Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(1) what assessment she has made of the implications for food security in 2050 of each extreme of the population range projection made by the Office for National Statistics for that year;

(2) what assessment she has made of food security in 2050 at the upper and lower limits of the population range currently projected by the Office for National Statistics.

James Paice (Minister of State (Agriculture and Food), Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; South East Cambridgeshire, Conservative)

The Office for National Statistics produce population projections for the UK based on a set of demographic assumptions. Their principal projection for the UK in 2050 is 78.4 million. Population projections become increasingly uncertain the further they are carried forward and the long-term figures should be treated with great caution.

Our food security depends on access to the world market; and our domestic food industry needs to be able to compete on the world stage. In a world where climate instability can disrupt patterns of production, food security cannot be delivered from a narrow, self-interested, national protectionist stance, or by recommending self-sufficiency.

Earlier this year the Government's Chief Scientist, Sir John Beddington, published a Foresight report into the Future of Food and Farming which looked at the challenges today and in the future. It explored how we can feed a global population of 9 billion by 2050 healthily and sustainably and identified hunger and environmental degradation as the key problems we face. The Foresight world population figures are derived from United Nations projections.

As an immediate response to the report, DEFRA have signed up to a Foresight Action Plan which will include:

- championing an integrated approach to food security;
- pressing for integration of agricultural GHGs into UNFCCC process;
- taking forward Nagoya work on international biodiversity;
- promoting the importance of sustainable intensification;
- pressing for trade liberalisation and CAP/CFP reform;
showcasing what can be achieved on food waste reduction within the UK and share best practice; and increasing the productivity and competitiveness of UK food and farming and ensure that agriculture and the food sector can contribute fully to the green economy.

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