrels a day by 2030.¹¹⁹ According to the

117 WFP, 2007 Food Aid Flows

118 Ev 34

119 Ev 47 and HM Treasury, ‘Global Commodities: a long term vision for stable, secure and sustainable global markets’, June 2008, Executive Summary

International Food Policy Research Institute, animal feed consumption will rise by nearly 300 million metric tonnes per year by 2020.¹²⁰ Demand for fish and seafood is also rising sharply due to increasing affluence.¹²¹ Avoiding the exhaustion of global supplies of food and oil within a generation is made more difficult by the additional challenge of climate change, which is leading to land and water scarcity.

Energy prices

61. Oil prices have risen faster than food prices, with an increase of 40% in 2008 alone, and have reached their highest ever levels. Food and energy prices are highly correlated, both directly—through cultivation, processing, refrigeration, shipping and distribution of food—and indirectly (for instance, the manufacture of fertilisers and pesticides).¹²² Increasing amounts of food, including maize, wheat, palm oil, cassava and sugar, are being converted into fuel which means there is now an arbitrage relationship between the two implying an ongoing linkage between food and fuel prices.¹²³

Biofuels

62. The biofuels that are produced from food have contributed to rising food prices. There are two major types of biofuel. Bioethanol is an alcohol derived from sugar or starch crops that is used as a blend with petrol or in specially designed engines. Biodiesel is derived from vegetable oils and blended with diesel or burnt directly in diesel engines.¹²⁴ In the USA, one-fifth of the maize crop is devoted to ethanol production, and this proportion is likely to rise to one-third over the next eight years.¹²⁵ Europe has also become a major producer of biofuels, with an estimated 10% share of world bioethanol.¹²⁶

63. Researchers are questioning whether large-scale biofuel production can ever be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable given that energy outputs from many crops are lower than the fossil energy inputs required to produce them. The Brazilian Government claims the ethanol it produces from sugar is much more environmentally sustainable than maize-based US ethanol: it is said to produce 8.2 times as much energy as is used in its production, compared with just 1.5 times for maize ethanol.¹²⁷ The net effect of biofuel production on any producing country will also depend on whether biofuels displace other crops (and which ones) or damage the local environment.¹²⁸ Biofuel producers—chiefly in the US, Canada and Brazil—claim that their crops have only had a 2-3% impact on this year's food price rises. But the IMF and food agencies put the figure much higher at 20-30%, particularly for specific crops such as maize.¹²⁹ The Executive

120 Ev 35

121 Ev 48

122 Ev 47

123 Ev 48

124 ODI Natural Resource Perspectives no.107 (June 2007), 'Biofuels, Agriculture and Poverty Reduction', p.2

125 Ev 47

126 ODI Briefing Paper no.32 (January 2008), 'Biofuels and development: will the EU help or hinder?', p.1

127 'Biofuels in Brazil: Lean, Green and not Mean', *The Economist* 26 June 2008

128 ODI Natural Resource Perspectives no 107 (June 2007), 'Biofuels, Agriculture and Poverty Reduction', p.4

129 'US attacked at food summit over biofuels', *The Guardian*, 4 June 2008

Director of the WFP, Josette Sheeran has said that governments need "to look more carefully at the link between the acceleration in biofuels and food supply and give more thought to it".¹³⁰

64. However, as experts from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) told us, biofuels are only part of the overall picture of price rises and it is important not to "demonise" them.¹³¹ Dr Steve Wiggins highlighted that the cost of rice has risen substantially since 2000, and yet the rice market is almost completely unaffected by biofuels.¹³²

65. The summit on the food crisis hosted by the FAO in Rome from 3-5 June 2008 did not produce a clear statement from the many governments present on the link between biofuels and rising food prices. The final declaration simply called for "in-depth studies" and the exchanging of "experiences on biofuels technologies, norms and regulations" to ensure the production and use of biofuels was sustainable.¹³³ Gareth Thomas argued for a balanced approach:

"There clearly is a contribution that biofuels can make, particularly if they are produced from ethanol. [...] Our own sense is that we will probably need to see some sustainability guidelines effectively drawn up so that biofuels are being encouraged from areas like sugar cane rather than from areas which might have been used for the production of food."¹³⁴

EU regulations require that 5.75% of petrol and diesel come from biofuels by 2010, and 10% by 2020. The UK Government has explored the indirect impacts of biofuels under the Gallagher review led by the Department for Transport. The final report, published on 7 July, concluded that the Government should slow down the introduction of biofuels until effective controls are in place to prevent land use change and higher food prices. As part of this, the review recommends that the rate of increase of the UK's biofuels target should be reduced to 0.5% per annum. Targets beyond 5% by volume should only be implemented beyond 2013–14 if biofuels are shown to be "demonstrably sustainable".¹³⁵ In its recent strategy paper on working with the EU, 'Europe for Development', DFID committed to work with the European Commission and EU member states to assess the possible impacts of biofuels on food security and to "take action, if necessary, to address them".¹³⁶

66. We agree with DFID that there are both challenges and opportunities in the use of biofuels and that the development of international sustainability guidelines on their use would be beneficial. We were disappointed that the Rome Summit of June 2008 did not produce a clear statement on the links between biofuels and rising food prices. As a

130 'UN warns on food price inflation', 6 March 2008, www.bbc.co.uk/news

131 Qq 42–43

132 Q 42 and Ev 34

133 'Declaration of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy'

134 Q 115. There is currently a global sugar surplus so biofuels from sugar cane and sugar beet are seen as more sustainable than those produced from maize.

135 Executive Summary, *Gallagher Review of the Indirect Effects of Biofuels* (published 7 June 2008), online at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/rfa/reportsandpublications/reviewoftheindirecteffectsofbiofuels/executivesummary.cfm>

136 DFID Strategy Paper, 'Europe for Development' (2008), p.16

first step, we urge the UK Government to press for rapid action on the “in-depth studies” and exchanges of experience on biofuels which were agreed in Rome. Proper research must be the basis for further negotiation on the global approach to biofuels if consensus is to be achieved. We also encourage DFID to fulfil its pledge to work closely with the European Commission and EU member states to address the possible impacts of biofuels on food security and to take action, where necessary, to address them.

Decreased supply

67. Supply of food has been constrained in recent years due to a series of long-term factors and short-term ‘shocks’. Between 2000 and 2006, cereal supply increased by a mere 7% and stocks declined to low levels. There have been successive poor harvests in major grain producing regions including Australia, Canada, the EU and Ukraine. Growing water scarcity, partly triggered by climate change, is affecting countries’ ability to irrigate crops. Global demand for water has tripled in the last 50 years.¹³⁷ Land availability could also constrain food production in future years: processes such as urbanisation and deforestation mean there is increasing competition for land. (Urbanisation is itself a causal factor in rising food prices, as we have discussed.) The FAO estimates that there is a maximum of 12% more land available that is not already forested or subject to erosion or desertification.¹³⁸

Export restrictions, stockpiling and speculation

68. A number of countries have sought to combat food price increases by boosting imports and imposing limits on food exports. India has banned rice exports and Vietnam has cut them significantly. Kenya and Saudi Arabia have reduced import duties across a range of food products. A number of countries have stockpiled staple foods. There is concern that such measures can distort markets and push prices even higher. The market volatility such actions cause has been exacerbated by market speculation. Trading in commodity derivatives has risen sharply over the last three years. The weak dollar, the sub-prime mortgage market and falling equity and bond markets have triggered increased investor interest in relatively safe commodity markets.¹³⁹

Rising food prices: trends

69. It is not clear how long the current trend of rising prices will persist. A recent HM Treasury report on Global Commodities was relatively optimistic:

“The world has adjusted to increased commodity prices in the past. The current trends can be changed, and economic growth continued, provided there is a concerted effort by all countries to enhance efficiency, invest in new technology and maintain open and fair markets.”¹⁴⁰

137 Ev 48

138 Ev 48

139 Ev 47

140 HM Treasury, ‘Global Commodities’ (June 2008), Executive Summary

The document suggests that the required actions to achieve greater stability include: maintaining economic stability; promoting openness; encouraging cooperation; supporting innovation and investment; ensuring fairness; and mitigating and adapting to climate change, especially regarding more efficient use of resources.¹⁴¹ DFID's evidence also took a relatively positive view of trends in food and commodity prices, noting that there are signs that the market is already responding to fluctuations in supply and demand, with bumper maize crops in the US and Brazil this year and global wheat production 5% up on 2006, resulting in an easing of maize prices over the past few months.¹⁴² Dr Steve Wiggins from the ODI told us,

“We have every expectation that the current price spike will be largely overcome once the northern hemisphere's harvest is in the third or fourth quarter of this particular year, but what all the projections are showing at the moment [...] is that the medium-term forecast over the next five to 10 years is for prices to be at something like 20 to 40% higher than we have seen them in the recent past. That may sound quite a long way higher and it is not desirable, but against the historical record of declining food prices, that takes us back to food price levels that we saw in the early 1990s.”¹⁴³

70. However, Alex Evans of New York University highlighted that structural factors may make high food prices the “new normality”.¹⁴⁴ The International Food Policy Research Institute estimates that real prices for rice, wheat and maize will increase by 20-30% by 2015, and beef, pork and poultry by 10% over the next decade.¹⁴⁵ Alex Evans said that population growth, rising affluence and the ‘scarcity trends’ connected with energy, land and water all make it likely that, whilst the steep rises in food prices may level off over the next decade, prices are unlikely to fall.¹⁴⁶ However, all these projections will be heavily influenced by the price of oil, which is extremely difficult to predict. Perhaps the safest assumption is one used by the ODI: “On current evidence it would be unwise not to prepare for higher prices in the medium term.”¹⁴⁷ **It seems likely that, whilst food prices may not continue their steep rise, they are also unlikely to drop significantly. We believe that given the uncertain nature of current food and commodity price predictions, the safest plan of action is to prepare for relatively higher prices over the next decade, and we encourage the WFP and DFID to make the necessary adjustments to their policies.**

The appropriate response from the WFP, DFID and the international community

71. It is clear that the impact of the current food crisis on poor people is likely to be significant. Whilst some farmers may benefit from higher prices, most poor consumers are

141 HM Treasury, ‘Global Commodities’ (June 2008), Paragraph 4.8

142 Ev 35

143 Q 38

144 Ev 51

145 Ev 58

146 Ev 48 and Ev 51

147 ODI Briefing Paper, ‘Rising food prices: cause for concern’ (April 2008), p.8

unlikely to be compensated by additional employment, state assistance or higher wages.¹⁴⁸ In this sub-section we will assess the adequacy and appropriateness of the response that is being made to rising food prices by the WFP, DFID and other international development actors.

The WFP's response

72. The WFP told us that it is working with other agencies including the FAO, Oxfam and Save the Children UK to carry out in-depth local monitoring of the impact of price rises on poor people's lives in key countries.¹⁴⁹ The WFP is also in the process of developing a global model that aims to identify countries most at risk from soaring prices, especially those which import much of their food and commodities and/or face inflationary pressure.¹⁵⁰ The agency is also trying to mitigate price increases by increasing the proportion of food it buys locally: 80% of its cash budget is now spent locally in the developing world, a 30% increase over 2006.¹⁵¹ Josette Sheeran told us that her agency was putting local procurement of goods and services at the centre of its response:

“One of the proposals is what I call our 80/80/80 solution [...] Eighty per cent of our cash for food is spent procuring food in the developing world [...] Eighty per cent of our land transportation is locally procured, which enables us to build in capability in trucking and infrastructure, storage and warehousing that is left behind when we leave [...] Eighty per cent of our staff are hired locally within country and they become very expert at food security systems, which helps, again, embed local solutions and investment in local economies. I do not know of any other organisation that is so deeply embedded now economically in the very countries where the challenges are.”¹⁵²

As we discussed in Chapter 1, the WFP is increasing its use of cash and food transfers which can provide a flexible way to help poor people cope with rising prices whilst also supporting local farmers and markets.¹⁵³ This “expanded toolbox” is embedded in the agency's new four-year Strategic Plan.¹⁵⁴ **We reiterate our support for the WFP's increasing use of social transfer schemes. We commend the WFP's latest Strategic Plan for its emphasis on local procurement of goods and services in developing countries.**

73. But the WFP can only do so much to defend its operations against global price fluctuations: as we have made clear, the agency's purchasing power is currently severely constrained and this is beginning to ‘bite’. The latest figures show that food aid deliveries declined by 15% in 2007 to 5.7 million tonnes—the lowest level since records began in 1961.¹⁵⁵ The implications are serious. In June 2008, the withdrawal of the Humanitarian Air Service run by the WFP on behalf of the humanitarian community in Sudan was

148 Ev 77

149 Ev 88

150 Ev 88

151 Ev 88

152 Q 24

153 See Paragraphs 20–25

154 Q 11

155 WFP, *2007 Food Aid Flows*

narrowly avoided due to last minute funding pledges. A reduced programme of air operations will be able to continue until September, after which new funding will be required if the service is to continue.¹⁵⁶ Funding for a helicopter operation providing essential logistical support to nearly 50 aid agencies in Burma is also close to running out, threatening the relief effort for 2.4 million cyclone survivors. An urgent WFP appeal to fund the helicopters and other logistics supporting the food pipeline to the worst-affected Irrawaddy Delta region was made in May but only 60% of the required funding has been pledged. The Secretary of State told us on 9 July that unless further contributions were made, the use of helicopters, trucks and boats in the relief effort would be impossible after August 2008. He had written to his fellow development ministers urging support for a revised appeal launched on 10 July.¹⁵⁷

74. The positive response to the WFP's \$750 million funding call in May 2008 (see Paragraph 9) has meant that the WFP has not yet had to engage in substantial cuts to country programmes, but the agency has been open about the fact that programme reductions will be the next step if funding gaps continue.¹⁵⁸ It is worth noting that this year's \$750 million appeal was needed simply to meet the WFP's current obligations. As Joachim von Braun told us, food aid budgets are tight: "For many food aid agencies, set budgets barely cover immediate assessed needs and would not be sufficient to respond to unforeseen emergencies."¹⁵⁹

75. Given the World Bank's estimate that 100 million more people may be pushed into poverty due to price rises, it is likely that global hunger will increase in the short to medium term. If WFP is to extend food assistance to new groups of people pushed into poverty, as well as continuing to deliver its existing services, its budget will need to be increased. Simon Maxwell of the ODI emphasised that meeting this additional need was feasible, if donors provide the relatively modest extra funding required:

"I think Robert Zoellick said 100 million might be seriously affected and pushed back below the poverty line but say 200 million—if you needed 100 kg per person in order to prevent famine, that is 20 million tonnes. Global cereal production this year is estimated by FAO at about 2 billion tonnes, so we are talking about less than 1% of global cereal production [...] As a share of total global income and as a share of total food supply, it is relatively small [...] What we need to do here is to find a way to put extra money into the agencies in order to support the short and then medium-term food programmes, and to do it by supporting their core budgets and not by setting up special-purpose vehicles."¹⁶⁰

World Bank President Robert Zoellick underlined the need to increase the WFP's core funding at the G8 Summit in Japan on 7-9 July:

156 WFP News Releases: 'WFP cuts humanitarian air service to Darfur', 10 June 2008 and 'Fast donor response keeps WFP Humanitarian Air Service flying in Sudan', 30 June 2008

157 Oral evidence taken before the International Development Committee on 9 July 2008, HC (2007–08) 946, Qq 15–17

158 'Call for global action to tackle food crisis', *The Guardian*, 22 April 2008, online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/apr/22/development.internationalaidanddevelopment>

159 Ev 59

160 Q 46 [Simon Maxwell]

“The WFP usually requires about \$3 billion a year in voluntary contributions. But this year it could be between \$5 and \$6 billion [...] Money should not be earmarked or tied, since this reduces its effectiveness. We should think about a special UN funding assessment, or a commitment to core funding, which would reduce the need to raise the full amount every year from scratch.”¹⁶¹

76. Save the Children agreed that donors, including DFID, should increase their funding of the WFP, saying that “the alternative, that WFP significantly scales down its work in 2008, is certain to lead to a significant hunger problem among populations it is currently serving.”¹⁶² The amount DFID gives to the WFP fluctuates in line with the number of humanitarian emergencies in any given year. Recently, the amount given directly to the WFP has declined and the money given to pooled funds has increased. But DFID’s direct contributions so far this year—£44 million in total—already represent a 40% increase on last year.¹⁶³ DFID said in its evidence, “When responding to new humanitarian appeals we will take the increase in food and transport costs into account.”¹⁶⁴

77. We are very concerned at the constraints that global food prices are imposing on the WFP’s budgets. Up to 20 million tonnes of food may be needed to assist the new groups of people being pushed into poverty by the current food price rises. Securing this additional food supply, which represents less than 1% of global cereal production, is achievable. But donor contributions to the WFP will have to increase substantially: the usual total of US\$3 billion a year in voluntary contributions may need to double to US\$5-6 billion. It is important that these increased contributions are made directly to the agency’s core budget rather than as earmarked funds. We welcome DFID’s pledge to take rising food and transport costs into account when responding to new humanitarian appeals by the WFP. We encourage DFID to do all it can to compensate for rising prices when disbursing funds to the WFP and to encourage other donors to do the same.

DFID’s response

78. Having discussed DFID’s funding responses, we now turn to other responses the Department is making to the current food crisis. It is important to remember that such responses need to go beyond DFID’s support to the WFP. The agency, whilst fulfilling a vitally important role, is responsible for only half of all world food aid.¹⁶⁵ This year, the WFP hopes to feed 73 million, less than one-tenth, of the 850 million people who regularly do not eat sufficient food to meet their nutritional requirements.¹⁶⁶ Thus a major imperative for DFID and other donors is implementing long-term responses to assist the remaining 775 million people not reached by the WFP. Alex Evans of New York University told us that addressing food security was vital regardless of the current food crisis: “It is essential that in addition to coping with the current short term turbulence in food markets,

161 World Bank Press Release, ‘Export restrictions hamper humanitarian response, Zoellick says’, 7 July 2008

162 Ev 70 and Ev 72

163 Qq 70–71

164 Ev 37

165 WFP, *2007 Food Aid Flows*, p.9

166 Ev 49

donors make a sustained effort to ask ‘what if?’ questions and plan for further contingencies.”¹⁶⁷

79. DFID is aware of the need to think beyond the current crisis to implement longer-term policies addressing food security. The Secretary of State for International Development said at the Rome Summit in June, “We need to use the current crisis as a catalyst for much deeper improvements.”¹⁶⁸ Gareth Thomas agreed that there must be more to DFID’s response to the food crisis than just giving more money to the WFP, including addressing trade rules that discourage poor farmers from expanding their operations and helping countries adapt their agricultural systems to climate change.¹⁶⁹ He saw these as “medium and long term responses” that could complement “the immediate response which WFP has been doing a fantastic job in leading.”¹⁷⁰

An International Partnership for Agriculture and Food

80. At the Rome Summit, the UK Government proposed a new International Partnership for Agriculture and Food that would include developing country governments, donors, international institutions, NGOs and the private sector. Its aims would include securing significantly increased investment in the sector and doubling agricultural production in participating countries. DFID hopes that this would “greatly” improve food security particularly for women and children within ten years.¹⁷¹ Gareth Thomas said that the proposed Partnership could act as a “marriage broker”, matching the needs of developing country governments in particular areas, for instance, agriculture or policy expertise, with expertise from different sectors of the international community.¹⁷² A small secretariat would operate on behalf of the Partnership, seeking to “bring together different people with their talents in particular agencies and [secure] access to pots of money in the different financing arms of the international community.”¹⁷³ He said that “a number of countries”, including France, had reacted positively to the idea and that DFID would seek to take the idea forward at the G8 meetings on 7-9 July 2008.¹⁷⁴ A commitment was made at the Summit that the G8 would work with the broader international community towards forming a global partnership.¹⁷⁵

81. We are concerned that there are 775 million people who are regularly hungry but who are currently not receiving sufficient assistance from their national governments, and who are not covered by the WFP’s emergency operations. We welcome DFID’s recognition that, as well as immediate emergency responses to the global food crisis, longer-term approaches addressing food security are highly important. We support the

167 Ev 51

168 ‘UK urges global action on food prices’, speech by Douglas Alexander on 3 June 2008, available online at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/Speeches/alexander-world-food-speech.asp>

169 Q 97

170 Q 97

171 Ev 46

172 Q 74

173 Q 97

174 Q 74

175 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/g8-japan.asp>

establishment of an International Partnership for Agriculture and Food and are anxious to see rapid action in taking the proposal forward. We urge DFID to build on momentum from the G8 Summit and ensure that the Partnership has the international community's agreement by the time of the UN High Level meeting on the MDGs, scheduled for 25 September 2008.

The international community's response

82. The Partnership, if agreed to by other members of the international community, could build on the work done in the short-term by a smaller, high level grouping, the UN Taskforce on the Global Food Security Crisis. The taskforce was launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in May 2008 and brought together the UN with the IMF, World Bank and other agencies. Sir John Holmes, head of humanitarian affairs at the UN, has been given responsibility for co-ordinating the taskforce, whose main objective is “to ensure comprehensive and coordinated understanding and action in responding to both immediate and longer-term food challenges”.¹⁷⁶

83. The Taskforce aims to: advise the Secretary-General on appropriate responses; ensure co-ordination amongst different actors; and develop and implement a range of strategies for immediate and long-term action. These strategies, known as the ‘Comprehensive Framework for Action’ (CFA), were presented to world leaders at the Rome Summit in June. The UN Secretary-General calls the CFA “a process, not a document” and has emphasised that it should support national governments, who must play the central role in responding to the food crisis. An updated version of the CFA was due to be prepared in time for the G8 Summit in July.¹⁷⁷ John Thompson from the Institute for Development Studies was cautiously optimistic about the draft CFA:

“The emphasis is on boosting smallholder farmers’ food production, increasing social safety nets and strengthening risk management. There is really very little new in these recommendations, but the focus on coordination and concerted action is an important addition, and long overdue.”¹⁷⁸

84. The Minister told us that the Taskforce’s work would be taken forward at the series of forthcoming global meetings, including the high-level meeting on the MDGs in September 2008. He envisaged the UK’s proposed International Partnership picking up the Taskforce’s initial “relatively time-specific” work and taking it forward in the longer-term, beyond the immediate crisis period.¹⁷⁹ **We commend the establishment of the UN Taskforce on the Global Food Security Crisis, and we hope that the UK’s proposed International Partnership for Agriculture and Food could—assuming international agreement to the Partnership is secured—lead on sequentially from the Taskforce’s initial phase of work.**

176 Terms of Reference for The Secretary-General’s High-Level Taskforce on the Global Food Crisis, online at <http://www.un.org/issues/food/taskforce/tor.shtml>

177 The Secretary-General’s High-Level Taskforce on the Global Food Crisis, Press Release 24 June 2008

178 John Thompson, ‘Reflections on the High-Level Conference on World Food Security’, 5 June 2008. Online at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/index.cfm?objectid=5916024B-9612-193F-34CC37A594DD2F22>

Beyond the Rome Summit

85. The Rome Summit on food prices in June 2008 achieved a number of key funding pledges, but, the presentation of the CFA aside, there was a disappointing lack of action-oriented responses by the international community. The funding pledges were by no means inconsequential—for instance, a \$1.2 billion facility was proposed by the World Bank for investment in social protection schemes, assistance to small farmers and balance-of-payments support to poor countries. However, many experts believed the Summit's outcomes to be disappointing. For example, Kevin Watkins of Oxford University has argued that the Summit's solutions were more “sticking plasters” than robust responses to the crisis.¹⁸⁰

86. The presentation of the draft Comprehensive Framework for Action was, however, a positive outcome from the Summit. In April 2008, Simon Maxwell of the ODI had told us that a unified UN response to the crisis was an overwhelming priority:

“It would be very helpful if the large countries like the UK would say to the UN system, “We want one ten-page summary of what you want to do as a UN system”, signed by the Secretary-General, delivered to the series of meetings that is happening through the summer, the Call to Action, the G8 and so on.”¹⁸¹

The development of this “single analysis and immediate action plan”, is, as we described in the previous sub-section, now underway due to the UN Taskforce's initial preparation of the CFA. Whether or not the final action plan meets Mr Maxwell's specifications—namely that UN agencies “move very fast” to get action plans agreed with countries; that the Plan should put national country needs at its centre; and that it should be coherent with the Paris agenda of harmonisation and alignment—is yet to be tested.¹⁸²

87. We commend the UN Taskforce's development of a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA). We urge the Taskforce, together with the international community, to finalise the CFA as soon as possible. We hope that implementation of CFA strategies at country level will be well underway by the time of the September 2008 meeting on the MDGs, so that the international community can assess progress at this point. We strongly encourage the Taskforce to put national country needs at the centre of the process. We request that DFID update us on progress on the International Partnership and the CFA in response to this Report.

180 Kevin Watkins, 'Mere sticking plasters', *The Guardian*, 2 June 2008

181 Q 33

182 Ev 79

4 Food security in the 21st century

88. The establishment of the Taskforce, the development of the CFA and the proposal for an International Partnership for Agriculture and Food are all essential short- and medium-term responses to the food crisis. But it is also crucial that the international community looks further ahead at long-term measures significantly to improve food security. One route towards this is pursuing reforms to the UN's approach to assisting people who are food insecure. Simon Maxwell told us that the food crisis “presents an important opportunity to tackle outstanding issues of aid architecture and UN reform”.¹⁸³ We will explore the options for reforms to the current UN approach in this chapter. Alongside this, we will assess another of the long-term drivers of food security—one that we believe donors such as DFID are currently under-emphasising: agricultural development.

The relationship between the WFP, FAO and other agencies

89. As we described in Chapter 2, the WFP works closely with a number of UN agencies. Its largest partnership is with UNICEF, followed by the FAO, but the WFP also works with: the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on agriculture; the UNHCR on refugees; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on school feeding; the World Health Organisation (WHO) on public health and nutrition; the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on a range of issues; the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) on mother and child health; and the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on humanitarian responses.

90. The WFP has particularly close relationships with the two other Rome-based agencies, the IFAD and the FAO.¹⁸⁴ The IFAD is purely a finance-based institution, whilst the FAO has policy and programme responsibilities: it has the specific UN mandate to work on agricultural production and productivity.¹⁸⁵ Josette Sheeran told us that the three agencies make proactive efforts to ensure efficient collaboration, have combined field offices and are linked on “hundreds of projects” such as a local purchase initiative, ‘Purchase for Progress’, in a number of African countries.¹⁸⁶

91. However, evidence we received was critical of the inter-relationship between the Rome-based UN agencies. There was a view that the current system is too fragmented and that the agencies’ remits overlap. The UK Food Group, for example, believed that a reorganisation of the three agencies’ tasks was needed.¹⁸⁷ Other criticisms related specifically to the FAO. The Minister said that the FAO needed to “accelerate their reform efforts”.¹⁸⁸ Oxfam said that the WFP “does not have such a strong relationship with FAO”

183 Ev 78

184 WFP, ‘Co-operation among UN Rome-based agencies’ (prepared for the Executive Board Annual Session, Rome 4–8 June 2007)

185 Ev 91

186 Q 26

187 Ev 82

188 Q 84

and that this “undermines the ability of the UN system to develop interventions that could go beyond food distributions, and be more effective in terms of prevention, mitigation as well as post-crisis rehabilitation.”¹⁸⁹

92. Oxfam believed the WFP should focus on improved collaboration and co-ordination of the activities of the three Rome-based agencies at several different levels:

- Pursue more consistent and comprehensive strategies regarding key global issues such as the achievement of MDG 1, food prices and biofuel production, with an emphasis on country-level strategies;
- Ensure better integration of the fundraising and resource mobilisation underpinning such strategies;
- Encourage participation by the Rome-based agencies in the design and the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies and efforts to ensure that food and agriculture are better integrated into national plans and World Bank/IMF strategies;¹⁹⁰ and
- Provide pooled funding at country level on a multi-year basis so that aid is provided according to needs.¹⁹¹

93. Lawrence Haddad of the IDS agreed that a more integrated strategy was needed and suggested that common measures, indicators and standards relating to food security should be agreed amongst the three Rome-based agencies.¹⁹² The UK Food Group suggested that the food agencies undertake “a relatively rapid ‘meta-evaluation’ of all of the global food and agricultural agencies together” that assessed their effectiveness in addressing hunger, including their long-term impact on policies supporting the global food system.¹⁹³

94. The Minister said achieving improved system coherence within the UN approach to food security was a priority for DFID:

“You have got WFP in particular focussing on the short-term immediate humanitarian needs; you have got IFAD looking at the longer term financing needs; you have got the FAO providing, in theory, policy advice to developing country governments. At different times you are going to need all three to be in place [...] There are a huge number of agencies that have a role to play in responding to particular needs at particular times. What we want to do is to try and empower the lead person for the UN in those contexts—be it the humanitarian coordinator or the resident coordinator—to be able to corral those agencies into giving advice in a way

189 Ev 69

190 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are prepared by governments through a participatory process involving the World Bank, the IMF, donors and civil society.

191 Ev 69

192 Ev 61

193 Ev 82

that best suits the needs of the country governments and looks at their medium-term and their long-term needs.”¹⁹⁴

95. The WFP, FAO and IFAD produced a paper entitled ‘Co-operation among UN Rome-based agencies’ in 2007. However, the paper was short and based mainly on bringing together ‘back office’ administrative and processing work such as procurement and human resources in order to achieve efficiency savings, rather than on ways to collaborate on policy issues and within country programmes.¹⁹⁵ **We believe many opportunities exist for greater integration between the three Rome-based UN agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose remits include food security. These include: the increased use of shared strategies and attached funding mechanisms; participation by the agencies in national Poverty Reduction Strategies and World Bank/IMF plans; pooled funding at country level; and the use of common indicators and measures. These are just some of the many ways in which collaboration could be improved. We encourage the WFP, the FAO and the IFAD to carry out a review of how their global operations could be better integrated, building on their 2007 report on improving co-operation over administrative processes.**

Making the system more effective: rethinking the architecture

UN system coherence

96. In 2006, the UN High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence produced a report entitled “Delivering as One”. This has resulted in the ‘One UN’ initiative, a process being piloted in eight countries aiming for greater cohesion at the country level through one UN programme, one UN budgetary framework and one UN leader. DFID is providing financial support to a number of the pilots and told us it hopes that the approach will be rolled out further—including in new countries—in the next two years.¹⁹⁶ The WFP is committed to the One UN initiative and has country programmes in four of the pilot countries (Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda and Tanzania).¹⁹⁷

97. The Coherence Panel’s key purpose was to find ways to narrow the gap between the three areas of humanitarian assistance, development and the environment.¹⁹⁸ The WFP’s written evidence suggested that the ‘One UN’ initiative may not thus far have narrowed this gap. The WFP pointed out that the pilots are focused on development activities that “may not be appropriate for responding to fast-moving humanitarian operations, which require different country-level structures.” However the agency also said that activities closely linked with humanitarian activities, such as disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and longer-term recovery have nonetheless been considered in the ‘One Programme’,

194 Q 82

195 WFP, ‘Co-operation among UN Rome-based agencies’ (prepared for the Executive Board Annual Session, Rome 4–8 June 2007)

196 Ev 46

197 Ev 91. The other pilot countries are Vietnam, Cape Verde, Albania and Uruguay.

198 UN, ‘Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel’ (November 2006)

when deemed to be of a more predictable and longer-term nature.¹⁹⁹ Josette Sheeran said that she had seen “in response to this food crisis a pulling together not only of the UN system but the global system as I have never seen before.” She highlighted that the UN Taskforce on the Global Food Security Crisis had “pulled together all the agencies of the UN to come up with a coherent response.”²⁰⁰

98. We consider the ‘One UN’ approach, currently at its pilot stage, as a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving more efficient collaboration and greater UN coherence on food security. Humanitarian operations generally need to be rapid and tailored to the specific context, and may sometimes fall outside the longer-term processes covered under the ‘One UN’ country initiatives. However, we agree with the WFP that wherever possible activities closely linked with humanitarian activities should be included in the ‘One UN’ programme.

One lead UN agency on hunger

99. Another route towards improved UN coherence would be for one UN agency to be identified to lead work on hunger. Given that the WFP already leads the frontline response to hunger, and that its mandate is expanding to include social protection work and an increased focus on nutrition, it would seem the obvious candidate for this role. Limiting this leadership role to hunger, rather than the broader area of food security, would also make sense: as we have argued, there are many long-term developmental aspects to food security that require inputs based on the agriculture and environment expertise of the FAO and IFAD, amongst other agencies.

100. Simon Maxwell said, “A new vision for WFP as the lead UN agency on all aspects of hunger would be inspiring. It would also be consistent with current efforts to strengthen the UN and make it more coherent.” He added that the WFP would require new resources to fulfil such a role, especially extra funding.²⁰¹ Lawrence Haddad supported a single leadership and said “While there are exceptions, very few truly joint initiatives manage to transcend the institutional fights for resources and media limelight.”²⁰²

101. The Minister believed that identifying a lead agency would not be necessary if DFID’s proposed International Partnership was successfully launched. He favoured “a light touch secretariat rather than a great new body, or a great new reform process that takes up huge amounts of time.”²⁰³ But it seemed to us that, in practice, the WFP already acts as lead agency on hunger and that substantial reforms to the UN system would not be needed. **We believe that identifying the WFP as lead UN agency on hunger offers a route towards quick gains without substantial system-wide reforms being necessary. Making the role of lead agency explicit and official would assist the WFP in securing the additional resources it would need to fulfil this role.**

199 Ev 91

200 Q 30

201 Ev 77

202 Ev 61

203 Q 86

Reprioritising agricultural development

Donor support to agriculture

102. We will now turn to explore another long-term driver of food security, agricultural development. During the 1990s and early 2000s, donor support for agriculture declined. In 1986, 20% of aid was devoted to agriculture in the developing world. By 2006, that had shrunk to less than 3%.²⁰⁴ It can be argued that by ‘taking their eye off the ball’, donors contributed to the onset of the current food crisis. Partly because agricultural development was under-emphasised, small farmers in developing countries have struggled to enter markets; grain supplies are at their lowest levels; and the availability of irrigation, seeds and infrastructure are insufficient. Global productivity growth has slowed from 3–5% 20 years ago to 1–2% now.²⁰⁵

103. **Given the urgency of the global food situation, the priority is not exploring what went wrong in agricultural development over the last two decades, but how it can be put right.** Alex Evans of New York University told us, “Until recently, agriculture was seen as a rather unfashionable relic of the past in many donor agencies [...] That needs to change quickly: donors need to invest heavily in programme aid—and in many cases, rebuilding their *own* capacity—in rural development.”²⁰⁶ DFID appears to be re-focusing on agriculture. Jonathan Lingham, Deputy Team Leader for Renewable Natural Resources and Agriculture at DFID, told us that “The role of agriculture has very often been moved down because of donor pressure in education and health. Only recently have we started to put more emphasis on agriculture and nutrition.”²⁰⁷ We have spoken in a number of our previous reports of the urgent need for donors to support the construction of the infrastructure that supports agriculture in developing countries, such as roads, bridges, crop storage facilities and irrigation.²⁰⁸

104. Many international actors are calling for a second ‘green revolution’ that embraces Africa as well as Asia.²⁰⁹ This second revolution also needs to be greener in the environmental sense, with the efficiency of agricultural inputs such as water and energy given far more attention.²¹⁰ DFID is the first bilateral donor to support the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).²¹¹ The Department has also launched a new package of support to agricultural research (including fisheries and forestry) which will see funding double to £400 million over five years.²¹² £130 million of this will be allocated to the

204 ‘Greener and leaner – how the west could stave off disaster’, *The Guardian*, 31 May 2008

205 ‘All agree there is a food crisis. But the argument is how to deal with it’, *The Independent*, 4 June 2008

206 Ev 51–52

207 Q 102 [Jonathan Lingham]

208 International Development Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2005–06, *Private Sector Development* HC 921 and International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2007–08, *DFID and the African Development Bank* HC 441

209 Ev 51. Asia’s ‘green revolution’ over the last 30–40 years has resulted in sustained agricultural development and improvements in productivity—although there is debate over whether this period of increased output is slowing.

210 ‘The end of abundance?’ *Financial Times*, 2 June 2008

211 ‘UK urges global action on food prices’, speech by Douglas Alexander, 3 June 2008. Available online at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/Speeches/alexander-world-food-speech.asp>

212 DFID Press Releases: 22 April 2008, ‘UK announces aid package to tackle rising food prices’

Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the balance to international research institutions, regional institutions in Africa and Asia and joint programmes with UK research councils.²¹³ Specific areas that will be funded include research to:

- Produce new varieties of staple crops and livestock (including adaptation to climate change);
- Create new income opportunities for communities from high value commodities (fruits, vegetables, fisheries and forest products);
- Conserve crop and animal biodiversity for future use;
- Develop improved practices and policies for the sustainable management of water, land and forestry resources; and
- Inform global and national agricultural and food policies (including policies on markets and trade).²¹⁴

We commend DFID's £400 million support package to agricultural research. We hope that this signals the start of an upward trend in DFID support to agriculture that can assist a second 'green revolution' that could transform African, and continue to develop Asian, agriculture.

New opportunities to drive agricultural development

105. The Minister told us that developing countries needed to do more themselves to invest in agriculture.²¹⁵ Under the Maputo Declaration of 2003, African governments committed to allocate at least 10% of national budgetary resources for agricultural and rural development within five years. The Minister told us that a number of countries, including Mali, Madagascar and Namibia, are achieving the target.²¹⁶ However, many others are not. Lawrence Haddad from the IDS summarised some of the most urgent investments needed to help drive long-term agricultural growth in developing countries: better inputs and information; more farmer-driven design of intervention; greater priority to women's expertise and preferences; better market infrastructure; and higher yield technology. Professor Haddad suggested that aid agencies should link with private initiatives such as the Gates Foundation, which is contributing \$3 billion to agriculture over the next 3 years.²¹⁷ There are also major opportunities for agencies such as DFID and the WFP to collaborate with the private sector, and in public-private partnerships. Collaboration between the public and private sectors is being pursued within the area of nutrition through initiatives such as the newly proposed \$800 million Public-Private Safety Net to Tackle Rising Global Malnutrition in Africa, to be co-ordinated by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). The Fund will take financial, technical and in-

213 Ev 45 and DFID Press Release, 6 June 2008, 'CGIAR receives £130 million for agricultural research'

214 DFID Press Release, 6 June 2008, 'CGIAR receives £130 million for agricultural research'

215 Q 66

216 Qq 66 and 98

217 Ev 61

kind contributions. It will be managed by a partnership that includes governments, the private sector and the WFP.²¹⁸ There is potential for similar initiatives to be launched within agricultural development. **We recommend that DFID explore opportunities to work with private foundations, such as the Gates Foundation, and with the private sector more widely, towards long-term agricultural development in Africa and Asia. We also recommend that DFID seeks opportunities to participate in public-private partnerships, where appropriate.**

Supporting farmers in the current food crisis

106. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has urged countries to seize “an historic opportunity to revitalise agriculture” as a way of tackling the food crisis.²¹⁹ DFID is building on this approach through its proposed International Partnership for Agriculture and Food.²²⁰ A key priority during the current food crisis is working out how best to support farmers to help them to benefit from higher food prices. Some farmers are benefiting from the higher prices they can charge for their produce, but given the soaring cost of fertiliser (which has increased by over 40%) and the fact that they too must purchase food for their families, many are losing out. As Lawrence Haddad told us, “Allowing [smallholder farmers] to respond to food price increases in ways that drive down prices for all but allow them to increase their own profits [...] is win-win”.²²¹

107. Problems such as the high risk of crop failure and lack of access to markets may dissuade small farmers from seeking to scale up their outputs. Joachim von Braun of the International Food Policy Research Institute suggested that possible ways to assist small farmers included: training farmers in new crops and production techniques; improving their access to finance, especially microfinance; building infrastructure; and developing domestic market institutions, such as commodity exchanges, to make markets more efficient and transparent to farmers in remote areas.²²² Dr Edward Clay of the ODI warned that further fluctuations needed to be prepared for: a sudden price drop or correction, following the current peak, would alter farmers’ circumstances once more.²²³ It is possible that some kind of insurance scheme for farmers could help incentivise poor farmers to increase their productivity by reducing the risks they face from price fluctuations and crop failure.

108. We believe that making small-scale agriculture a more reliable economic venture is key to improving food security over the longer-term. Helping poor farming communities insulate themselves against economic and other shocks such as extreme weather events will require a whole range of development inputs, including: adaptation to climate change; improvements to global trade rules; and the development of new technologies that help ensure reliable yields. But we believe that agencies such as DFID

218 For further details, see the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition’s (GAIN) website, <http://www.gainhealth.org/system/files/2008-05-02-malnutrition-safety-net.pdf>

219 BBC Online, ‘UN sets out food crisis measures’, 3 June 2008

220 See Paragraph 80

221 Ev 61

222 Ev 60. Microfinance is defined as credit, savings, insurance and money transfer services for relatively poor people.

223 Ev 57

can also support specific interventions that will help farmers increase their productivity, including: training in new crops and production techniques; improved access to finance; building infrastructure; and developing domestic market institutions, such as commodity exchanges. We recommend that DFID also explore opportunities for insurance schemes for poor farmers that could help mitigate the risk in increasing their outputs or developing commercial ventures. We will explore agricultural development further in our current inquiry into DFID's Departmental Annual Report 2008.

Genetic modification

109. The debate about the use of genetically modified (GM) technology has been reinvigorated by the current food prices increases. Around 100 million hectares, or about 8%, of the world's cultivated land are sown with genetically modified organisms.²²⁴ Countries are divided in their support for GM: supporters, such as the USA and Brazil, argue that the technology can contribute to increased yields and help crops withstand climactic variability. Supporters also point to possible nutritional benefits: staple crops in developing countries, such as cassava, can be fortified with vitamins, minerals and protein to provide a whole day's nutrition requirements from one meal.²²⁵ The UK Government is more measured in its approach to GM foods. The Minister told us "I do not think they are going to be a magic bullet which solves the issue of rising food prices, but they are going to have a contribution to make."²²⁶ He believed that, ultimately, the decision about whether to use GM crops as a response to the food crisis should be made by individual countries:

"We do need to allow developing countries to make their own judgments about whether or not to allow GM crops to be planted. As well as funding the initial research into different types of GM crops, we are also providing support through the UN's Environment Programme to help developing countries develop their own ability to manage the decision as to whether or not to allow their own people to use GM crops."²²⁷

We agree that it should be for developing countries to decide whether to explore the use of genetically modified crops as a response to the current food crisis. We commend DFID for helping fund initial research into different types of GM crops so that countries can make an informed decision on the basis of reliable information.

224 'The end of abundance', *Financial Times*, 2 June 2008

225 'GM crops may provide day's worth of nutrition in one meal', *The Herald*, 1 July 2008

226 Q 120

227 Q 120

5 Conclusion

110. Hunger and malnutrition have been significant problems for the world for many years, but the food crisis is pushing borderline communities over the edge. The international community needs to find opportunities for long-term improvements to food security for poor people. A creative approach is needed. As Alex Evans from New York University told us, “Development advocates may find that the emergence of food as a top rank political issue provides them with an opportunity to form new alliances, new coalitions and drivers for change.”²²⁸

111. The WFP, by broad consensus, does a fine job of providing assistance at the frontline of hunger. Its work in some of the most challenging and dangerous environments in the world—key countries include Somalia, Sudan, Burma and Zimbabwe—makes the difference between life and death for millions of people. In this report, we have striven to be a ‘critical friend’, suggesting new opportunities and ways to strengthen the WFP’s crucial work within the broader UN context. We have set out the ways in which we think DFID could best support the agency.

112. The major lesson from the current food crisis hinges on the ‘security’ element of this report’s title. The international community must do more to support poor communities in building resilience to the ‘shocks’—economic, social or environmental—which are hitting populations with increasing frequency and inhibiting their access to food. This means taking the long view and working hard to prevent hunger and malnutrition through approaches that help protect communities from external factors outside their control. Sustained investment in nutrition and agricultural development is one route towards this. Another is to intensify the process of UN reform so that this collective entity works as efficiently as possible in reaching each and every person who is currently trapped by hunger. Only then will the international system be fulfilling its obligations to the many hungry and malnourished in the world.

List of conclusions and recommendations

Social protection

1. We are gravely concerned that millions of people are being pushed into acute hunger by rising food prices. We recognise that it is the poorest of the poor, those living on a dollar a day or less, who are being hit the hardest. We welcome the WFP's broadening of its activities from food aid alone to food assistance, and its associated increasing use of cash and food transfer schemes. These social protection schemes offer a flexible and effective approach to building up vulnerable communities' resilience to food insecurity over time. We encourage DFID and the WFP to continue to evaluate the different elements within social protection packages—the right balance of cash and food and the best techniques for targeting transfers—to ensure that an optimal package can be provided. We commend DFID's decision to increase its funding for the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia to £30 million per year. We encourage both DFID and the WFP to explore options for replicating lessons from the Ethiopian scheme elsewhere. (Paragraph 25)

In-kind food donations

2. The rapid rise in commodity prices has put huge strain on the purchasing power of both food agencies such as the WFP and poor people globally. We believe that it would be of deep concern if the USA were to follow up on suggestions that it might reduce the amount of aid it provides to the WFP because of rising prices and costs. We also believe that the USA should review its practice of giving nearly all its support 'in-kind' as food, given that cash donations are of much more value to the WFP than food donations in developing the flexible "toolbox" that it now requires. (Paragraph 27)

The WFP as a humanitarian actor

3. The WFP deserves credit for its role at the centre of the UN's response to humanitarian emergencies, including its leadership of the global food aid sector and the logistics cluster. We acknowledge the difficult and often dangerous job that WFP employees do in difficult environments, especially conflict-prone and conflict-affected states. Priority must be given to ensuring coherence with other UN agencies in line with the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda. The WFP should continue to support the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its role in overseeing the co-ordination of emergency responses. (Paragraph 32)
4. We believe the WFP deserves credit for its ongoing lifesaving work in Darfur and southern Sudan. We were particularly pleased to hear that conditions are improving sufficiently in southern Sudan to allow key WFP programmes such as road-building and school feeding to be handed over to the government. We welcome DFID's funding of the Sudan Recovery Fund and the contribution this will make to the transition process. We believe DFID's increased contributions to pooled international emergency funds such as the Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs) in

Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are an effective way of helping ensure a coherent UN approach in crisis situations such as Darfur. (Paragraph 35)

5. We are deeply concerned about the hunger crisis in Zimbabwe. The ban on food aid imposed by Robert Mugabe's government in June 2008 will halt or hamper delivery of vital WFP supplies to millions of people. The disastrous state of Zimbabwe's economy and agricultural sector is likely to leave innocent citizens without any source of food and condemn many to starvation. We urge the UK Government to continue to press for the food aid ban to be revoked as soon as possible so that the Zimbabwean people can receive the humanitarian assistance they so desperately need. (Paragraph 38)

Hunger, malnutrition and the MDGs

6. We believe that DFID does not give nutrition the attention or resources it deserves. Malnutrition kills up to 2.5 million children a year—around five times more than the number of children dying from HIV/AIDS. The effects of malnutrition in children under two years old endure throughout their lives. Malnutrition is easily passed on to the next generation by expectant mothers who are malnourished. Yet it is entirely preventable, and often at very little cost. The fact that DFID does not have a nutrition policy, even if it does now have a policy team, is not satisfactory. Indirect policies focusing on wider sectoral approaches to health and social development make a necessary but insufficient contribution to combating child malnutrition. We recommend that DFID adopt more direct policies to combat malnutrition and give greater support to proven interventions such as support to breastfeeding and micronutrient supplementation. (Paragraph 51)
7. We are very concerned that DFID does not have a measurable target for malnutrition. The Department's decision to measure progress towards MDG 1 using a poverty indicator alone, rather than including indicators for hunger and nutrition, implies it believes that wider poverty reduction strategies are sufficient tools with which to combat hunger and nutrition. This is far from proven. We recommend that DFID add a new indicator under MDG 1 in the 2008-11 PSA to enable its work on nutrition and hunger to be properly targeted and measured. (Paragraph 53)
8. DFID and other donors have given nutrition insufficient priority. It is fragmented across different UN bodies, with no agency taking overall responsibility. We believe that it is therefore vitally important for the WFP to continue its nutrition activities. A huge opportunity exists at the point of delivery of food aid: adding micronutrient supplements and working with breastfeeding mothers are just two examples of the essential nutritional interventions that the WFP factors into its work. As an agency working at the point of delivery in humanitarian emergencies, it is essential for the WFP to raise its profile as a major implementation agency for nutrition-focused work. (Paragraph 56)
9. We were surprised that DFID was not more supportive of the wider development activities undertaken by the WFP, of which nutrition is one. Long-term development work such as nutrition and agricultural development builds the foundations for communities' survival in emergency situations. Failing to use the interface between development and emergency work is a missed opportunity as well as an inefficient

use of resources. We recommend that DFID expand its funding for the WFP to include the agency's essential development work, especially on nutrition which is currently under-funded and under-emphasised by the international community and the UN system. (Paragraph 57)

Biofuels

10. We agree with DFID that there are both challenges and opportunities in the use of biofuels and that the development of international sustainability guidelines on their use would be beneficial. We were disappointed that the Rome Summit of June 2008 did not produce a clear statement on the links between biofuels and rising food prices. As a first step, we urge the UK Government to press for rapid action on the "in-depth studies" and exchanges of experience on biofuels which were agreed in Rome. Proper research must be the basis for further negotiation on the global approach to biofuels if consensus is to be achieved. We also encourage DFID to fulfil its pledge to work closely with the European Commission and EU member states to address the possible impacts of biofuels on food security and to take action, where necessary, to address them. (Paragraph 66)

Rising food prices: trends

11. It seems likely that, whilst food prices may not continue their steep rise, they are also unlikely to drop significantly. We believe that given the uncertain nature of current food and commodity price predictions, the safest plan of action is to prepare for relatively higher prices over the next decade, and we encourage the WFP and DFID to make the necessary adjustments to their policies. (Paragraph 70)

The appropriate response from the WFP, DFID and the international community

12. We reiterate our support for the WFP's increasing use of social transfer schemes. We commend the WFP's latest Strategic Plan for its emphasis on local procurement of goods and services in developing countries. (Paragraph 72)
13. We are very concerned at the constraints that global food prices are imposing on the WFP's budgets. Up to 20 million tonnes of food may be needed to assist the new groups of people being pushed into poverty by the current food price rises. Securing this additional food supply, which represents less than 1% of global cereal production, is achievable. But donor contributions to the WFP will have to increase substantially: the usual total of US\$3 billion a year in voluntary contributions may need to double to US\$5-6 billion. It is important that these increased contributions are made directly to the agency's core budget rather than as earmarked funds. We welcome DFID's pledge to take rising food and transport costs into account when responding to new humanitarian appeals by the WFP. We encourage DFID to do all it can to compensate for rising prices when disbursing funds to the WFP and to encourage other donors to do the same. (Paragraph 77)
14. We are concerned that there are 775 million people who are regularly hungry but who are currently not receiving sufficient assistance from their national governments, and who are not covered by the WFP's emergency operations. We

welcome DFID's recognition that, as well as immediate emergency responses to the global food crisis, longer-term approaches addressing food security are highly important. We support the establishment of an International Partnership for Agriculture and Food and are anxious to see rapid action in taking the proposal forward. We urge DFID to build on momentum from the G8 Summit and ensure that the Partnership has the international community's agreement by the time of the UN High Level meeting on the MDGs, scheduled for 25 September 2008. (Paragraph 81)

15. We commend the establishment of the UN Taskforce on the Global Food Security Crisis, and we hope that the UK's proposed International Partnership for Agriculture and Food could—assuming international agreement to the Partnership is secured—lead on sequentially from the Taskforce's initial phase of work. (Paragraph 84)
16. We commend the UN Taskforce's development of a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA). We urge the Taskforce, together with the international community, to finalise the CFA as soon as possible. We hope that implementation of CFA strategies at country level will be well underway by the time of the September 2008 meeting on the MDGs, so that the international community can assess progress at this point. We strongly encourage the Taskforce to put national country needs at the centre of the process. We request that DFID update us on progress on the International Partnership and the CFA in response to this Report. (Paragraph 87)

The relationship between the WFP, FAO and other agencies

17. We believe many opportunities exist for greater integration between the three Rome-based UN agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose remits include food security. These include: the increased use of shared strategies and attached funding mechanisms; participation by the agencies in national Poverty Reduction Strategies and World Bank/IMF plans; pooled funding at country level; and the use of common indicators and measures. These are just some of the many ways in which collaboration could be improved. We encourage the WFP, the FAO and the IFAD to carry out a review of how their global operations could be better integrated, building on their 2007 report on improving co-operation over administrative processes. (Paragraph 95)

UN system coherence

18. We consider the 'One UN' approach, currently at its pilot stage, as a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving more efficient collaboration and greater UN coherence on food security. Humanitarian operations generally need to be rapid and tailored to the specific context, and may sometimes fall outside the longer-term processes covered under the 'One UN' country initiatives. However, we agree with the WFP that wherever possible activities closely linked with humanitarian activities should be included in the 'One UN' programme. (Paragraph 98)

One lead UN agency on hunger

19. Another route towards improved UN coherence would be for one UN agency to be identified to lead work on hunger. Given that the WFP already leads the frontline response to hunger, and that its mandate is expanding to include social protection work and an increased focus on nutrition, it would seem the obvious candidate for this role. Limiting this leadership role to hunger, rather than the broader area of food security, would also make sense: as we have argued, there are many long-term developmental aspects to food security that require inputs based on the agriculture and environment expertise of the FAO and IFAD, amongst other agencies. (Paragraph 99)
20. We believe that identifying the WFP as lead UN agency on hunger offers a route towards quick gains without substantial system-wide reforms being necessary. Making the role of lead agency explicit and official would assist the WFP in securing the additional resources it would need to fulfil this role. (Paragraph 101)

Reprioritising agricultural development

21. Given the urgency of the global food situation, the priority is not exploring what went wrong in agricultural development over the last two decades, but how it can be put right. (Paragraph 103)
22. We commend DFID's £400 million support package to agricultural research. We hope that this signals the start of an upward trend in DFID support to agriculture that can assist a second 'green revolution' that could transform African, and continue to develop Asian, agriculture. (Paragraph 104)
23. We recommend that DFID explore opportunities to work with private foundations, such as the Gates Foundation, and with the private sector more widely, towards long-term agricultural development in Africa and Asia. We also recommend that DFID seeks opportunities to participate in public-private partnerships, where appropriate. (Paragraph 105)

Supporting farmers in the current food crisis

24. We believe that making small-scale agriculture a more reliable economic venture is key to improving food security over the longer-term. Helping poor farming communities insulate themselves against economic and other shocks such as extreme weather events will require a whole range of development inputs, including: adaptation to climate change; improvements to global trade rules; and the development of new technologies that help ensure reliable yields. But we believe that agencies such as DFID can also support specific interventions that will help farmers increase their productivity, including: training in new crops and production techniques; improved access to finance; building infrastructure; and developing domestic market institutions, such as commodity exchanges. We recommend that DFID also explore opportunities for insurance schemes for poor farmers that could help mitigate the risk in increasing their outputs or developing commercial ventures. (Paragraph 108)

Genetic modification

25. We agree that it should be for developing countries to decide whether to explore the use of genetically modified crops as a response to the current food crisis. We commend DFID for helping fund initial research into different types of GM crops so that countries can make an informed decision on the basis of reliable information. (Paragraph 109)

Annex A: The Committee's visit programme in Ghana

The International Development Committee visited Ghana from 25 to 28 March 2008. The group consisted of:

Malcolm Bruce (Chairman), Hugh Bayley, Mr Stephen Crabb, Mr Marsha Singh and Sir Robert Smith

Accompanied by: Matthew Hedges (Clerk) and Dr Anna Dickson (Committee Specialist)

The key meetings were as follows:

Wednesday 26 March

Meetings in Accra in connection with the Working Together to Make Aid More Effective inquiry

Thursday 27 March

Visit to Princess Marie Louise Hospital, Central Accra

Meetings in Accra in connection with the Working Together to Make Aid More Effective inquiry

Friday 28 March

Visit to UN Humanitarian Response Depot

Annex B: The Committee's visit programme in Rome

The International Development Committee visited Rome from 11 to 14 May 2008. The group consisted of:

Malcolm Bruce (Chairman), Hugh Bayley, Mr Marsha Singh and Sir Robert Smith

Accompanied by: Matthew Hedges (Clerk) and Dr Anna Dickson (Committee Specialist)

The key meetings were as follows:

Monday 12 May

Round-table meeting on: food price rises, energy and agriculture; WFP's strategy to meet increased needs; WFP engagement with local communities to identify needs.

Round-table session to discuss issues of UN reform, meeting the MDGs, effectiveness of food assistance and system-wide coherence.

Working lunch: Lennart Båge, President of IFAD; John Powell, Deputy Executive Director of WFP; and Anika Söder, Assistant Director General of FAO

Meeting with WFP on operations and logistics

Tuesday 13 May

Meetings in Rome in connection with the Working Together to Make Aid More Effective inquiry

List of acronyms

CFA	Comprehensive Framework for Action
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
G8	Group of Eight
GM	Genetic modification
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
UNAIDS	Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNHRD	UN Humanitarian Response Depot
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UN OCHA	UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 15 July 2008

Members present:

Malcolm Bruce, in the Chair

John Battle
Richard Burden

Sir Robert Smith

Draft Report (*The World Food Programme and Global Food Security*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 112 read and agreed to.

Annexes and Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Tenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 22 April.

[Adjourned till Thursday 17 July at 2.00 pm]

Witnesses

Tuesday 22 April 2008	<i>Page</i>
Ms Josette Sheeran , Executive Director and Mr John Aylieff , Director, Programme Design and Support Division, World Food Programme (WFP)	Ev 1
Mr Simon Maxwell , Director, and Dr Steve Wiggins , Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute	Ev 12
Mr Alex Rees , Food Security and Livelihoods Advisor, Save the Children UK	Ev 16
Tuesday 17 June 2008	
Mr Gareth Thomas MP , Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development, Mr Jim Harvey , Permanent Representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome and Mr Jonathan Lingham , Deputy Team Leader, Renewable Natural Resources and Agriculture Team, Department for International Development	Ev 20

List of written evidence

Department for International Development	Ev 34; 45
Alex Evans	Ev 46
Cru Investment Management	Ev 53
Dr Edward Clay, Overseas Development Institute	Ev 55
International Food Policy Research Institute	Ev 58
Lawrence Haddad, Institute of Development Studies	Ev 60
Mohammad Pournik, Principle Economic and Governance Advisor, United Nations Development Programme Yemen	Ev 62
Nestlé UK	Ev 63
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)	Ev 64
One World Trust	Ev 65
Oxfam GB	Ev 67
Rothamsted Research	Ev 70
Save the Children UK	Ev 70; 73
Simon Maxwell, Director, Overseas Development Institute	Ev 76
UK Food Group	Ev 79
UK Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (UKFARD)	Ev 84
World Food Programme	Ev 86

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2007–08

First Report	DFID Departmental Report 2007	HC 64 (HC 329)
Second Report	Development and Trade: Cross-departmental Working	HC 68 (HC 330)
Third Report	Work of the Committee 2007	HC 255
Fourth Report	Reconstructing Afghanistan	HC 65 (HC 509)
Fifth Report	Maternal Health	HC 66 (HC 592)
Sixth Report	DFID and the World Bank	HC 67 (HC 548)
Seventh Report	DFID and the African Development Bank	HC 441 (HC 988)
Eighth Report	Scrutiny of Arms Export Controls (2008): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2006, Quarterly Reports for 2007, licensing policy and review of export control legislation	HC 254
Ninth Report	Working Together to Make Aid More Effective	HC 520

Session 2006–07

First Report	DFID Departmental Report 2006	HC 71 (HC 328)
Second Report	HIV/AIDS: Marginalised groups and emerging epidemics	HC 46-I&II (HC 329)
Third Report	Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 228
Fourth Report	Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories	HC 114-I&II (HC 430)
Fifth Report	EU Development and Trade Policies: An update	HC 271 (HC 622)
Sixth Report	Sanitation and Water	HC 126-I&II (HC 854)
Seventh report	Fair Trade and Development	HC 356-I&II (HC 1047)
Eighth report	DFID's Programme in Vietnam	HC 732 (HC 1062)
Ninth report	Prospects for sustainable peace in Uganda	HC 853 (HC 1063)
Tenth report	DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border	HC 645-I&II (HC 1070)

Session 2005–06

First Report	Delivering the Goods: HIV/AIDS and the Provision of Anti-Retrovirals	HC 708–I&II (HC 922)
Second Report	Darfur: The killing continues	HC 657 (HC 1017)
Third Report	The WTO Hong Kong Ministerial and the Doha Development Agenda	HC 730–I&II (HC 1425)
Fourth Report	Private Sector Development	HC 921–I&II (HC 1629)
Fifth Report	Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2004, Quarterly Reports for 2005, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny	HC 873 (Cm 6954)
Sixth Report	Conflict and Development: Peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction	HC 923 (HC 172)
Seventh Report	Humanitarian response to natural disasters	HC 1188 (HC 229)