

Lets grow more food

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to encourage more domestic food growth to help reduce the level of importation of food and the consequent impact on the environment. (83505)

Tabled on: 09 November 2022

Answer:**Mark Spencer:**

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain. We produce 61% of all the food we need, 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year, and these figures have changed little over the last 20 years.

The Government Food Strategy, which was published in June of this year, sets out what we will do to create a more prosperous agri-food sector that delivers healthier, more sustainable and affordable food. The Food Strategy includes a commitment to broadly maintain the level of food that we produce domestically and boost production in sectors where there are the biggest opportunities. As part of this commitment, we are providing support to farmers to help improve productivity. This includes investing over £270 million in innovation by 2029 to support agricultural productivity. In addition, the £48m Farming Innovation Fund is supporting more than 43,000 farmers by providing grants which will also improve productivity.

Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. Recognising the global impact of food production, at COP26 the UK COP Presidency launched the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use. This declaration included the Policy Action Agenda for the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture which raised visibility of and mobilised action for transformation in agriculture, land use and food systems. Action in these areas is essential to ensuring sustainable food production for a growing population, whilst building resilience for farmers and a just transition to reduce emissions and reverse harmful impacts on biodiversity.

The answer was submitted on 21 Nov 2022 at 17:07.

Comment. This is too little and lacks the energy and determination needed to drive up our home market share to nearer the levels we enjoyed prior to joining the CAP in the 1970s. I will press harder to get the grant money spent on food production, not wilding.

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to incentivise people to increase fruit and vegetable growing capacity by (a) using modern techniques to extend growing seasons and

(b) regulating water and fertiliser use. (83506)

Tabled on: 09 November 2022

Answer:

Mark Spencer:

The Government recognises the important role of high-tech growing technologies in ensuring a reliable and sustainable supply of fresh produce for much of the year. Innovation, such as the development of new plant varieties and growing systems, have already allowed growers to extend the growing seasons of a variety of crops, for example strawberries.

Our plan to support the horticulture sector was outlined in the Government Food Strategy, launched on 13th June this year. The strategy will aim to increase domestic production through the adoption of a range of growing models, such as controlled environment horticulture systems. A controlled environment can offer environmental benefits, including efficient water use and a reduction in the use of agrochemicals.

In November last year, Defra launched round one of the Farming Investment Fund, committing over £98 million worth of funding for farmers and growers to invest in farm equipment, as well as technology and infrastructure to improve productivity, growth and resilience. As part of the fund there are numerous strands which would benefit fruit and vegetable growers specifically, including a £25 million 'Improving Farm Productivity' theme and a £30 million 'Adding Value' theme. Both of which provide grant support for higher value, more complex project investments which deliver transformative improvements to farmer's and grower's businesses.

Having sufficient water is of vital importance for ensuring optimal yield, growth and quality of our crops. As part of the Farming Investment Fund, Defra launched the £10 million Water Management grant scheme which provides grant funding support for the construction of on-farm reservoirs and the adoption of best practice irrigation application equipment to help ensure farmers have access to water when they need it most. This will build on-farm water resilience, so helping to ensure farmers will have access to the water they need to produce adequate fruit and vegetable yields.

We are also looking at a potential future offer for the Producer Organisation Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme. We are currently exploring the best way to support the sector once the Scheme ends in 2025.

The answer was submitted on 21 Nov 2022 at 17:03.

Comment This is more helpful but the small sums suggest it lacks ambition over scale