



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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Archbishop living in cloud cuckoo land - FPC calls for reality check

Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams is living in cloud cuckoo land if he thinks we can make the UK self sufficient in food production and still allow consumers to enjoy the wide variety of fruit and vegetables they want. His call to mobilise Britain's gardeners and transform our gardens and parks into vegetable plots to feed the nation is ridiculous.

Around 60% of fruit and vegetables are imported into the UK, providing us with produce outside the UK season as well as varieties which simply cannot be grown in the UK. Research shows that some imported fruit and vegetables are grown in less greenhouse gas intensive ways than the same products in the UK, with savings from greater efficiency outweighing the potential negative impacts of additional transport. There's no need to restrict choice by excluding imported produce on the basis of its carbon footprint. We can enjoy a wide variety of fresh produce all year round, irrespective of its origin. The consumption of fruit and vegetables accounts for only 2.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions in total.

With rising levels of obesity and the UK consumer eating on average only 2.5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day we should not be doing anything that limits choice.

Agricultural growth is essential to economic growth in Africa; imports to the UK from Kenya alone are worth £100 million, with trade providing direct employment for 135,000 people. There is no evidence that fewer aircraft would fly if less imported fruit and vegetables were

eaten, as at least 60% of air freighted fresh produce is brought to the UK in the bellyhold of passenger aircraft. Total air freighted imports of fruit and vegetables account for 0.2% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions.

We do need to look at ways of tackling climate change, but the concept of 'food miles' is confusing and generates a false sense of eco-security. Instead let's look at the carbon footprint of the whole product supply chain and provide consumers with meaningful advice on which to make informed decisions.

As TV presenter Janet Street-Porter recently admitted, it's a lot harder to grow your own:

"We think it's green to eat seasonal, locally-sourced food, but if you live in the UK, how many months of the year are you willing to exist on a diet of potatoes and cabbage? I naively thought that buying imported food was sinful because of the transport involved. But every food has a carbon footprint."

"Once you succumb to growing vegetables, accept that it's completely addictive – and will entail hours of toil (no matter what Monty and his mates say) and plenty of heartbreak."

"Let's lay a couple of myths to rest: it's no bloody cheaper to grow your own, despite what the experts tell you and it completely does your head in."

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Notes for editors:

1. The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) is the UK's fresh produce trade association and is based in Peterborough. The FPC has represented the fresh produce sector for many years and is recognised across the UK and EU as the voice of the industry.
2. Extensive membership covers the complete spectrum of industry businesses including growers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors, processors, packers, food service companies and other allied organisations.
3. Eat in Colour campaign www.eatincolour.com
4. Extracts from '*Don't Let the B*****s Get You Down*', published by Quadrille at £12.99

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