



House of Commons  
Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs Committee

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**Securing food supplies  
up to 2050:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Fourth Report of  
Session 2008–09**

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**Third Special Report of Session 2008–  
09**

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## Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its associated bodies.

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Mr Geoffrey Cox (Conservative, Torridge & West Devon)  
Mr David Drew (Labour, Stroud)  
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### 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](http://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

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### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Richard Cooke (Clerk), Joanna Dodd (Second Clerk), Sarah Coe (Committee Specialist—Environment), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), Briony Potts and Mandy Sullivan (Committee Assistants).

### Contacts

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# Third Special Report

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The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee reported to the House on *Securing food supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK* in its Fourth Report of Session 2008–09, published on 21 July 2009 as HC 213. The Government's response to the Report was received on 25 September 2009.

## Government response

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### Introduction

1. The Government welcomes the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's thorough and constructive report on this important subject. We have taken careful note of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, the main thrust of which we accept.
2. In particular, we welcome the Committee's recognition of the work that the Government has done on food security, particularly our current assessment of the state of our food supplies.
3. The Committee's report also highlights the Government's work to develop a vision and strategy on the future of food. A package of documents on the future of our food system was published on 10 August 2009. As well as the UK's first food security assessment, the package also includes an interactive tool called 'Food 2030', to enable discussion and debate about the future of food, as well as a progress update on the objectives set out in the 'Food Matters' report, published by the Cabinet Office in 2008. In addition, a consultation has been launched on how best to measure our success in creating a sustainable food system, through indicators grouped into themes such as healthy and informed consumers, and skills and innovation.
4. The food strategy for the future will be published early in the new year, drawing on responses to the consultation.
5. The food strategy will also be underpinned by a new cross-government food research and innovation strategy to be published later in the year. The Food Research sub-Group of the Food Strategy Task Force is leading the development of this, under the chairmanship of the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser. The BBSRC is leading the development of plans for coordination of current research through a new cross council multi-disciplinary programme in Food Security with Defra, Dfid and other key partners.

### RESPONSE TO CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *The projections made at the FAO food security conference*

1. *At the World Food Security Conference in Rome, it was announced that there was a need to increase food production by 50% by 2030 and double it by 2050. These figures are based on assumptions about population growth and patterns of*

***consumption. It is important to bear in mind that they are projections rather than targets. They are a useful way of focusing attention on food production. However, they should also be used to draw attention to population growth, diet, and waste at all stage of the food chain, and the need for policy responses in these areas. (Paragraph 22)***

We are currently analysing the basis of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 2030/50 projections. In 2006 FAO produced projections of slowing demand growth. Clearly rising population adds to food demand (although it also adds to labour force), but it is also true that population growth is declining as countries develop and urbanise. FAO data shows that, in the period 1970–2000, world population grew on average by around 1.7% per year. This is expected to fall to 1.0% per year in the period 2000–30, and to 0.5% per year in the period 2030–50. This dampening effect on demand growth is partly offset by rising incomes. Using 2000 as a baseline, FAO projections roughly correspond to the Conference figures, if 2000 is considered the starting point: i.e. 56% over the period 2000–2030 and 87% increase over the period 2000–2050. These projections imply that demand and by implication, food production in the period 2006–2050 would increase by around 70%, and this has been confirmed in this year's OECD-FAO *Agricultural Outlook, 2009–2018* and *The Resource Outlook to 2050*, both published in June 2009.<sup>1</sup> The latter suggests that, compared to the 2005 to 2007 average, food production needs to increase by 70 percent by 2050 to cope with the projected increase in world population and to raise average food consumption to 3130 kcal per person per day by 2050. It should be noted that in the period 2000–2007 food production increased at a faster rate than the projections. The difference between 100% and 70% is not trivial: it is more than the food production of the whole American continent. So claims around food production needing to increase 50/100% need to be treated with care.

Notwithstanding the varying assumptions about population growth and patterns of consumption in the future, it is clear that there will be a significant increase in global food demand over the next 50 years.

Increasing sustainable agricultural production and productivity will be important to feed this growing population—not least in Africa where our vision is to see a doubling of agricultural production over the next 20 years in ways that manage natural resources sustainably and are adapted to climate change.

But simply increasing food production will not end hunger. Even when food was at its cheapest in 2000, there were still 800 million people without enough food to eat. There are huge problems in terms of access to food, distribution, and affordability. There is also a significant potential contribution of reducing losses/waste in meeting increased demand. For instance, the 2009 UNEP report: *The environmental food crisis* estimated that harvest losses and distribution losses and waste add up to approximately 1400 kcal/capita/day or 70% of current final consumption. Put another way, if these global losses were halved we could feed another 1/3 of today's population.

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<sup>1</sup> The estimated increase in production of 70% is quoted by OECD FAO in their *Agricultural Outlook 2009 2018* (published on 17th June 2009) [http://www.agri\\_outlook.org/pages/0,2987,en\\_36774715\\_36775671\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.agri_outlook.org/pages/0,2987,en_36774715_36775671_1_1_1_1_1,00.html) See p. 11, fifth bullet point. More detail is provided in *THE RESOURCE OUTLOOK TO 2050* <http://www.fao.org/es/esd/Natural%20resource%20use%20-%20Bruinsma.pdf>. We are aware that other headline projections have been attributed to FAO and cited in international fora, and we are further investigating this, together with Dfid.

It is therefore important that we complement our work to increase sustainable agricultural production with our work on trade and CAP reform, reducing food waste across the food chain, supporting research and development, looking at how we can ensure better diets and nutrition, and ensuring social protection systems are in place to help vulnerable people who cannot produce or buy enough food to feed themselves and their families.

The Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures is looking comprehensively at all these issues and is due to report in 2010. It will help to ensure the continued high profile of this issue. And Defra has already commissioned research into how we can meet anticipated 2030 food demand in the most environmentally sustainable way, which we hope will inform this work.

***2. More work is needed on future patterns of consumption. Doubling production by 2050 may focus the minds of policymakers, but, by itself, it is too broad a projection on which to base a response. We recommend that the Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures, which is due to report in October 2010, provide a clear and accessible breakdown of this projection, encompassing where and at what rate the population increases are likely to take place, and how demand is likely to change. It should indicate the implications of these factors for world production of different food commodities. Defra should determine how it will monitor global food production and demand trends in order further to refine the projections in the future. (Paragraph 23)***

The Foresight Project will undertake a detailed analysis of global food system out to 2050, including population growth and changing patterns of consumption around the world, together with changes in the production and processing of food and the wider food supply chain. It will consider the major challenges faced, the uncertainty associated with them and analyse how they could interact to affect the food system and give rise to future shocks and stresses.

The Foresight Project's Lead Expert Group has proposed that there is a need to review the existing global agricultural models and to consider the state of the art in long-run modelling of alternative scenarios. The Chief Scientific Adviser to Defra, Professor Bob Watson, has agreed to fund a series of modelling workshops to explore these issues, bringing together expertise in the current state of global agricultural modelling and exploring potential links with climate change models.

Defra are also studying the basis of the Food and Agriculture Organisations projections to gain a more critical understanding of the various factors and how they vary geographically. We are also considering including demand analysis explicitly within the global availability theme of our Food Security Assessment.

### **Sustainability**

***3. Producing sufficient food is only part of the challenge the world faces, the implications of the way in which it is produced are equally important. The only acceptable form of food production is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Applying this***



























































