



House of Commons
International Development
Committee

**The World Food
Programme and Global
Food Security:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Tenth Report of
Session 2007–08**

**Eighth Special Report of Session
2007–08**

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International Development Committee

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Eighth Special Report

On 23 July 2008 the International Development Committee published its Tenth Report of Session 2007–08, *The World Food Programme and Global Food Security*, HC 593-I. On 6 October 2008 we received the Government’s response to the Report. It is reproduced as an Appendix to this Special Report.

In the Government Response, the Committee’s conclusions and recommendations are in bold text. The Government’s response is in plain text.

Appendix: Government response

The International Development Committee’s focus on global food security is timely, and the Government welcomes the report. We are pleased that the Committee gives the World Food Programme the credit it is due in providing the frontline response to hunger in some of the most challenging and dangerous environments: Burma, Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe. We are also pleased that the Committee recognises the leading role played by the UK in drawing attention to the growing crisis earlier in the year, and for our work in seeking to establish a global partnership for agriculture and food.

We are continuing to work closely with the UN, World Bank, other donors and developing countries to develop our plans over the coming months. Our immediate aim is to ensure the international community meets the urgent short-term needs of those who are most vulnerable to higher food prices. But ultimately we want to see a substantial increase in the amount of investment going to the agriculture sector in developing countries over the next few years, thereby raising productivity levels, stimulating economic growth, increasing food security, and reducing hunger and improving nutrition in line with the targets set under the first of the Millennium Development Goals.

Social protection

[Paragraph 25] We are gravely concerned that millions of people are being pushed into acute hunger by rising food prices. We recognise that it is the poorest of the poor, those living on a dollar a day or less, who are being hit the hardest. We welcome the WFP’s broadening of its activities from food aid alone to food assistance, and its associated increasing use of cash and food transfer schemes. These social protection schemes offer a flexible and effective approach to building up vulnerable communities’ resilience to food insecurity over time. We encourage DFID and the WFP to continue to evaluate the different elements within social protection packages—the right balance of cash and food and the best techniques for targeting transfers—to ensure that an optimal package can be provided. We commend DFID’s decision to increase its funding for the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia to £30 million per year. We encourage both DFID and the WFP to explore options for replicating lessons from the Ethiopian scheme elsewhere.

We welcome the Committee’s recognition that more food aid should not be the only response to higher food prices. Where they exist, scaling up social protection mechanisms

(such as cash transfers, food for work, or voucher systems) can provide a quick response to reducing household vulnerability in the face of short to medium term food price rises. DFID fully supports WFP in its move towards food assistance and away from a sole reliance on food transfers, and will continue to work with them and other partners to determine the optimal balance between different elements of social protection, appropriate to each country context, wherever possible using examples of best practice from developing countries. DFID has a social protection team within its expanded Food Group to lead this work. We support WFP's move to purchase food locally, providing care is taken not to distort markets. However more country-by-country analysis is required on the short term implications, as well as the sustainability of longer term responses.

In-kind food donations

[Paragraph 27] The rapid rise in commodity prices has put huge strain on the purchasing power of both food agencies such as the WFP and poor people globally. We believe that it would be of deep concern if the USA were to follow up on suggestions that it might reduce the amount of aid it provides to the WFP because of rising prices and costs. We also believe that the USA should review its practice of giving nearly all its support 'in-kind' as food, given that cash donations are of much more value to the WFP than food donations in developing the flexible "toolbox" that it now requires.

US contributions to WFP appear to be holding up in cash terms, \$1.2 billion having been committed so far this year, and it remains by some margin the largest contributor. But all donors should bear in mind that WFP's costs have increased substantially because of higher food and fuel prices, and adjust their contributions accordingly: the UK has doubled its funding over the past year, our contribution for 2008 standing at around £65 million. We are a leading donor to the UN's pooled funding mechanism for humanitarian emergencies (the "CERF"), and country based pooled funds such as the Common Humanitarian Funds for Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

WFP is not the only institution for delivering food assistance to vulnerable populations. Many NGOs, UNICEF and the International Committee for the Red Cross are capable of delivering food assistance and nutrition programmes with direct funding, albeit in smaller volumes.

The US Administration is sympathetic to the idea of local purchase of food aid, rather than shipping US agricultural surpluses to developing countries, recognising the benefits of speed of response, cost effectiveness, and the stimulation of local production and markets. From a practical point of view, farm surpluses in the US have lessened over the last few years, in part due to increased domestic demand for biofuel feedstock. This year, Washington has approved a \$60 million pilot programme for local purchase of food. We will encourage the US to expand this pilot, and provide more humanitarian assistance in the form of cash, rather than in kind.

The WFP as a humanitarian actor

[Paragraph 32] The WFP deserves credit for its role at the centre of the UN's response to humanitarian emergencies, including its leadership of the global food aid sector and the logistics cluster. We acknowledge the difficult and often dangerous job that WFP employees do in difficult environments, especially conflict-prone and conflict affected states. Priority must be given to ensuring coherence with other UN agencies in line with the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda. The WFP should continue to support the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its role in overseeing the co-ordination of emergency responses.

DFID believes that WFP's comparative advantage within the international system lies in its humanitarian work. It has a track-record of successful delivery in emergency, fragile and transition situations, and we recognize and value the bravery and commitment of WFP staff. They have provided a frontline response to hunger in some of the most challenging and dangerous environments: Burma, Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe. As the Committee notes, priority must be given to ensuring a fully collaborative approach with other UN agencies, the Red Cross/Crescent and NGOs, under coordination from the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and through the cluster system. We acknowledge WFP's successful implementation and leadership role within the logistics and global food aid clusters in a number of crises.

[Paragraph 35] We believe the WFP deserves credit for its ongoing lifesaving work in Darfur and southern Sudan. We were particularly pleased to hear that conditions are improving sufficiently in southern Sudan to allow key WFP programmes such as road-building and school feeding to be handed over to the government. We welcome DFID's funding of the Sudan Recovery Fund and the contribution this will make to the transition process. We believe DFID's increased contributions to pooled international emergency funds such as the Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are an effective way of helping ensure a coherent UN approach in crisis situations such as Darfur.

WFP is a key player in Sudan. In the South they have, with full support of GoS (Government of Sudan) and donors including DFID, overseen the construction of over 2,300 km of rural access roads which has aided the delivery of humanitarian goods and stimulated longer term recovery and development. In Darfur, their operations provide 40,000 tonnes of food a month to the two million displaced and others in need of food assistance. We share the Committee's assessment that DFID's contributions to the pooled funds are an effective way of encouraging a coherent UN approach in long-term humanitarian situations, and we will continue to lobby other donors to join with us in channeling their assistance in this way.

[Paragraph 38] We are deeply concerned about the hunger crisis in Zimbabwe. The ban on food aid imposed by Robert Mugabe's government in June 2008 will halt or hamper delivery of vital WFP supplies to millions of people. The disastrous state of Zimbabwe's economy and agricultural sector is likely to leave innocent citizens without any source of food and condemn many to starvation. We urge the UK Government to continue to press for the food aid ban to be revoked as soon as possible so that the Zimbabwean people can receive the humanitarian assistance they so desperately need.

The lifting of the ban on humanitarian NGOs was announced by the Mugabe regime on 29 August, following intense lobbying by the diplomatic community (including the UK) and the UN. WFP will now be able to relaunch its feeding programme for vulnerable people, delivered through NGOs, which aims to assist up to 5 million people in rural areas who will be facing food shortages over the next seven months. We will be monitoring the resumption of this and other humanitarian operations carefully, and will do what we can to ensure that no further constraints are imposed, and that the Zimbabwe government remains compliant with international humanitarian laws and standards.

Hunger, malnutrition and the MDGs

[Paragraph 51] We believe that DFID does not give nutrition the attention or resources it deserves. Malnutrition kills up to 2.5 million children a year—around five times more than the number of children dying from HIV/AIDS. The effects of malnutrition in children under two years old endure throughout their lives. Malnutrition is easily passed on to the next generation by expectant mothers who are malnourished. Yet it is entirely preventable, and often at very little cost. The fact that DFID does not have a nutrition policy, even if it does now have a policy team, is not satisfactory. Indirect policies focusing on wider sectoral approaches to health and social development make a necessary but insufficient contribution to combating child malnutrition. We recommend that DFID adopt more direct policies to combat malnutrition and give greater support to proven interventions such as support to breastfeeding and micronutrient supplementation.

DFID spends more than any of the top ten donors on tackling the underlying causes of chronic malnutrition by investing in essential public services such as health, water and sanitation, education and social protection. DFID spends at least 50% of its development assistance in these areas.

DFID's Policy and Research Division (PRD) established a Nutrition Task Team in June this year. Ministers have asked the team to recommend ways in which DFID can strengthen its focus on improved nutrition outcomes, in the context of rising food prices. The Team will therefore look at what DFID and other development partners are already doing, where the gaps are and what support can be given in building a common agenda around nutrition internationally, in doing so developing a new strategy for DFID's engagement in the sector by the end of 2008.

The Team is reviewing DFID's support to direct nutrition interventions, and assessing options for increasing our support—bilaterally and through partners such as the World Bank, UNICEF and WFP. However, it is estimated that only one quarter of the burden of malnutrition will be eliminated through direct interventions. It is imperative therefore to simultaneously focus on the root causes of poverty and inequality, and to mainstream nutrition in multiple sectors such as agriculture, health, social protection, gender and education.

[Paragraph 53] We are very concerned that DFID does not have a measurable target for malnutrition. The Department's decision to measure progress towards MDG 1 using a poverty indicator alone, rather than including indicators for hunger and nutrition, implies it believes that wider poverty reduction strategies are sufficient tools with which

to combat hunger and nutrition. This is far from proven. We recommend that DFID add a new indicator under MDG 1 in the 2008-11 PSA to enable its work on nutrition and hunger to be properly targeted and measured.

The UK Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) to reduce international poverty is to accelerate progress towards all eight of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Progress towards the MDGs is monitored annually through the collaborative efforts of agencies and organisations within the UN system which track the progress of 48 specific indicators. These include 2 indicators of malnutrition—the prevalence of underweight children under five years of age and the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption.

We have selected eight of these 48 indicators—one for each MDG—as a summary measure of progress against the PSA in 22 partner countries. We have selected a poverty measure—the proportion of population with income below \$1 as our indicator of progress against MDG1—to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. We will, however, continue to monitor progress against all MDG indicators, including those on malnutrition, throughout the PSA period.

[Paragraph 56] DFID and other donors have given nutrition insufficient priority. It is fragmented across different UN bodies, with no agency taking overall responsibility. We believe that it is therefore vitally important for the WFP to continue its nutrition activities. A huge opportunity exists at the point of delivery of food aid: adding micronutrient supplements and working with breastfeeding mothers are just two examples of the essential nutritional interventions that the WFP factors into its work. As an agency working at the point of delivery in humanitarian emergencies, it is essential for the WFP to raise its profile as a major implementation agency for nutrition-focused work.

We would agree with the IDC that nutrition has been given insufficient priority by the international community and that there is considerable fragmentation. This is now beginning to change, particularly in light of the increase in global food prices. A number of agencies are reviewing their nutrition strategies, including DFID. Reviews of the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition and the broader global nutrition architecture are also currently underway. DFID will continue to press for greater international action, to bring more coherence and leadership on nutrition and to assess options for plugging financing gaps. DFID is also supporting research on increasing the level of essential micro-nutrients (e.g. iron, zinc and Vitamin A precursors) in staple crops such as rice, maize, cassava and sweet potato.

[Paragraph 57] We were surprised that DFID was not more supportive of the wider development activities undertaken by the WFP, of which nutrition is one. Long-term development work such as nutrition and agricultural development builds the foundations for communities' survival in emergency situations. Failing to use the interface between development and emergency work is a missed opportunity as well as an inefficient use of resources. We recommend that DFID expand its funding for the WFP to include the agency's essential development work, especially on nutrition which is currently under-funded and under-emphasised by the international community and the UN system.

WFP's core business is to save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies through the provision of food assistance. We support WFP's nutritional interventions in emergency contexts, working in partnership with other agencies. Our main concern with their longer-term development activities is that often they have been weakly integrated into national programmes and implemented without clear objectives and handover strategies (notably school feeding). We have worked closely with WFP to ensure that the Strategic Plan requires the organisation to integrate its developmental work into country-led planning (notably under the objective of reducing chronic hunger and undernutrition).

We expect to see WFP fully integrate its developmental work into national strategies and programmes. In many cases other members of the UN family, notably the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Development Programme, will be equally or better placed to implement development work. Where WFP can demonstrate an appropriate contribution within country level processes we would expect them to attract support from donor country budgets.

Biofuels

[Paragraph 66] We agree with DFID that there are both challenges and opportunities in the use of biofuels and that the development of international sustainability guidelines on their use would be beneficial. We were disappointed that the Rome Summit of June 2008 did not produce a clear statement on the links between biofuels and rising food prices. As a first step, we urge the UK Government to press for rapid action on the "in-depth studies" and exchanges of experience on biofuels which were agreed in Rome. Proper research must be the basis for further negotiation on the global approach to biofuels if consensus is to be achieved. We also encourage DFID to fulfill its pledge to work closely with the European Commission and EU member states to address the possible impacts of biofuels on food security and to take action, where necessary, to address them.

The Gallagher Review into the indirect impact of biofuels, carried out for the Government earlier this year, confirmed that increasing demand for biofuels has contributed to rising prices for some food commodities, notably for oil seeds. But the scale of their effect is complex, and difficult to model, and the Review stated that biofuels had some part to play in any low-carbon response to fuel security. But biofuels are no magic bullet: their contribution to sustainable fuel security is likely to be more modest than was forecast in the past. Reflecting this finding, the UK government has already taken the decision to slow down the rate at which biofuels are introduced into road fuel in the UK.

Some developing countries may benefit in terms either of export growth or import substitution. But care will need to be exercised to ensure that any benefits are not outweighed by the disbenefits, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions or unaffordable food prices.

The World Bank has already made a start on a substantive study examining the impact of biofuels on developing countries, including the impact on food security. Its findings and recommendations should help shape the drawing up of international standards. In parallel with this work, the Government has already shared the results of the Gallagher Review

with the European Commission, with the aim of helping to inform the ongoing debate about EU biofuels targets and sustainability.

Rising food prices: trends

[Paragraph 70] It seems likely that, whilst food prices may not continue their steep rise, they are also unlikely to drop significantly. We believe that given the uncertain nature of current food and commodity price predictions, the safest plan of action is to prepare for relatively higher prices over the next decade, and we encourage the WFP and DFID to make the necessary adjustments to their policies.

Food prices have fallen since their peak in April. The international price of wheat is now around \$280 a tonne, maize around \$200 a tonne, compared with earlier peaks of around \$430, and \$250 respectively. The price of rice too has fallen significantly, from well over \$1000 a tonne in May, to around about \$600 now. These falls have been due to a number of factors, including good harvests and the removal of export bans by some countries.

Nevertheless, prices remain significantly higher than they were a year ago, and we agree with the Committee that they are likely to remain so for some time to come. The rapid rise in prices over the last year, and the consequential impact on the most vulnerable, has served as a wake up call to the international community. Ensuring food security and stable prices must be a priority, and a coordinated response must be made to substantially increase food production. Both WFP and DFID are assuming that food prices will remain high for some time to come, and we are developing our policies accordingly.

The appropriate response from the WFP, DFID and the international community

[Paragraph 72] We reiterate our support for the WFP's increasing use of social transfer schemes. We commend the WFP's latest Strategic Plan for its emphasis on local procurement of goods and services in developing countries.

We share the Committee's assessment of WFP's new Strategic Plan. We support the broadening of WFP's activities to include targeted social transfers e.g. cash/vouchers in emergency situations, and elsewhere to work closely with governments and donors in developing long-term, sustainable social protection (although we don't see a lead role for WFP in this area). Food distribution is appropriate only as a last resort, and only in those circumstances where empowering consumers with additional purchasing power is not possible.

We also support the local purchase of food wherever possible as this is usually quicker, cheaper, and encourages local production. However caution needs to be exercised in those situations where WFP is a dominant purchaser to ensure that local markets are not disrupted.

[Paragraph 77] We are very concerned at the constraints that global food prices are imposing on the WFP's budgets. Up to 20 million tonnes of food may be needed to assist the new groups of people being pushed into poverty by the current food price rises. Securing this additional food supply, which represents less than 1% of global

cereal production, is achievable. But donor contributions to the WFP will have to increase substantially: the usual total of US\$3 billion a year in voluntary contributions may need to double to US\$5-6 billion. It is important that these increased contributions are made directly to the agency's core budget rather than as earmarked funds. We welcome DFID's pledge to take rising food and transport costs into account when responding to new humanitarian appeals by the WFP. We encourage DFID to do all it can to compensate for rising prices when disbursing funds to the WFP and to encourage other donors to do the same.

So far this year the UK has contributed \$132 million to WFP, an important part of our response to the global food crisis. WFP estimates its requirements for 2008 at almost \$6 bn, towards which it has firm or fairly firm commitments of \$4.6 bn, including the response to the March appeal for \$775 million to cover higher food and transport costs which was realised within a matter of weeks.

We are the largest donor to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) which has allocated \$117.8 million to WFP so far this year, and has advanced US\$ 30 million as a loan to WFP. The Secretary of State has written to his counterparts in a number of donor countries encouraging an increase in contributions to the effort in the Horn of Africa. We shall continue to encourage donors to contribute to UN appeals to tackle the food crisis, including those of WFP. We will continue to work closely with WFP to prioritise the use of existing funds to ensure that the needs of those most affected are met.

DFID is committed to providing humanitarian assistance on the basis of need and for this reason most humanitarian funding derives from country programmes; we have limited central reserves. In the short term, we will ensure that our country responses to WFP are made in the most flexible and timely manner. In the medium term, we are working with WFP and other donors to review the organisation's financial policy framework with a view to increasing flexibility and predictability whilst offering greater transparency and accountability.

Whilst we earmark funds to particular emergencies and sometimes to specific activities, we are one of WFP's most flexible donors. We do not impose any of the limitations that hinder procurement such as bag marking or GM commodity restrictions. We support local purchasing and 'twinning' (where a developing country donates food but a third party meets the cost of transport and distribution).

[Paragraph 81] We are concerned that there are 775 million people who are regularly hungry but who are currently not receiving sufficient assistance from their national governments, and who are not covered by the WFP's emergency operations. We welcome DFID's recognition that, as well as immediate emergency responses to the global food crisis, longer-term approaches addressing food security are highly important. We support the establishment of an International Partnership for Agriculture and Food and are anxious to see rapid action in taking the proposal forward. We urge DFID to build on momentum from the G8 Summit and ensure that the Partnership has the international community's agreement by the time of the UN High Level meeting on the MDGs, scheduled for 25 September 2008.

Following the broad endorsement of our ideas for a Global Partnership for agriculture and food in Japan, we are working hard to build international support ahead of the Millennium Development Goal Call to Action event in New York in September. Priorities are meeting the gap in immediate short term food needs, particularly in the Horn of Africa; rapid scale-up in agricultural productivity in the 10 to 20 countries worst affected; getting developing country governments to commit to policies which encourage investment in the sector; and getting donors, governments and the private sector to significantly increase expenditure in the sector.

[Paragraph 84] We commend the establishment of the UN Taskforce on the Global Food Security Crisis, and we hope that the UK's proposed International Partnership for Agriculture and Food could—assuming international agreement to the Partnership is secured—lead on sequentially from the Taskforce's initial phase of work.

It remains our aim to align behind the UN High Level Task Force and its Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA). The CFA proposes a clear integrated strategy for tackling the current global food crisis. The focus is on immediate response—to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable populations—and on longer-term assistance to build resilience and contribute to global food and nutrition security. The ambition of the Global Partnership is to build on this, aiming to foster buy-in from all partners—donors, developing country governments, civil society, and the private sector—to ensure this response is realised and coordinated. It will do this by catalysing funds to support effective national agriculture development policies, monitoring progress, building capacity and regional partnerships, and holding both donors and recipient governments to account for their commitments and actions.

[Paragraph 87] We commend the UN Taskforce's development of a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA). We urge the Taskforce, together with the international community, to finalise the CFA as soon as possible. We hope that implementation of CFA strategies at country level will be well underway by the time of the September 2008 meeting on the MDGs, so that the international community can assess progress at this point. We strongly encourage the Taskforce to put national country needs at the centre of the process. We request that DFID update us on progress on the International Partnership and the CFA in response to this Report.

The Comprehensive Framework for Action was finalised by the Task Force in July, and presented at a special meeting of the Security Council in July. In what must be a country-led approach, it is unlikely that implementation will be underway ahead of the MDG meeting in late September, but we will be pressing all present to endorse the strategy set out in the CFA at that event. We shall continue to keep the International Development Committee informed of progress with both the Comprehensive Framework, and the Global Partnership, over the coming months.

It is worth noting that the World Bank's newly established Global Food Crisis Rapid Response Programme, set up as part of the international response to channel urgent assistance to the countries most affected by the food price crisis, has already committed \$130 million to 15 countries, for such activities as social protection and nutrition programmes, seeds, fertiliser and other inputs.

The relationship between the WFP, FAO and other agencies

[Paragraph 95] We believe many opportunities exist for greater integration between the three Rome-based UN agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose remits include food security. These include: the increased use of shared strategies and attached funding mechanisms; participation by the agencies in national Poverty Reduction Strategies and World Bank/IMF plans; pooled funding at country level; and the use of common indicators and measures. These are just some of the many ways in which collaboration could be improved. We encourage the WFP, the FAO and the IFAD to carry out a review of how their global operations could be better integrated, building on their 2007 report on improving co-operation over administrative processes.

We too want to see greater collaboration between WFP and the various Rome-based UN agencies, the wider UN family, and also the World Bank and other international financial institutions. We will continue to press for this, and for continued reform to make the international system as a whole more effective, and better able to address the emerging global agenda for agriculture.

UN system coherence

[Paragraph 98] We consider the ‘One UN’ approach, currently at its pilot stage, as a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving more efficient collaboration and greater UN coherence on food security. Humanitarian operations generally need to be rapid and tailored to the specific context, and may sometimes fall outside the longer-term processes covered under the ‘One UN’ country initiatives. However, we agree with the WFP that wherever possible activities closely linked with humanitarian activities should be included in the ‘One UN’ programme.

The ‘One UN’ approach is a positive step in the coordination of UN agencies in the provision of development assistance, and this should be linked up with the humanitarian response where appropriate. When working in a development context, DFID will continue to urge WFP’s full engagement in the ‘One UN’ process.

However, the Humanitarian Reform agenda outlines specific mechanisms for the coordination of humanitarian responses, more appropriate to the unique nature of humanitarian work. Humanitarian responses should be coordinated by a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), under the auspices of UN OCHA. Sector level coordination is supposed to be managed through the ‘cluster’ system: WFP leads the Food and Logistics clusters, UNICEF leads the Nutrition cluster (at global and country level).

The UK is a leading advocate for humanitarian reform, and OCHA’s coordination role. We will continue our active support of cluster leads, including WFP and UNICEF, in achieving their sector level coordination responsibilities.

One lead UN agency on hunger

[Paragraph 99] Another route towards improved UN coherence would be for one UN agency to be identified to lead work on hunger. Given that the WFP already leads the frontline response to hunger, and that its mandate is expanding to include social protection work and an increased focus on nutrition, it would seem the obvious candidate for this role. Limiting this leadership role to hunger, rather than the broader area of food security, would also make sense: as we have argued, there are many long-term developmental aspects to food security that require inputs based on the agriculture and environment expertise of the FAO and IFAD, amongst other agencies.

This is an interesting proposal, and one primarily for consideration by the UN and WFP's Executive Board. WFP's operational engagement in social protection and nutrition will be determined primarily through country-led planning and programming. As they acknowledge in their strategic plan they will often play a supportive rather than a lead role. A wider role might best be one of advocacy, monitoring, and holding other partners to account. WFP's new communications strategy (June 2008) has as its first core message "Hunger undermines health, education and strong communities. Often it kills". WFP will work with the FAO and IFAD to explain to policy-makers and the public both the prevalence of hunger and the ways in which it undermines human potential.

[Paragraph 101] We believe that identifying the WFP as lead UN agency on hunger offers a route towards quick gains without substantial system-wide reforms being necessary. Making the role of lead agency explicit and official would assist the WFP in securing the additional resources it would need to fulfil this role.

As with the proposal above, this is primarily for consideration by the UN. But we shall encourage such discussion.

Reprioritising agricultural development

[Paragraph 103] Given the urgency of the global food situation, the priority is not exploring what went wrong in agricultural development over the last two decades, but how it can be put right.

Many donors concede that the food crisis took them by surprise, and admit that agriculture has been neglected in recent years. It is time to put that right. The UK Government has set a challenge to the international community to double agricultural productivity in Africa, double agricultural growth rates in Asia, and double the amount of funding going to international agricultural research. These aims are part of our idea for a Global Partnership.

[Paragraph 104] We commend DFID's £400 million support package to agricultural research. We hope that this signals the start of an upward trend in DFID support to agriculture that can assist a second 'green revolution' that could transform African, and continue to develop Asian, agriculture.

As well as increasing the funds committed to agricultural research, DFID is restructuring its research division, and recruiting a cadre of senior research fellows to provide intellectual leadership for DFID's research priorities, assist with DFID's engagement with the science

and policy research communities, promulgate best practice, and maximise the impact of research on development policy. Expertise in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, agricultural markets and plant breeding biotechnology are some of the skills being sought.

DFID is also working to reform the international research system, enabling donors to double (to \$1 billion) the amount of funding going annually to the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research. CGIAR contributed significantly to the successes of the first Green Revolution.

The Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), part of the CGIAR system, estimates that the global public expenditure gap in agriculture is around \$16 billion per annum. The UN has urged donors to increase aid to the sector from the current level of 3% of official development assistance to 10%. Direct budget support (where appropriate) remains DFID's preferred instrument for providing bilateral assistance to Africa. This provides flexibility to African governments to respond to evolving needs, for example increased spending on social protection, or on agriculture. African governments have committed themselves to increasing the proportion of national budget going to agriculture and rural development to 10%.

[Paragraph 105] We recommend that DFID explore opportunities to work with private foundations, such as the Gates Foundation, and with the private sector more widely, towards long-term agricultural development in Africa and Asia. We also recommend that DFID seeks opportunities to participate in public-private partnerships, where appropriate.

We are already working with such foundations. The Gates Foundation has been instrumental in setting up the Alliance for the Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). This is an African-led alliance which aims to develop a thriving agricultural sector in sub-Saharan Africa. It will bring together African partners from government, business, and civil society to focus on a range of issues, including breeding better crops adapted to local conditions in Africa, training African crop breeders and agricultural scientists, and guaranteeing reliable ways to get high-quality seeds to farmers. AGRA's work is focused on small farmers and economic and environmental sustainability. DFID was the first donor to provide AGRA with core funding.

We are already working closely with the private sector—particularly on supply chain issues, and on improving African farmers access to new technology—and would look to developing public-private partnerships if these were in fulfilment of our Global Partnership aims.

Supporting farmers in the current food crisis

[Paragraph 108] We believe that making small-scale agriculture a more reliable economic venture is key to improving food security over the longer-term. Helping poor farming communities insulate themselves against economic and other shocks such as extreme weather events will require a whole range of development inputs, including: adaptation to climate change; improvements to global trade rules; and the development of new technologies that help ensure reliable yields. But we believe that agencies such as

DFID can also support specific interventions that will help farmers increase their productivity, including: training in new crops and production techniques; improved access to finance; building infrastructure; and developing domestic market institutions, such as commodity exchanges. We recommend that DFID also explore opportunities for insurance schemes for poor farmers that could help mitigate the risk in increasing their outputs or developing commercial ventures.

We agree that smallholder farmers, particularly women, have the potential to contribute significantly to improved food security for their families and the wider community. But they need to be properly supported. DFID's agriculture policy addresses many of the constraints to smallholder farmers' development. This includes: access to fertile land, fertilizer and seeds; developing and disseminating appropriate technologies; supporting markets and trade; putting in place national policies and strategies that focus on rural and agricultural growth; and ensuring farmers have a say in their own development.

We have already begun a pilot scheme in weather insurance in Malawi, and will look to expand and replicate it in other countries if the results show promise.

Genetic modification

[Paragraph 109] We agree that it should be for developing countries to decide whether to explore the use of genetically modified crops as a response to the current food crisis. We commend DFID for helping fund initial research into different types of GM crops so that countries can make an informed decision on the basis of reliable information.

GM technology will not solve the problem of world hunger on its own, but it has the potential to make a significant improvement to the yield on which the poor rely. DFID is working closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to provide information to developing countries to enable them to make informed choices about the adoption of such technology.