



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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NEW DRIVE NEEDED FOR UK SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Increased consumption of fruit and vegetables and sustainable opportunities for increasing domestic production of fresh produce are essential to re-energise the UK Government's policy for sustainable food, says the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC). FPC welcomes the report by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) which is calling for the UK Government to drive forward a sustainable development policy, as set out in 'Food 2030'.

"This report recognises the importance of the horticultural sector in delivering sustainable development," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of FPC.

The SDC recognises the importance of the Government's own responsibilities to drive forward a national policy and to have a more imaginative approach to European policy making.

"The fresh produce industry has called on the UK Government to deliver on its commitment to reduce unnecessary burdens on the food industry. There is a pressing need for the UK Government to tackle the cumulative impact of regulation, to influence policy makers in the EU and to have early engagement with the food industry," commented Nigel Jenney.

Around 60 per cent of fruit and vegetables are imported to the UK, mainly from within the EU, 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. FPC believes 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.

“We want to see public sector procurement, another area covered in this report, combat poor diets and rising obesity levels by having a cohesive policy for public sector food procurement which encourages greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, regardless of their origin, and in line with Defra’s own definition of ‘locally in season’ which includes imported produce,” added Nigel Jenney.

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’.

The SDC comments on the limitations of ‘food miles’ as an indicator for sustainability, yet it talks about the importance of ‘local and regional’ in a national strategy and the development of new local food partnerships.

“We encourage both central and local government to recognise that many wholesale markets provide an excellent model and are well placed to deliver the objectives of a local food hub,” commented Nigel Jenney.

The Government needs to help consumers make sound ethical choices on sustainable healthy food and to encourage greater consumption of fresh produce. The industry’s Eat In Colour campaign has made great strides to increase consumers’ enjoyment of fresh produce as part of a healthy diet. Whilst the Department of Health has achieved significant consumer awareness of 5-a-day this has not translated into widespread adoption of a healthy diet and greater consumption of fresh produce, and FPC wants to see a greater focus on key consumer groups in the 5-a-day action plan.

FPC believes that there should be the opportunity for adequate returns for all elements of the supply chain which are working efficiently. The SDC’s proposal that Defra publish a breakdown of where the consumer’s ‘food pound’ goes within the food chain also merits further discussion.

The SDC report stresses the importance of addressing the impacts of meat and dairy production and consumptions but claims that such policies 'are contentious and remain a key challenge'.

The fresh produce sector has a relatively low carbon footprint in comparison with other food sectors. 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.

FPC was involved in a research project commissioned by WRAP which is developing detailed 'resource maps', quantifying food waste and packaging waste, through the fresh produce retail and wholesale supply chain. The project was led by Cranfield University, working with food and grocery supply chain expert IGD and FPC, representing the fresh produce industry.

"We look forward to working further with the UK Government to take up the SDC's recommendations. As a society we cannot afford to delay progress in the face of increasing challenges for sustainable food production," said Nigel Jenney.

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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. For more information on the Eat In Colour campaign visit www.eatincolour.com
4. Sustainable Development Commission 'Looking Back, Looking Forward – Sustainability and UK Food Policy 2000-2011': <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/presslist.php/118/coalition-government-must-step-up-to-the-plate-on-sustainable-food>

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