

National food capacity and sustainability: redefining and re- governing UK food security policy

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Look at:

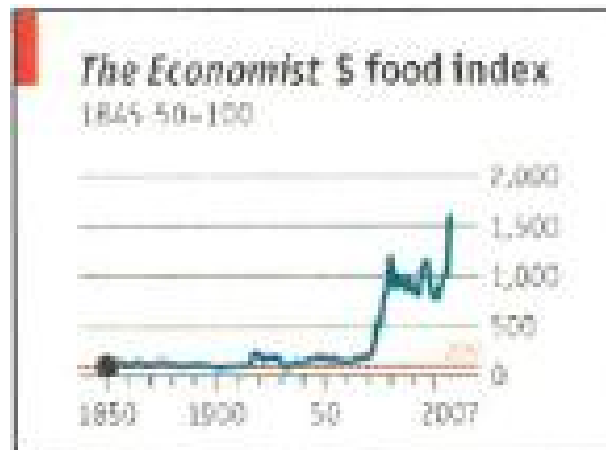
1. Why UK food security is back on policy agenda & will remain due to environmental change
2. Map UK government position & other positions emerging in UK debate
3. Some early findings of our current project on UK food security and sustainability
4. Redefining UK food security as FOOD CAPACITY
5. Implications for re-governing of food supply and policy



Rising prices

- Oil over \$100 barrel
- Wheat over £200 a tonne
- Rice over \$500 a tonne

‘Agflation’ is high...The end of cheap food” *The Economist* (Dec 8 2007 p11)



End of era of low food prices?

- Commodity price increases (cyclical – peaks in downward trend...)
- **BUT new market demands** (esp. China, India) feed commodities for meat and dairy
- **AND shift in land use** for commodity crops to **biofuel** production → amplify change
- **Uncertain** picture - international trade of bulk agricultural commodities as feed and food ingredients (grower responses uncertain) → c. 20-25% food manufacturers costs (FT 23.10.07)
- **Danone** announce 10% price increase Oct 2007 (ingredients costs) follow Hershey (Milk costs) and others (FT 23.10.07)

Pressures on food supply 2007- 8

- Social unrest & campaigns around costs of iconic/cultural foods:
 - Tortilla Protests (Mexico)
 - Pasta protests (Italy)
 - Bread boycotts (France) & Tomato boycotts (Argentina)
 - Indonesia: rice (25%), tofu (50%), cooking oil (40%) (FT Feb 27 2008 p12)
- Exporting countries restrict grain exports (FT 23.10.07 & 02.04.08)
- Importing countries introduce food subsidies & tariff adjustments
- FAO Director Jacques Diouf concerns over biofuel commodities & also impacts of rising prices on global food security and poorest nations

8 fundamentals loom

- Commodity prices
- Climate change
- Fuel / oil / energy
- Water
- Land use (biofuels)
- Labour
- Demographics / affluence (BRICs +)
- Health / Nutrition transition

See:

1. T Lang Rachel Carson lecture: <http://www.pan-uk.org/Projects/RCML/index.htm>
2. Chatham House project: http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/research/global_trends/

UK production: falling again?

NOW

- In 2006 UK was 63% self-sufficient for food but 73.3% for indigenous foods
- 1990 – 2005 UK decline from 85% → 73% indigenous type produce
- Imports rising:
1995: 27%
2006: 37%

Farmers Weekly May 24 2006

PAST

Pre 1750	c100%
1750-1830s	90-100%
1870s	c 60%
1914	c 40%
1930s	30-40%
1950s	40-50%
1980s	60-70%
2000s	60%

source: Defra Food Security paper, 22 12 06

UK govt. position on national food security

- Trade liberalisation & global food supply can provide food security
- Treasury led approach informs UK Govt's EU Budget and CAP reform stances – end financial supports
- Reflected in Defra's *Food Security and the UK* (Dec. 2006)
- **Informed by an era of cheap food**

Defra 2006 FS paper

- *“Poverty and subsistence agriculture are root causes of national food insecurity. National food security is hugely more relevant for developing countries than the rich countries of Western Europe.”* (p23)
- There is enough food to feed the world
- Self-sufficiency is an undesirable goal for a trading nation (and won't work anyway)
- UK can and should buy on open markets and work for CAP reform (HMT & Defra 2005 *A Vision for the CAP*)
- Contingency planning is needed (p51)

Policy positions around UK national food security 1

ID differing perspectives and interests (with overlaps):

1. Status Quo: Defra 2005 paper position

1. Security through **flexibility of international supply** (e.g. harvest loss) and in **supermarket supply** – both seen as very resilient
2. Position under pressure

2. Resilience of food supply – geopolitical and national infrastructure fault lines:

1. domestic; centralised power supplies; 2000 fuel protests; terrorism; see food production as a national strategic asset (Chatham House)
2. Global: supply resilience; oil/climate/war/terrorism shocks

Policy positions around UK national food security 2

3. Also Conservative Party's *Blueprint for a Green Economy* report (2007):

- Food security seen as a key vulnerability issue: “*This is not a policy driven by the need to safeguard our ability to provide the commodities that our people need*” (p. 161).
- Food Security “*at the core*” – Jim Paice shadow Agriculture spokesperson of its *Quality of Life* agenda (F. Guardian 6.10.07: 6)
- clear policy difference from Labour Govt.

Policy positions around UK national food security 3

4. Farming sector economic interest and supporting rural fabric:

- Economic self interest (medium & large producers)
 - Farm share of food basket down 23% from 1988 (RASE 2006: 4)
 - Commercial Farmers Group advocacy (since 2003)
 - Farmers for Action – campaigns (fuel protests)
- Socio-economic rural fabric:
 - Baroness Byford (Conservative spokesperson House of Lords)
 - Women's NFU

5. Retreat to & rebuild the local: Green commercial exchange

Policy positions around UK national food security 4

6. Links to UK Development Policy and poverty reduction in global south (DFID & Development NGOs):

- No retreat for decoupling of support for UK agriculture (CAP reform direction)
- Dependencies of African and other producers on UK markets for export goods and poverty reduction be recognised & supported.
- Concern about “nationalist” tone of UK food security

UK food supply chains, national food security & sustainability – early findings

- Scoping study of UK food security debates & sustainability dimensions
- Interviews along supply chains & across food sectors (inc. policy/ NGO/Trade Associations)

SOME FINDINGS:

- Degree of homogeneity of responses about big issues on agenda for food supply – clearly in a common discourse – emerging framework for thinking
- Degree of desire for government to take clearer lead e.g. from retailers as they step in to policy space

UK food supply chains, national food security & sustainability – early findings

- Env. sustainability in supply chains driven by retailers in UK (esp. inc. last 12 – 18 months)
- Retailers driven by evidence (climate change) and new area of customer demand - good business practice
- BUT impact on some supply chains more than others (e.g. FF &V, meat, eggs - not frozen ready meals)
- Quality drivers – environment, animal welfare & local
- Consumer/customer preference for local as being UK – instinctive – support UK farming &/safer
- Key role of econ. sustainability (profit) for producers → intra supply chain relationships important

Re-define as National Food Capacity... build on 3 pillars of Sustainable Development

FOOD CAPACITY in terms of:

- **Production capacity** – production base and supply chain governance; labour skills base; applied R & D
- **Load-bearing capacity** – food's impact on environment: land & natural resources - biodiversity, soil, water, emissions.
- **Social capacity** – stress here the importance of consumption capacity (diet related public health) & social and cultural dimensions.

Need approaches to policy that will:

- Think through complexities and confusions
- Build ecology and sustainable development into all food supply chain sectors
- ‘Speak’ to all sectors of the food system
- Reconnect consumers with issues with which they are currently out of touch or de-emphasising
- Address failures: markets, state and consumer culture
- Re-inject multilevel coherence across the food system: supply chain, state, society

**Re-think governance of food
supply accordingly**

**Some tentative policy
pathways**

1. Government role

- Leadership: carrots not sticks
- Define what a sustainable food system is (SDC)
- Take to EU agenda in 2013 CAP reform run up
- Starting points:
 - Land policy: food not biofuels
 - Energy: reduce use / retrofit
 - Skills: SD training across food supply chain
 - R & D for sector and grower/farmer need
 - Re-orient the market on sustainability grounds
 - “Carry the people with us” not “hide behind Tesco”

2. Cheap food or sustainable?

- Tackling consumer assumptions
 - Price
 - Availability
 - Seasonality
- What would values-for-money look like?
- A big political decision cuts across conventional party lines

3. Public engagement

- City review for Chatham House 2006: no publicly available studies on attitudes to Food Security
- Defra 5 studies on consumer SD behaviour change:
 - Food sustainability consciousness low
 - Behaviour change shaped by cost + individual benefits
 - “If it was serious, the Gov’t would be doing something about it” → need for visible action by Gov’t + business
 - Buying better products is more acceptable than changing lifestyles – consumers ‘locked in’ by children + food tastes

4. Supply chain capacity

- If 95% food is oil-dependent, what would a post or 'less oil' food economy look like?
- Which sectors need to change most?
- Cost: prices need to rise but how much would they? SDC \$100 Barrel (oil) report said + 5 - 10% (match ONS + 8% food price inc. 2007)
- Supply chain relationships (economic sustainability)
- Skills on farm and garden – labour resource

5. International politics

- Will need further international co-operation & responses:
 - Doha on or off? New ground rules for trade?
 - CAP reform post 2013
 - Replacement for Kyoto with teeth?
 - Mediating natural resource conflicts (international/regional)
 - “Lead State(s)” advocacy in international arenas

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