



# FPC PRESS RELEASE

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## **FRESH PRODUCE INDUSTRY WELCOMES FOOD POLICY COUNCIL'S SUPPORT FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE STRATEGY**

The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) supports the Council of Food Policy Advisors' call for a strategy for fresh produce, one of the key priorities proposed by the Council in its first report. The strategy will increase consumption of fruit and vegetables and identify realistic and sustainable opportunities for increasing domestic production of fresh produce.

"The Council clearly recognises the significant challenges we face in UK food supply and FPC believes that all sectors of the fresh produce industry must play a leading role in developing a sustainable food policy for the UK," commented Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of FPC.

"We are keen to be involved in the Government's fruit and vegetable task force and to help drive forward this important agenda."

FPC provided evidence earlier in the year to the Council of Food Policy Advisors and also took part in the Round Table discussion led by Hilary Benn on ways to increase production and consumption of fruit and vegetables.

The Council of Food Policy Advisors is calling for clear priorities and immediate action to: define the low impact (sustainable) healthy diet; exemplify best practice in health and sustainability through public food procurement; and provide a strategy for increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables, as well as increasing domestic production.

“We believe that government departments can make a far greater impact to combat poor diets and rising obesity levels simply by having a cohesive policy for public sector food procurement which encourages greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, regardless of their origin,” commented Nigel Jenney. “We have taken the Minister for Health to task regarding the current hospital procurement strategy over its lack of consistency with Defra’s definition of ‘locally in season’. This report suggests a model for ‘regional procurement hubs’ which we believe already exist in the excellent network of local regional and national wholesale food service businesses. We hope that the Minister will take on board a more sensible position with the introduction of the Healthier Food Mark.”

FPC has been lobbying for the expansion of the successful Schools Fruit and Veg Scheme and welcomes the Council’s push for greater emphasis on establishing healthy eating habits among young children through schools.

The report identifies the need for the Government to coordinate evidence to help consumers make sound ethical choices on sustainable healthy food. It also recognises the need to provide greater assistance to certain consumer groups to encourage greater consumption of fresh produce. Those consumers who are interested in the provenance of their food will welcome greater coordination of information by the Government but it is essential that information is easily comprehensible and that it is cost effective and not unduly bureaucratic for the industry to provide.

“The industry’s Eat In Colour campaign has made great strides to increase enjoyment of fresh produce and to encourage greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet. FPC looks forward to a greater focus on key consumer groups by the Department of Health through its 5-a-day action plan,” said Nigel Jenney. “We acknowledge that the Department of Health has achieved significant consumer awareness of 5-a-day but this has not translated into widespread adoption of a healthy diet and greater consumption of fresh produce.”

The report recognises the importance of allowing UK consumers to enjoy a wide variety of fresh produce throughout the year, advocating the need for both domestic production and imports in order to increase consumption. Around 60 per cent of fruit and vegetables are imported to the UK, providing consumers with produce outside the UK season as well as varieties which cannot be grown in the UK due to our climate.

“UK growers have a significant opportunity to increase the sustainable production of indigenous crops which are suited to our climate. We believe that Defra should identify those indigenous crops with greater production potential than is achieved currently and ensure that the sector has the necessary tools to maximise this potential,” commented Nigel Jenney. “We welcome the balanced approach in this report towards the need for imports and the recognition of our responsibility to support developing countries within a global market.”

“The fresh produce industry is putting in place measures to achieve food production in a low-carbon world, calculating greenhouse gas emissions, reducing excess packaging and increasing re-use and recycling, as well as reducing food waste and recovering energy,” added Nigel Jenney. “We believe that there should be the opportunity for adequate returns for all elements of the supply chain which are working efficiently, not just primary producers, as stated in the report. In addition, government investment is essential to ensure that the fresh produce industry is equipped with the necessary resources and skills to meet the challenges of delivering food security.”

The report does not compare the impacts of different elements of the food chain, such as meat production. The consumption of fruit and vegetables accounts for just 2.5 per cent of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions in total. Meat and dairy production is responsible for 8 per cent of total UK greenhouse gas emissions, more than three times that of fruit and vegetables.

“We are delighted that the Council acknowledges the importance of the fresh produce sector, however it is important that it keeps in perspective the relatively low carbon footprint of this sector in comparison with others and recognises the complexities of the whole food supply chain,” added Nigel Jenney.

“The Council highlights future priorities for sustainable food production where there are further tough challenges ahead, and we look forward to working further with the Council and Government departments to help develop sound policies to deliver a globally sourced sustainable food supply,” said Nigel Jenney.

**Ends**

**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](http://www.eatincolour.com)
4. Defra's definition of 'locally in season' is: 'Food that is outdoor grown or produced during the natural growing/production period for the country or region where it is produced. It need not necessarily be consumed locally to where it is grown. This applies to seasonal food produced both in the UK and overseas'.
5. The Council of Food Policy Advisors' report is available from:  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodrin/policy/council/reports.htm>

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