



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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UK NEEDS TO ACT GLOBALLY TO SECURE FOOD SECURITY SUSTAINABLY

FPC welcomes the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's report into sustainable food security ('Securing food supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK'), stating that the fresh produce industry will continue to provide a sustainable supply of fresh produce and play a leading role in securing food supplies in the UK.

The Committee recognises that long-term security, sustainable food production and consumption must be delivered in a global context. The report states: 'The UK should not aim to be self-sufficient, even in indigenous food stuffs. Total self-sufficiency would make the UK's food supplies less secure rather than more secure.'

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.

At the same time the report identifies the need for Defra to understand more fully 'the reasons for relatively low level of domestic fruit and vegetable production'. FPC has provided evidence to the Government's Council of Food Policy Advisors which is tasked to look at some of the barriers facing production in the UK.

"There is a significant opportunity for UK growers to increase the sustainable production of indigenous crops which are suited to our climate. We believe that Defra should help provide a focus for the industry to evaluate the potential for increasing these crops and ensure that

the sector has the necessary tools to maximise this potential,” commented Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium.

The Committee highlights the need to encourage greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet, recognising FPC’s evidence regarding the potential for further expansion to meet consumption targets of 5-a-day. If the entire UK population were to eat the recommended 5-a-day actual consumption would be in the region of 8.8 million tonnes a year, compared with 7.9 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables marketed in the UK in 2007, without taking into account the projected increase in population, more effective use of products throughout the supply chain and minimising waste in the home.

The report also states the importance of a fair return for growers and a profitable agricultural system, calling on Defra to ensure that there are strong relationships in the food chain which secure food supplies over the long term.

“There are some tough challenges ahead which have been recognised in this report and we recognise the Committee’s call for a more robust supply chain to meet these challenges. With rising obesity levels across Europe it is essential that we encourage more people to eat fresh fruit and vegetables and that the industry can continue to provide a sustainable affordable supply of fresh produce,” said Nigel Jenney.

The report identifies the need for sustainable food production, recognising that ‘producing sufficient food is only part of the challenge’. 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.

The Committee is calling for more funding to be spent on research, and FPC has made a case recently to the BBSRC for more focus to be given to UK horticulture. Government investment is essential to ensure that the fresh produce industry is equipped with the necessary resources to meet the challenges of delivering food security in 2050.

The report recognises the importance of engaging consumers’ interest in food production and calls for Defra ‘to educate children about food’. FPC recently took the UK Government

to task for not securing available EU funding to expand its successful Schools Fruit and Veg Scheme.

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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. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's report 'Securing food supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK' can be found at:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmenvfru/213/21302.htm>

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