

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

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Food 2030 a UK vision for a secure sustainable food supply

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Report Highlights:

The UK government has launched a vision for a secure and sustainable food system of the future called *Food 2030*. For the most part *Food 2030* is domestic in focus. However, it is clear that the UK government is also seeking to demonstrate global leadership in response to food security and climate change concerns. *Food 2030* makes the consumer central to achieving its aspirations and calls on “people power” to bring about a revolution in the way food is produced and sold. It contains a strong call to increase food production in the UK (so long as it is healthy food, sustainably produced), and bolder than previous statements in support of contentious issues such as nanotechnology, agricultural biotechnology, and consumer product labeling.

General Information: Background

Concerned about the food commodity price spikes in 2007/2008, Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Cabinet Office Strategy Unit took a long hard look at the UK food system. The analysis considered UK government policies on food security, energy, climate change, environment, economy, technology, technology, human and animal health, and culminated in the release of a report called *Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century* (See GAIN Report UK8014, August 2008, available at: [FAS/USDA Attache Reports](#)). *Food Matters* made a series of recommendations aimed at achieving better integration of food policy across government. The [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#) was charged with formulating a new stakeholder-inclusive vision and strategy for the UK food system of the future. At the Oxford Farming Conference in January 2010, Secretary of State Hilary Benn unveiled the UK vision and strategy in the shape of *Food 2030*.

***Food 2030* – Overview and Impact**

In launching *Food 2030* the UK government has outlined an ambitious vision for a secure and sustainable food system of the future. For the most part *Food 2030* is about the UK's aspirations for a safe, secure, affordable, nutritious, and sustainable food supply to feed its own people. However, it is clear that the UK government is also seeking to demonstrate global leadership in response to food security and climate change concerns. *Food 2030* makes the consumer central to achieving its aspirations and calls on “people power” to bring about a revolution in the way food is produced and sold.

Much of what is presented in *Food 2030* is not new, but the weaving together of existing policy strands on food, farming, health and environment. The main points of note include a strong call to increase food production in the UK (so long as it is healthy food, sustainably produced), and bolder than previous statements in support of contentious issues such as nanotechnology, agricultural biotechnology, and consumer product labeling.

In addition, *Food 2030* endorses “choice editing” of products (listing products on merits other than price) by retailers and other food businesses to assist the consumer in having greater access to products that have been produced sustainably, and paves the way for environmental labeling in some form in the future.

Some critics say that *Food 2030* lacks ‘bite’ as there is no new government intervention included - most of the initiatives proposed are voluntary. However, it has been welcomed with caution by food and farming industries who see it as a useful blueprint for the future but warn that much work will need to be done to flesh out the details needed for its implementation.

Food 2030 has been released just as UK political parties embark on their campaigns for a national election widely predicted to be held in May/June 2010. Some observers have noted the softness of its tone, and question the likelihood of the strategy's success in achieving a revolution in UK food supply without government intervention and additional funding. For example, it is notable that *Food 2030*

does not address the concentration within the food supply chain and balance of power in the hands of large supermarket chains. However, in a separate development the UK government has announced that there will be an enforcement body set up to monitor compliance with the recently developed [Groceries Supply Code of Practice](#) that seeks to protect grocery suppliers from excessive risk exposure and unexpected costs being passed down to them from supermarket chains.

Industry and consumer market observers have given *Food 2030* something of a muted response. They feel that, although ambitious in vision, *Food 2030* contains little new policy. The soft tone of the document's action plan has resulted in some commentators pointing to inertia ahead of a looming national election.

Comment

In general, *Food 2030* is considered to be ambitious in its vision, but short in detail about how to achieve that vision. Its strategy very much relies on all stakeholders working together to deliver its aim of a secure and sustainable food supply, and on consumer demand rewarding that investment. That has been the UK government's favored approach to food policy of late, and is unlikely to change as competition for ever smaller public funds increases across government departments.

It is also unrealistic to expect major programs or potentially contentious policy changes to be announced less than six months before a national election. But, what *Food 2030* does do is neatly summarize the UK's thinking on the many inter-related aspects affecting food supply.

For interested parties, some the main points of note from *Food 2030* are given on the following pages, and the full document can be found at: [Defra Food 2030 Strategy](#).

***Food 2030* - Vision**

Food 2030 is the UK's first fully integrated food and farming policy since the end of the Second World War. It makes the consumer central to delivering its objectives and calls for other stakeholders (food, farming and fishing industries, retailers, foodservice operators, research bodies, non-governmental organizations) to work together towards achieving this vision:

UK Vision for a Sustainable and Secure Food System for 2030

Consumers are informed, can choose and afford healthy, sustainable food. This demand is met by profitable, competitive, highly skilled and resilient farming, fishing and food businesses, supported by first class research and development.

Food is produced, processed, and distributed, to feed a growing global population in ways which:

- use global natural resources sustainably,
- enable the continuing provision of the benefits and services a healthy natural environment provides,
- promote high standards of animal health and welfare,

- protect food safety,
- make a significant contribution to rural communities, and
- allow the UK to show global leadership on food sustainability.

Food security is ensured through strong UK agriculture and food sectors and international trade links with EU and global partners, which support developing economies.

The UK has a low carbon food system which is efficient with resources – any waste is re-used, recycled or used for energy production.

(Page 7, Food 2030)

Food 2030 – Strategy

The strategy outlined in *Food 2030* is structured around six core issues for the food system: trade, food production, health, climate change, energy, and investment in skills and technology. See the full document at: [Defra *Food 2030 Strategy*](#). Below is some selected policy statements from *Food 2030* organized under each of the six issues identified above:

TRADE: have a resilient and economically sustainable food system

While working to tackle sustainability challenges for key agricultural products such as biofuels and palm oil, the UK will continue to press for improved market access through trade liberalisation, for trade distorting domestic support to be significantly reduced globally, and for the elimination of all export subsidies by 2013. *(Page 22, Food 2030)*

In the EU, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) keeps food prices higher than they should be, as the CAP results in higher prices for farmers. In the UK, this meant that consumers paid an extra £3.2 billion (\$5 billion), or £52 (\$83) each for food in 2007. The associated market price support and high import tariffs impact on poorer households disproportionately. *(Page 13, Food 2030)*

The UK is working for reform of the CAP so that farmers are subsidized only for producing societal benefits (particularly environmental outcomes) which the market cannot otherwise provide. *(Page 35, Food 2030)*

Complete the Doha Development Agenda, secure greater tariff liberalization for agricultural commodities and the remove distorting and harmful subsidies. *(Page 29, Food 2030)*

PRODUCTION: increase food production sustainably

Domestically, we want a profitable, thriving, competitive UK food sector to continue to play its part in keeping us food secure. UK farming should produce as much food as possible, as long as it is responsive to demand, and recognizes the need to protect and enhance natural resources. Our ability to take advantage of global growth in demand will depend primarily on the competitiveness of UK agricultural production, as well as the nature of the demand. So we need to create the conditions for competitive, sustainable, domestic production to thrive. *(Page 37, Food 2030)*

Encourage development and dissemination of sustainable production methods to increase agricultural output without undermining the natural resource base and avoiding large-scale land use changes. This

should incorporate efforts to improve nutrient and water use efficiency, and sustainable land management techniques. (Page 40, *Food 2030*)

HEALTH: encourage and enable people to eat a healthy, sustainable diet

The health benefits accrued of meeting nutritional guidelines are estimated to reach almost £20 billion (\$32 billion) a year, and are estimated to prevent 70,000 premature deaths a year. (Page 11, *Food 2030*)

People take responsibility for their health through the food they choose to eat, understand the impacts their diets can have on their health and the environment, buy what they need and do not waste food. (Page 15, *Food 2030*)

Consumers should eat food that is in season, and buy food that is certified as sustainable. (Page 14, *Food 2030*)

Households need access to affordable, nutritious food to give them food security. The [UK's Food Security Assessment](#) shows that physical access to food is not itself a significant problem, nor a significant negative factor in diets. There are however a number of other barriers to accessing healthy food including lack of income, education and skills, which affect low income and other vulnerable groups more acutely. (Page 13, *Food 2030*)

CLIMATE CHANGE: reduce the food system's greenhouse gas emissions

For our food system to be sustainable, all parts of it need to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. For example, retailers could choose to stock lower carbon products and so would encourage their suppliers to make lower carbon products. (Page 44, *Food 2030*)

Onsite investment in renewables or low carbon generation can deliver additional carbon savings. Technologies such as Combined Heat and Power and anaerobic digestion are well suited to those of the part of the food sector where energy needs are intensive and constant. (Page 44, *Food 2030*)

Consumers can help develop a lower-carbon food system by creating demand for food with a smaller environmental footprint. (Page 47, *Food 2030*)

There are some groups that advocate a diet with less meat as a way for consumers to reduce the environmental footprint of their diet. But the evidence to inform appropriate consumer choices and policy responses is currently unclear. (Page 48, *Food 2030*)

Further research is needed to quantify properly the life-cycle emissions of different livestock production systems. Government is challenging assumptions about home-grown alternatives to soya for animal feed in order to progress this debate. (Page 48, *Food 2030*)

Ways of measuring the footprint of food products tend to focus on single issues, such as carbon or water. Presenting the full picture is a much greater challenge, but would help consumers cut through confusing and often conflicting information on diets, and would help the food supply chain to develop

sustainable choices for consumers. (Page 14, *Food 2030*)

ENERGY: reduce, re-use and re-process waste

Ensure that biofuel (and wider bioenergy) production does not compromise food security goals. Develop and implement sustainability criteria for biofuels/bioenergy at global and EU level, that address both direct and indirect impacts; ensure biofuel/bioenergy mandates are sufficiently flexible to enable adjustment between fuel, food and feed sectors; undertake further research, including through the [Foresight food project](#), informed by FAO and other international work; address food security in Commission-led review of EU biofuel/bioliquid provisions by 2014 and Commission proposals on biomass sustainability. (Page 41, *Food 2030*)

The UK government is committed to maximizing the potential use of anaerobic digestion to reduce emissions and produce renewable energy. (Page 46, *Food 2030*)

TECHNOLOGY/SKILLS: have the appropriate research, skills, knowledge and technology

Agricultural biotechnology, like nanotechnology, is not a technological panacea for meeting the varied and complex challenges of food security, but could have some potential to help meet future challenges. Safety must remain our top priority and the Government will continue to be led by science when assessing the safety of biotechnology. (Page 61, *Food 2030*)

People are well informed, and can participate in debate about the risks and opportunities posed by the use of new technologies in the sector. (Page 63, *Food 2030*)

There will be a new research program on food security, coordinated by the [Biotechnology and Biological Sciences & Research Council \(BBSRC\)](#) together with other Research Councils and Government Departments, and involving close engagement with industry and other stakeholders. (Page 65, *Food 2030*)

A new [Sustainable Agriculture and Food Innovation Platform](#) led by the [Technology Strategy Board](#), co-funded by Defra and BBSRC with £90m (\$140 million) over 5 years, to fund innovative technological research and development in areas such as crop productivity, sustainable livestock production, waste reduction and management, and greenhouse gas reduction. (Page 65, *Food 2030*)

A doubling of research investment in agriculture by the Department for International Development (DFID) over the next five years to provide farmers in developing countries with access to technologies and to help their national governments with more effective agricultural policies. (Page 65, *Food 2030*)

Appendix – Related Work

Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century (July 2008)

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/food_policy.aspx

Food Matters – One Year On (August 2009)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/pdf/food-matters-oneyearon090806.pdf>

GM Crops and Foods: Follow-up to the Food Matters Report by Defra and the FSA (August 2009)

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodmattergmreport.pdf>

Food Security Assessment (August 2009)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/security/index.htm>

Sustainability Indicators (October 2009)

www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/index.htm

UK Cross-Government Food Research & Innovation Strategy (January 2010)

<http://www.dius.gov.uk/~media/publications/GO-Science/UK-Cross-Government-Food-Research-Strategy>