



Vegetarian Economy & Green Agriculture

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CONSULTATION FOR POLICY COMMISSION ON FARMING AND FOOD FOR ENGLAND

Policy for British farming and food is a topic for detailed discussion offering golden opportunities for salutary and bold reforms. Such “Green Planning” for farming, food, health, and the land have engaged the research of organisations such as ours; contributions to the BSE Inquiry and comments to the Food Standards Agency for intensive debate and reform, e.g. in seminars with well-versed representatives with broad interests reflect the earnestness.

1. Objections, General

- 1.1 We regard the Policy Commission’s establishment and purview as unapt and possibly harmful: urgent measures are needed to cope with the particular consequences of the BSE and FMD disasters and to staunch the torrent of subsidies, compensations, and grants the Treasury has had to meet as a result of entrenched evils in the live/deadstock trade, but they must not in haste prejudice opportunities for belated long-term planning and reform. We find it difficult also to distinguish the separate but concurrent functions performed by Lord Haskins.
- 1.2 We are suspicious of the Commission and its utterances for these main reasons.
 - 1.2.1 Restriction to England is perverse: much of the food consumed in England has been produced on farms and in slaughterhouses and processing plants in the rest of the British Isles, let alone from transshipments from most of Europe, and imports from countries outside the European Union. A “little England” outlook must not blink a responsibility for the welfare of animals traded and slaughtered in this vast area of food production nor the social and economic consequences in satisfying the home demand for a year-round continuity of supply for foods out-of-season in the U.K. If Englanders are to rise to healthy exhortations to consume at least five portions a day of a diversity of fruit and vegetables what variety can they expect of England’s supposedly green and pleasant land during the winter months – let alone fresh oranges, bananas, and apples for all or most of the year?
 - 1.2.2 The programme of the Commission is both limited and rushed; spatchcocked and inept policies uttered after only a few months’ deliberation can spoil long-term planning based on earnest debate, information, and education. The Commission’s present purpose ranks as an insult to commentators on national issues with means of powerful persuasions for widespread benefit, not only for the U.K. but asserting for Great Britain a sturdy example and authority in international trade and affairs.

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- 1.2.3 We criticise strongly the complement of the Commissions. Our accusations salute the officers' badges and rank rather than their personal probity, but we take particular issue with the representation and interests persisting of the ill-reputed Meat and Livestock Commission. It has been discredited over recent years in its partiality and connivance in the evils of a substantial part of the live/deadstock industry and its importunate demands for subventions from the Exchequer for relief from the proper retribution of its incompetence. We are not alone in our reservations and we warn the Commission of the disrepute likely to accompany receipt of its pronouncements. Sinners may come to repentance and some latter-day participants in financial affairs may be rapidly recanting and learning from their mistakes, but we would still keep clear of investing our pensions in funds administered by them.
- 1.2.4 Farming and food should be allied to health and this issue: tempering the pull of the consumers' demands with the push for production and profit by the food-industry has not been adequately recognised in the Commissioners' composition and purport. We must be thankful at least that British farmers have no desire to grow tobacco, but we lament the vision of the political establishment when it can seriously entertain a candidate for a post of possible influence, even the Prime Ministership, who has served as a Minister of Health, flagrantly ignores the toll of woe caused by the tobacco-industry, and actually participates in its workings. Such ridiculous politicking undermines public confidence in the activities of commissions that must be seen as fiercely independent and committed to the common good.

2. **Objections, Specific – Undue Reliance on the Live/Deadstock Industry**

- 2.1. To emphasise our indictment we cite some specific criticisms and recommendations.
- 2.1.1 The BSE Inquiry's report directed "stern criticism" (to quote the *Meat Trades Journal*, 2nd November 2000) to the MLC and, in particular, to its former director-general, Colin Maclean. The indictment concerns "statements made by the Commission in 1990, a position statement it made on BSE in 1995, an advertising campaign it mounted in late 1995, and its relationship with one of its scientific consultants, who also happened to be a member of the Government's advisory body on BSE, SEAC". The Inquiry concluded that "on a number of occasions the MLC, under the guidance of Mr Maclean, made inaccurate statements to the public that exaggerated the safety of beef and suggested that precautions that has been put in place were unnecessary. We are satisfied that there was no basis upon which Mr Maclean could reasonably believe that these statements were accurate".
- 2.1.2 The Report also criticises the MLC and Mr Maclean over statements to the press and in a video circulated to local authorities in January 1990. This concerned possible contamination of meat supplies with bovine offals. A press-release in the MLC's name following the significant news that a cat had contracted an SE was also criticised for inaccurately suggesting that BSE posed no risk. In the Report's words "Mr Maclean's enthusiasm to rebut what he described as 'alarmist stories and overblown claims' led him to overblow his defence of beef". Commenting on such instances the Report concluded "the inaccuracies would have tended to foster a belief that beef was safe but that BSE was no threat. To that extent they would have made their contribution to the perception in March 1996 that the public had not been told the truth".

- 2.1.3 Criticising the appearance of the MLC in the experts' estimations as a body whose primary function was to promote the beef-industry, the Report cites evidence of its condemnation: "More significantly Mr Packer (MAFF permanent secretary at the time) said that in January 1996 he sought to distance the Government from public statements by the MLC "because I feared the MLC would wish to make statements in their advocacy to which the Government could not subscribe." The Report continues that some of the "over-extravagant" comments made "in respect of the safety of eating beef "appeared by 1995" to have robbed statements by the MLC in relation to the safety of eating beef of much of their credibility."
- 2.1.4 The BSE Inquiry also took issue with a comment from the MLC the "all specified offals are removed and destroyed before meat enters the human food chain" when the MLC's own head of veterinary services had told the Inquiry that removals of materials of specified risk "were not always carried out to the letter of the law". The Report states that Mr Maclean knew of this information (and contradiction). After noting evidence from other witnesses the BSE Inquiry found that the MLC's position statement in July 1995" had a degree of hyperbole". Mr Maclean, as director-general of the MLC, should not have allowed publication of an "unqualified assurance" that all types of offal from all cattle were removed and destroyed before meat entered the human food chain, which was "one of a number of occasions when the MLC fell short of the objectivity that should have been shown by a statutory body with a duty to have regard to the interests of the consumer."
- 2.1.5 The BSE Inquiry condemned an advertising campaign at the end of 1995 that claimed that the British meat-industry was avoiding "even the remotest perceived risk (of material carrying BSE infection) entering the food-chain." The Report described this "a further example of exaggeration." The campaign came at the same time as the then MLC chairman, Don Curry, wrote to the then agriculture minister, Douglas Hogg, expressing concern at breaches of integrity of the specified bovine offals system. The BSE Inquiry holds Mr Maclean responsible for an "inappropriate exaggeration," Mr Curry, as executive chairman, accepts "some responsibility," although he could not "recollect whether he was aware of the terms of the advertisement". Mr Curry was excused blame for fault, because he could "properly reply upon Mr Maclean to ensure that the terms of the advertising campaign were appropriate"; however, "the repeated hyperbole" of the MLC campaign must have led the public to be sceptical of the advertising. "The result was that the MLC found it had lost credibility" and the Report commends the MAFF for its prompt action to protect the perceived independence of SEAC and for distancing itself from the MLC.
- 2.1.6 Last year the MLC engaged in another bout of dubious advertising and campaigning playing on the ignorance of the British consumer on the composition of feeds for pigs and aspects of farm animal welfare, accompanied by allusions to practices and aspersions on farms and in slaughterhouses, e.g. in Denmark, producing meat for the British market. This campaign sank expensively under the Advertising Authority's opprobrium and under the weight of ridicule from consumer organisations and animal welfarists. It overlooked strenuous efforts, even by representatives of the Assured British Meat Scheme, to reintroduce MBM into feedstuffs in livestock farming in the U.K. and it had to concede that swill-feeding was permitted for pigs to be slaughtered

under the British Quality Scheme. Classical swine fever has run through British pig farming, further condemnation of which has been stimulated latterly by implications in the epidemic of foot-and-mouth. The MLC should have sought a rigorous ban on malpractices such as swill-feeding and saved the Commission on Farming and Food a belated action that must be surely expected of it, together with ousting other wheelings and dealings to which MLC has turned a blind eye.

- 2.1.7 The MLC's pork promotion campaign upset some farmers and interests in the trade itself. "For years many traders have tried to ensure consumers are not reminded meat comes from livestock" commented *The Grocer* (29 July 2000), noting the embarrassment among shoppers in stimulating "serious worries about seeing the skin and hairs – anything that signals this is an animal. Consumers tend to be committed to both animal welfare and the enjoyment of meat-eating, recognise these are conflicting objectives and need the industry's help in addressing them". John Howard, "the old-fashioned Englishman", marketing director of the Danish Bacon and Meat Council, "likes to strive for consensus, fair play, cricket" (and, undoubtedly, that mystical level playing field), but he rounded on the MLC's incompetence "It is not prudent for the meat industry to overtly confront consumers with the nitty-gritty of how their meat reaches the table," states Mr Howard, representing remonstrances to the MLC's bungling and postulating a false confidence among "mainstream consumers" in retailers and meat suppliers and belying the plow-to-plate openness and traceability the Good Standards Agency and its counterparts in Europe purport to assert.
- 2.1.8 This farm-to-fork trust will take more than the meat trade's defective self-policing to generate. Paul Chadwick, representing the small slaughterhouses, advocates of pithing, and objectors to HACCP, bewails the reduction of the reputation of the butcher to a point where s/he is "no longer viewed as a respectable member of the community in which he trades but has almost become a peddler of death". Mr Chadwick rails against the activities of the "animal doctors" of the Meat Hygiene Service and he attacks the Food Standards Agency, "which would like to public to believe that the practices in butchers; shops are so deplorable and such a risk to public health" (*Meat Trades Journal*, 6 July 2000). (The FSA, through the MHS, is responsible for animal welfare, as well as hygiene in slaughterhouses). An MLC study essayed a solution to such misgivings with a need for "rebranding" animal welfare into "more socially acceptable terminology" to "help consumers accommodate their scruples without feeling compelled to reduce purchases". Rebranding slaughterhouses as abattoirs has not allayed misgivings over the assault and battery that goes on in them. Rebranding is an infelicitous choice of word in this context. No amount of rebranding would enable a British butcher to trade by flogging a dead horse.
- 2.1.9 After all these blunders the "cash-strapped" MLC – "which has lost £1.7M in revenue since the outbreak (of FMD) started in February and is bracing itself for a shortfall of up to £10M over the year – is sinking £900,000 into a four-week campaign promoting pork" (*Meat Trades Journal*, 10 May 2001). Details of the campaign were unveiled a few days after the MLC's new chairman, Peter Barr, told the all-party Commons agriculture committee and the press that "our research tells us we need a short-term £25M marketing drive to recover the market to provide a platform for growth. Underlining the need for "clawing back consumer confidence in red meat" the MLC's

marketing director, Richard Lowe, remarked on surveys suggesting that “15% of people are less likely to buy and eat British meat as a result of the disease”.

3. The Report of the Phillips BSE Inquiry, Nutritious and Valuable Feed for Thought

- 3.1 Citizens with a broader view of feed production and consumption must warn the Government of powerful vested interests, some disproportionately favoured in various ways, who are intent on upholding a flagging industry trying to foist on customers foods of dubious origins and attraction; further, the full cost is not paid at the till for this speciously cheap feed: the taxpayer faces the rest of the bill when the Exchequer’s funds have to be raided to bail out in subsidies, grants, and compensations a live/deadstock industry with such an appalling record of depredations on the national food supply and health and the environment, and on manifold violations of animal welfare. BSE is reckoned to have run up a bill so far of £4Bn and FMD of £3Bn. The Phillips BSE Inquiry has cost £27M and the Government has not yet fully responded to its findings and recommendations. ***In the evidence and statements (such as ours) it considered the Inquiry anticipated factors and reforms that must engage the attention and endorsement of the Farming and Food Commission. Subsequent investigations commissioned by SEAC and the FSA have added weight to the Inquiry’s testimony.***
- 3.2 The BSE Inquiry’s expensive procedures and explorations of partiality and habit in the witnesses it called set a precedent for the Farming and Food Commission. Each witness was asked to declare his or her dietary practices and changes, if any, made since the beginnings in the 1980s of the major BSE epidemic. ***This useful test of conviction in the testimony adduced must be expected likewise by commissioners and civil servants called by the Government for duties on its Farming and Food investigation and report.*** We subjected Professor Krebs to similar interrogation when he was appointed head of the Government-appointed Food Standards Agency. He was happy to declare his acumen in forgoing beef during a period when MAFF, the MLC, and farming interests were pronouncing its safety; he also volunteered his support for the efforts of his wife, a school governor, to remove beef from menus in school catering. We expect similar declarations of commitment from Commissioners on Farming and Food. Indifference to the indicators of hazard and the worse sin of castigating those practising personal precautionary disciplines or institutional responsibilities, together with the harm this negligence or even wrongdoing has wrought on human and farm-animal populations, should disqualify any such miscreants as advisers on a Farming and Food Commission that the Government can trust.
- 3.3 Further, we emphasise the warnings the BSE Inquiry was giving the Government on the probity of officers of the MLC and representatives of the live/deadstock industry, and especially their flawed assessments of risks and attempts at objectionable interventions in dissemination of objective scientific, medical, and veterinary evidence and of issues in doubt. Again, ***we would expect commissioners on farming and food policies to affirm support for the strictures in the BSE Inquiry Report and to declare innocence of any of the wrongdoings we are quoting from it.*** The Phillips Inquiry was limited to aspects of the red meat industry (i.e. involving cattle, sheep, goats, deer, ostriches, pigs, etc.). Poultry (chickens, turkeys, ducks, etc.) provide white meat; pig producers sometimes vault the colour bar and describe theirs as white meat. ***The Phillips and later Inquiries emphasise that BSE originated and has been mainly perpetuated in the predominant dairy sector of the dairy/beef/veal industry, which is a part of***

modern intensified British farming and normally supplies over half of the beef sold in the U.K.

4. Food, Health, and Nutrition

- 4.1 Napoleon was surprised when his armies in North Africa reached Egypt that they had come upon a land where men menstruated. He was confused by a symptom of a prevalent parasitic disease (bilharziasis or schistosomiasis) that caused damage in the bladder and bleeding into the urine. He would see the like if he visited today. An appraisal from a reconnaissance of today's Englishmen might prompt him that they were several months' pregnant. Wrong again: he would be witnessing the plague of overweight and obesity with associated degenerative disorders that, among others, connotes a nation manifesting serious food-related disorders and throwing an appalling strain on medical and surgical services. The NHS belies its name: it has to function as an ill-health service trying to cope with, among other ailments, the self-inflicted and cursed inability to relate intake of products of the appetising enterprise of the food industry with the declining need for such a surfeit of calories in a population less and less physically active and not increasing in numbers to take up the producers' urge to raise output and sales.
- 4.2 Recent trends have prompted food-producers to play the market with increased choice rather than sheer quantity; the public has been able to appreciate variety and cultivation of niche markets, but these developments have occurred under a prevailing social and political expectation of cheap food (at least as it is paid for at the till). Convenience rates as another attribute of choice and counts in value for money. The mighty food-industry benefits from promotions from producers and retailers abetted by the media, publishers, the catering and leisure industries and suppliers of fuel and equipment for cooking (the English word for food-preparation is cooking, an incongruous relic during the salad days, now many, when good food uncooked can come from the kitchen).
- 4.3 For most of the British population, however, this excess has proved harmful. The Government has the superficially unpopular responsibility of diverting this enterprise into choices enriching the quality of life from the quick profitability of mass-production of quantity down to a price. The trend in which consumers pay proportionately less of their outgoings on food must be reversed and producers must be rewarded appropriately. Food must rank higher in the domestic spend and initiatives by Government through information, education (but not indoctrination), and labelling must stimulate the customers' confidence, participation and control. This is a redoubtable task for governments fearful of initiating long-term reforms with few returns at the outset. The political position at the moment is as favourable as it is ever likely to be for entering into bold and salutary long-term policies for farming, food, health, and the environment. *The example of the resilience of the tobacco-industry and smoking illustrates the size of challenges that are necessary now in the supply of food.*
- 4.4 The Government is now in a position to tackle food policies with reinforcement and practice of recommendations consistently from health authorities in Europe and North America. A meeting convened in 1997 in Italy by the European Commission brought together experts from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the U.K. to define the merits of the "estimable" Mediterranean diet. Elements of traditional oriental-style diets overlap and add to these attributes. They are relevant and applicable to the U.K. and not as exotic as they seem at first, because the slow changes in genes have not kept pace with the rapid – in evolutionary terms – diaspora of our forebears to higher northerly latitudes. Rapid reversals of

this migration are reflected in returns for holidays southwards to the sun and delectable food, rather than in other directions with less clement climates and fewer dietary delights. British farmers, even before anticipations of global warming, have fallen in with the efforts of botanists and breeders to grow “southern” crops such as wheat (rather than rye), rape, linseed, Italian rye-grass, maize, and even sunflowers and soya.

- 4.5 The experts defined the estimable fare as the “traditional (European) Mediterranean diet”, which “is characterised by an abundance of plant foods such as bread, pasta, vegetables, salad, legumes, fruit, nuts; olive oil as the principle sources of fat; low to moderate amounts of fish, poultry, dairy products, and eggs; only little amounts of red meat; low to moderate amounts of wine, normally consumed with meals. The diet is low in saturated fatty acids, rich in carbohydrate and fibre, and has a high content of monounsaturated fatty acids. These are primarily derived from olive oil.” (We note that rapeseed oils have most of the attributes of olive oil).
- 4.6 The experts “agreed that there is strong evidence that a Mediterranean-style diet, in which olive oil is the principal source of fat, contributes to the prevention of cardiovascular factors, such as dyslipidemia, hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, and therefore in the primary and secondary prevention of coronary heart disease. In addition, there is evidence suggesting that the Mediterranean diet plays a preventive role against some cancers.” Achieving this salutary diet requires reform and reversal of modern European trends, particularly in consumption of animal-derived foods. It is an attractive, if challenging, role for leadership, example, and intervention by Government and attracts beneficial adjustments for British agriculture. Unlike the heavily prohibitive tenor of the campaign against smoking, a dietary campaign could be handled in a positive and enlightening way and stand up to farmers, food processors, and retailers reluctant to jump the groove of productivity dominated by yield and output for a more innovative appreciation of choice and value.
- 4.7 With this aim the Government could resort to a more enterprising manipulation of its tax-levying powers. Most European countries and the USA exercise such discretion; the ***British Government could start with an increase of VAT by 5% (say) on animal-derived foods, with the comfort of precedents in other countries.***

5. Wider Responsibilities of Little England, Supply and Demand

- 5.1. The population of the U.K. accounts for less than one-hundredth of the world’s people, but commands a far greater influence in international trade. Like half the populations of northern Europe and north America the British try sporadic bouts of dieting, mostly to reverse the results of gluttony and sloth and in the interests of health and fitness and extending liveability without recourse to miserable terminal years with heavy costs in terms of medication, loss of independence, and cries for care. On the other hand, more people in the world suffer malnutrition, face hunger, and succumb to starvation; they are unable to compete on world markets in food but are regrettably motivated by aspirations to meretriciously high standards of living flaunted by the rich (and particularly by their commercial interests) when prudent attention to the quality of life and independence would do more good. The opportunity now arises for Britain, in reforming its farming policies, to assert an example with far-reaching consequences. Objective analysis of the mistakes and solutions must drive the future, not submergence into a mire of lazy excuses.

- 5.2. Projections of world consumption of food are daunting. At the moment they magnify errors and pressures that have spoilt food-production, health, and the environment in the U.K. The world's production of meat has increased five-fold in the last half-century and is now at about 220M tons. The human population of about 6Bn is exceeded by enormous numbers of farm animals wastefully converting feed into food and appropriating resources of land, soil, and water: they number 1Bn pigs, 1,3Bn cattle, 1.8Bn sheep and goats, and 13.5Bn chickens. Over the last decade per capita consumption of beef, pork, and chicken has doubled in the world's poorer nations. This change goes with increasing affluence; however, meat-consumption in developing countries is still only at one-third of the level in industrial nations. The USA and China, accounting for about 25% of the world's population, consume 35% of the world's beef, over half the poultry, and 65% of the world's pork. About 36% of the world's grain goes to feed livestock and poultry. The global fish harvest has soared from 21M tons 50 years ago to 120M tons now, with an environmental detriment augmented by applications in animal feeds.
- 5.3 In July last year, Don Curry, then chairman of the MLC, addressed an invited audience at the Royal Show of guests from the industry, with confidence that a likely increase of meat-consumption of 35% over the next 10 years in global terms and of affluent consumers from 2.1Bn to 2.7Bn would offer promise to British producers. He also expected a rise from 3.8M to 4.4M tons in the U.K.; and he forecast a major opportunity for British suppliers in the continuing growth in the catering and processed meat sectors, which are expected to account by 2010 for two-thirds of the total meat market. His optimism undaunted and the other half of the world's people overlooked in his assessment, Mr Curry conceded that the meat-trade had gone through its "fair share of problems", but it was important to "look forward and be optimistic" and to regard many of the threats of BSE to be overcome (*Meat Trades Journal*, 6 July 2000). Mr Curry desisted that most of the increase in the demand for meat will come from the Far East and South America.
- 5.4 Wrong yet again: the MLC's economists reanalysed the prospects this year, as the effects of the FMD epidemic entered renewed analyses from the MLC. "Irreversible change" is now forecast that would mean, for example, "the U.K. sheep industry might have to prepare itself for long-term contraction". Operators should aim more "at what the market requires" and anticipate higher costs and poorer prospects for exporters. These doubts omitted the FSA's suspicions that BSE organisms might now be lurking in sheep apparently harbouring them with or without frank manifestations of classical scrapie. An immediate slump in U.K. output is predicted, which would be attended, for various reasons, in a drop in imports and only a partial recovery. The British public do not go out of their way to buy sheep-meat even when the price at the till is lowered as a result of hefty subsidies to farmers; nor does sheepmeat commend much attention from the processing and manufacturing industries.
- 5.5 The MLC's latest analysis predicts substantial falls in the home-production of beef and veal, which will be accompanied by increases in imports. These changes spell difficulties in the whole of the dairy/beef/veal complex. The MLC is also expecting sharp falls in pig-meat production in the U.K. and entertained "worrying implications" for the U.K. as countries such as Canada increased production and exports. Nevertheless, Bob Bansback, the MLC's corporate strategy director, perceived some reasons for confidence mainly based on economic factors and the red meat industry's "extreme resilience" in "the face of BSE, Ecoli, and FMD scares". The red meat industry in the U.K. emerges as a failing part of the national economy, suffered at great expense in rushed rescue subventions from the Treasury, in dangers to health and the environment, and in vain competition for markets declining and/or in unloading

excessive production into the export trade. *We recommend the Government to seize the opportunity to begin a long-term reduction in the production and consumption of red meat, by (say) 10% as an immediate aim.*

6. Farming, Pharming, and Husbandry

- 6.1 The red meat industry has urgent problems to solve, involving the upkeep of sheep marooned while growing and needing feed in areas isolated by FMD restrictions. Sheep-farmers must be restrained from breeding next year's crop of lambs, with the usual heavy losses through neglect and exposure in the less favoured areas but now overloading the market with lambs, hoggets, and spent ewes and tups that fetch hardly any price, nor can they be exported. *The aftermaths of BSE and FMD have yielded further embarrassments in dairy/beef/veal sector, transshipments of bobby-calves for veal production on mainland Europe having been halted and resumption of this trade – like long-distance movements of lambs and sheep – being likely to arouse outcry at the cruelty involved. Likewise, the anticipated wheeling and dealing in the British livestock industry will have to be banished, entailing closure of markets and establishing tighter traceability, on grounds of hygiene and welfare.*
- 6.2 The poultry industry in the U.K. benefits much less than the red meat sector from Government subsidies and other benefits. Until recently it was able to keep the British market self-sufficient in supplies of carcase-meat and fresh eggs, as well as rejects and offals for manufacturing purposes and pet-foods. However, it has latterly had to compete with imports from countries such as Brazil and Thailand and ex-Comintern nations in Europe to meet demands for manufacturing and catering purposes. Consumption of shell eggs has declined over the last two decades, but the slide has been arrested by belated efforts at reducing risks of food-borne bacterial disease (e.g. salmonella and campylobacter) and in attempts, some specious, at allaying public disquiet over infringements of animal welfare and over environmental nuisance. In the U.K. disposal of poultry waste has become a serious problem. End-of-lay ("spent") hens have become of so little value that they are barely worth the cost of transport and slaughter. In some aspects production of pigmeat resembles the condition of the poultry-industry. Both are regarded by the public as typical manifestations of modern intensified and offensive farming, and many farmers are ashamed of them and demur at generic claims for contributions of farming to the beauty and amenity of the countryside and environment that blink the premises, factories and operations in which the "animal machines" are exploited.
- 6.3 However, cheapness and convenience have lulled the public's qualms. Although sales of white meat have made inroads in traditional markets, the food-industry has muted any red-versus-white conflict that might erupt with revealing discredit to both parties. New and continuing developments will unsettle the British food-industry, as imports progress from raw materials to value-added commodities made in developing countries building the required factories: chicken nuggets, vichyssoise, and fast-foods will come to Britain ready-prepared and packed, and Lord Haskins of Northern Foods will have to keep pace with developments as Lord Haskins of International Food Factors. As with other intensive farming methods (such as the dairy/beef/veal system) British arable farmers have a big interest as suppliers of feeds for animals denied the ability to forage for themselves; many British exports of cereals are used likewise.
- 6.4 A report released last October from Mintel indicates that red meat is becoming increasingly bought as an ingredient for further processing. Purchasers of red meat remain primarily the

over-35s – and especially the over-50s. Lack of knowledge on food preparation is perceived as a factor; younger consumers are choosing the easier option of further processed rather than primary foods; moreover, younger consumers and women are likelier to abstain from meat, although this aversion may begin to change as “the trendiness of vegetarianism” declines. The Mintel report refers to a reversal of the vegetarian and demi-vegetarian trend of the 1990s, noting strenuous and expensive efforts by the MLC and Government to halt the march of the meat-excluders. *Nonetheless, Mintel describes a “major factor” in sales of meat in the trends set by meat-reducers, motivated to eat fewer meat-based meals, mainly for health reasons, with fruit and vegetables widely regarded as healthier options.* Red meat has therefore to compete, in Mintel’s view, with poultry, bacon, and delicatessen meats as a meal centre, but also with veggie options that use quorn, tofu, cheese, or pulses.

- 6.5 In another analysis Professor Phil Thomas spelt out examples of the profitability for food-producers at the manufacturing and retailing end rather than value-adding for the primary source. Prof. Thomas, a research consultant for Ethos, states (*Farmers Weekly*, 28 July 2000): “U.K. agriculture’s turnover is about £7.2Bn a year; 51% of that is state aid, so about £3.5Bn is earned. That compares poorly with examples such as ready-made sandwich-sales, which had a turnover of £6Bn last year”. He cited household expenditure on food and drink at £82.5Bn, with food accounting for 10.5% of total household expenditure. He emphasised that “dairy farming must change for the future.” Milk production must become more efficient and “meet market and manufacturers’ needs, while dairy farming must meet consumer needs and attempt to add value”. He called for “increasing sophisticated technology.”
- 6.6 That technology is also being exploited effectively by the “alternative” industry catering for the population of dairy-reducers and dairy-excluders – “dairy-frees” whose various aversions to “cow-juice” comprise dietary allergies, intolerances, perceptions of unsuitability and unnaturalness (of a food evolutionarily contraindicated for adult mammals, which include grown-up human milksops unequally sustaining the preservation of baby-guts), and unease over the origins and prevalence of BSE. *“The milk of human blindness” is being toppled by developments, now in evidence on supermarket shelves, in alternative dairy-products obtained by feeding soya and other pulses and cereals (which may be home grown and organic) into gleaming stainless steel converters rather than into a limping population of miserable, mastitic, and mucky cows.*

7. Qualms, Quirks, and Substance

- 7.1. While increasing affluence is adduced to support changes in food production and consumption, animal welfare and environmental considerations count little in the prices in the shops that the British public is prepared to pay. Complacency and inaction lie behind many of the excuses and acceptance of the lack of control implied in free trade; public confidence in government agencies has ebbed and the education system, media, and advertising industry have failed to arm the consumer/customer/citizen with means to arrive at an objective personal assessment of risk. More understanding of genetics, food production, and nutrition must inform and heighten the interest in these matters. The Government must strive to reassert an authority. We had urged the FSA before announcement of the Farming and Food Commission’s agenda to organise working parties and symposia to tackle answers to many questions and to recognise the public’s gut-feelings when science returns a don’t know or not-proven feeling. The U.K. officially mounts no objection to “hormonised” beef, in common with the USA and some other

countries but in disagreement with views from other EU countries, whose objections are difficult to uphold scientifically. But... absence of evidence does not connote evidence of absence. The British public does not take to antibiotics in farming or GM-feeds and foods; these “unscientific” objections have strengthened to powerful and effective persuasions in food retailing. The eruption of BSE elicited from scientists and the public disgust at the conversion of archetypal herbivores into “carnibals”, although such practices had been connived at for decades by scientists, the MLC, the Government and consumer watchdogs. The public would have been more impressed and arrested if the journalists who indulged themselves on Mr Gummer’s infamous blunder were not compromised by celebrating their own daughters’ birthdays with parties at McDonald’s.

- 7.2 At the moment the FSA’s reputation is imperilled by subsequent outbursts of ridicule such as those that befell John Gummer. The FSA declares that sheep-meat is safe to eat and fends suggestions that any restrictions or impoundments should be applied while calling attention to experiments that may take years to justify their complacency or error; worse, as such dubious confidence undermined Mr Gummer’s reputation, so the temporizing FSA may be heading for discredit as the consumers’ champion and purveyor of sound advice and objective caution.
- 7.3 The FSA’s efforts at assuring the public of the safety of food will create and stimulate demands for tests on animals of the type required for registrations of pharmaceuticals (not for nothing is the monitor in the USA known as the Food and Drugs Agency). Tests for cosmetic ingredients and constituents of foods nutraceuticals, and beverages, as well as for residues of pesticides etc, will increase as experimentation for similar safety purposes, having attracted curbs under the pressure of public disquiet, in toiletries and cosmetics declines or is replaced. Manufacturers of foodstuffs must take heed of this precedent. Drugs and vaccines have to be developed to counter the effects of ill-use and bad husbandry in the livestock industry. Statistics on BSE are based on ugly tests on laboratory mice; and control of FMD has borne witness to crude experiments in containing disease in farm animals. In some ways the public perceives the use in farming and food-production of “chemicals” as a crude and inadequately-monitored form of experimentation on the whole human population.

8. Professional Example and Commitment - Do Do-Gooders Do Good?

- 8.1 If Government scientists and experts squander their authority and reputation in increasingly fallible communications with politicians, the public can gain little conviction from the stand made by the great and good in some professions and well-heeled consumer-organisations and self-styled champions of the environment and animal welfare – and even rights. The RSPB proffers advice on the environment and farming practices but spoils its case by ignoring the plight of millions of unfortunate birds exploited in intensive farming systems and in rearing enterprises for blood “sports” perpetrated by most unwelcome visitors to the countryside but sources of income. The public would be more impressed if all members of the RSPB declared their commitment by spending Christmas without a turkey in the oven and strove to rid the countryside of the cruelty of activities such as commercialised “sports”, of which shooting of reared pheasants is an infamous example.
- 8.2 The RSPCA’s Freedom Foods scheme is a marketable assurance scheme – one of a bewildering array of such approbations – that fosters the belief that present demands for animal-derived foods can be met with small premiums in the shops and improvements in welfare on the farm. The scheme is betrayed by the lack of appeals to the RSPCA’s members to deny themselves

any animal-derived foods that do not carry at least the RSPCA's Freedom Foods mark, of which implies some shortcomings in animal welfare. Unfortunately schemes such as the RSPCA's nourish illusions beyond its purview – that the approved systems were “friendly”, organic, and as demanding in animal welfare terms as, say, the Soil Association's.

- 8.3 The Soil Association takes a wider and commendably more objective view. Its members show a greater conviction and constraint to practise what they preach, and demand from the affluent public is promising; farmers and retailers are being persuaded that this is a niche market with a strong and steady demand. However, supplies of organic milk are already exceeding demand and causing tension between farmers and retailers. In a similar trend, free-range eggs now yield hardly any bonus for farmers. Objective commentators and practitioners agree that consistent and wide-ranging adoption of organic practices would require reductions in the supply and consumption of animal-derived products greater than we have proposed for immediate adjustments in the national economy of farming, food, health, and the land.
- 8.4 The veterinary profession is also an agent losing the public's confidence in issues of animal welfare. Herriot-worship is losing its attractions as vets struggle with clashes within their calling through connivance in disagreeable farming and slaughtering practices, and the abandonment of many vets of their complicity with farmers and pharmaceutical agents for the cosier ministrations in small animal practice. ***It is becoming difficult to enlist British vets for duties in the assault and battery by which slaughterhouses operate, and the profession laments the opportunities it is losing to keep an eye down on the farm when the owner pleads inability to pay them for visits desirable in the pursuit of good husbandry.*** Vets face difficult decisions and boring paperwork in the rough and tumble of routines for the Meat Hygiene Service, which has in turn to deal with money-saving efforts at “privatising” some of its services and devolving its duties on the specified employees of meat-plants.
- 8.5 Animal welfare organisations fret at the chronic compilations, malpractices, and recommendations (tardily heeded, if at all) for reform of the exploitation of livestock. Undue effort and expense (much of it now met by Government and charities) has to be devoted to repetitious confirmations, some elaborate and slow, of woes that a good stockperson would recognise immediately as signs of bad husbandry and the need for urgent merciful change. ***Do we really need construction of obstacles and races to clinch for scientists the deduction that rickety broiler chickens unable to bear weight on their inflamed and bacterially-infected legs are in distress and likely to be unable to feed and drink adequately? Vets must demonstrate the sincerity of their professional vow to do their utmost for the welfare of the animals in their care by publicly and officially rejecting any complicity in bad husbandry by boycotting the purchase and consumption of the products of evil husbandry. Such self-imposed discipline would raise their standing and set an impressive example to lay-customers, the industry, and retailers.*** Vets must measure their knowledge and influence with the doctors'. What respect can the public accord to doctors explaining the evils of smoking while puffing on a cigarette? Vets must display similar mettle on matters of animal welfare and thus support efforts by Government in the implementation of effective reforms: at the same time they will be manifesting that systems rated “unacceptable” by objective animal welfare research are just that to discriminating purchasers. At the same time they would demonstrate solidarity with farmers and producers of food with acceptable standards and competing against a free trade flood of questionable provenance. ***The Government and its agencies must exert rigorous surveillance on claims, and labelling, and insist on detailed information at point-of-sale for customers showing a healthy interest in standards of operating and manufacturing practice.***

9. Informed Choice for Customer and Producer – L’attitude

- 9.1 The foregoing requirements apply also to sales of all food products. Incentives should be given to retailers putting their weight behind primary producers and proving the superiority of and deserved premiums on products prepared and monitored to high standards (e.g. use and detection of pesticides, GM feeds and ingredients, as well as residues and contaminants). Education at all levels must be well informed to assess, say, the pros and cons in GM feeds and foods to avoid sensationalism and burdening the industry with quirky marketing reactions. (We note different attitudes to GM in feeds and foods, although the environmental arguments apply in both and the precautionary principle is stretched to find risks to health – the principle is certainly stronger in assessments of hazards in crops and foods containing mycotoxins.)
- 9.2 Consumers and customers motivated by social, economic, and political considerations would benefit in making informed choices on agronomic issues, such as “fair trading”. Use of sweetening agents illustrates this point nicely, e.g. the factors involved in the production, subsidies, and tariffs in the market for Europe-grown sugar beet, cane sugar from developing countries, products of biotechnology based on crops such as maize (corn) and on home-grown starchy substrates such as potatoes, as well as synthetic sweeteners vaunting lo-calorie claims. Interest must be awakened and strengthened in choices of potatoes and cereals, not just spuds, wheat, barley, oats, but also for the functions (e.g. suitability for storing, chipping, baking, brewing, pesticide resistance, etc.), so that the customer appreciates better the farmers’ choice (e.g. the Russet Burbanks for McDonald’s or Santé for blight-resistance in the organic fashion).
- 9.3 Definitions of local produce and food miles engage some pundits on political agronomy. England is part of the European Common Market, so tomatoes from the Canary Islands might now be described as local and in economic terms should not be described as an import. In terms of the WTO we are becoming a global free trade area with no barriers. We avail ourselves of corn from the USA, to make wholemeal bread; lamb all the way from the antipodes smoothes out the seasonal fluctuations in U.K. supplies, and most of the fruit sold in England comes likewise from far-away sources. British farmers can grow Golden Delicious apples but supplies are too late and inadequate to compete with, say, the French (where, in addition, the regard for wild birds is lower than in Britain and reduces the depredations of these predatory frugivores that top-fruit growers have to contend with in England’s local orchards). Customers in the U.K. may wonder just how “organic” tomatoes sold as such from Morocco may be; likewise with organic wines and juices from all over the world. If we count such crops as organic should we at least be sure that the labelling and approbations – as well as the claims at the farmers’ markets a few miles away – conform to the same set of rules?
- 9.4 In agronomic terms use of water supplies, irrigation, and distribution must be comprehended in policies, especially in view of global warming. British farmers resort to various devices to overcome adverse climatic conditions, from greenhouses and polytunnels to plastic sheeting, organic manures to darken the soil, and fossil fuels and fermentation for heating – and generation of greenhouse gases. Intensive systems of animal production are also extravagant in use of fuel: prominent advertisements for “free-range” meat and dairy products from New Zealand allude teasingly to such factors. The fuel cost of shipping in or air freighting green leafies and tomatoes from the sunny Canary Islands or Kenya during the bleak midwinter in England may contribute no more to global warming than heating greenhouses and pumping water for out-of-season cultivations at 50° to 55°N. *The concept of food miles has to work in*

two ways: organic tomatoes from the plantations in Almería in southern Spain will call for replenishments of compost and manure generated where they are consumed, so food miles should be balanced by returns under the heading of manure miles or compost kilometres. Chemical fertilisers will probably be introduced ultimately at the areas of production instead.

- 9.5 A locally-produced chicken tikka ready-to-eat from an English processing factory is extravagant in rigorously-audited food and manure-miles. Our national dish is far more exotic than fish-and-chips. British farmers may claim to produce “assured” British chicken, and British yoghurt, may be labelled with tractor symbols (and there’s a gas guzzler for a start; it is some years ago since British farmers grew their fuels and motive power in the forms of grass meadows, trees, and horses) but they are as British as a Rover car assembled in England, for the components comprise imported concentrates to force the intensively-reared birds and cows into prodigious feats of growth and production.

10. Power

- 10.1 Complacency over cheap and inexhaustible supplies and North Sea gas and fossil fuels must be assessed against the environmental advantages in solar, wind, and tidal power, especially for locally-produced supplies of electricity, entailing minimum losses in transmission. Wind-farming seems to have potential. Objections to the sight of modern windmills – especially when electricity pylons stride almost unremarked across our landscapes – may diminish. In coastal areas barrages, large and small, might bring some prosperity from power and irrigation in replacement for the declining fishing industry. The Chinese are leading the way with several GM crops that will grow and yield in salty coastal soil and withstand irrigation with seawater. Farmers can grow industrial crops (e.g. types of rapeseed that may be cultivated on set-aside land and applied as fuels) and coppicing from forestry yields combustible sources of energy and power, as well as materials, e.g. for fencing. Special crops are being developed, e.g. miscanthus, for farm-grown sources of fuel; methane generated from composted wastes may also be applied as a resource of this type. The Government must avail local farmers and horticulturists to find outlets where their competitive qualities incur the minimum costs in transportation. Sales through shops as well as farmers’ markets are commendable additions to the choice, flavours, and interest in farming and food, and they might help to enliven trade in high streets as well as in village shops. They would also revive possibilities in market gardening and horticulture and even see a return to pick-your-own enterprises and an increase in orchards. *In CAP terms we recommend the Government to seek latitude grants to compensate for a disadvantage British farmers suffer in competition with growers enjoying sunnier climes as many as 10° nearer the Equator (although they may complain of disadvantage over water-supplies). Standards and training – and wages – in the retail and catering trades must be raised. The average British restaurant, pub, or shop proffers more information on the provenance of the imported wine that it serves than detail of locally-grown crops or reared animals from which the “home-made” bread, beer, pasties or pies are made. How many customers know a Friesian from a Guernsey, although they can probably tell Edam from Gruyere, a hock from a burgundy – and a Fiat from a Ford?*
- 10.2 The post-WW2 agricultural reforms to encourage self-sufficiency reflected alarm over threats of blockade by war or other efforts at throttling Britain’s usufruct of acres and investment abroad. The food industry made appropriate adjustments, particularly in industrialising its practices and reducing the skill and labour in bringing staple foods to increasing urban populations distanced from primary production, even in their own country. Factory-made

bread from homegrown grists became a feasible cheap alternative to labour-intensive methods requiring batch fermentations, unfavourable hours of working, and imports of hard wheats from North America and continental areas at lower latitudes. Such innovations within the U.K., emphasised by combined systems of harvesting and their capabilities, has favoured wheat and barley as cereal staples with great versatility over, say, oats. In pre-WW2 Britain a multiple retailer called Home and Colonial illustrated the assumption that Britain had easy access to the world's cornucopia; subsequently, cheap travel enabled the hoïpolloi to demand more exotic choices than boiled beef and carrots and fish-and-chips on Fridays.

- 10.3 In some ways barriers to this unconstrained choice and accessibility have recurred in different forms. Food safety, phytosanitary, “organic” imperatives, and doubts over the policing of production and exploitation of distant resources, reinforced by vigorous labelling and advertising initiatives, have given home producers some respite from competition, not always well-earned. Bio-terrorism and sabotage are factors that can work both ways, as we explained in statements to the BSE Inquiry; the persistence and spread of the BSE epidemic and outbreaks of viral diseases such as FMD and CSF would be interpreted to represent malevolence beyond careless wrongdoing. ***CSF, BVDV, FMD, and myxomatosis are infections almost harmless to people; other viruses such as West Nile, Borna, and Nipah, could be transmitted similarly, causing loss of production from animals and serious disease in people, adding their threats to familiar bacterial zoonotic pestilences such as salmonella, Ecoli, and campylobacter.*** Public health issues have been and are in use as barriers to international trade, some speciously to mask economic competition, but possibilities of cordons sanitaires and reviews of the susceptibilities of various methods of farming must return attention to the susceptibility of animal husbandry to such contamination. Planners and policy-makers must understand that the FSA is an expense, with much else, incurred mainly through bad husbandry and flawed or absent standards, with repercussions on the imports and exports of farm products. The appalling crises over BSE and the toll inflicted on the cattle and sheep industries and the Exchequer tell of the full cost of cheap food. Reservations over residues of pesticides in arable, vegetable, and fruit crops, and cosmetic applications of “agrochemicals” are smaller burdens that primary producers and retailers must be prepared to lift at their own expense but with the reward of customers’ confidence. ***Recent disasters raise the demand for restocking, which – as has happened before – may introduce and multiply risk of disease and of untoward traits.***
- 10.4 Increases in traceability and education, as well as training and licensing of all animal and food handlers and premises, must be pursued urgently. ***Operators in all parts of the food trade must indemnify themselves against harm attributable to their activities – in the way that the motorist must not drive his car without adequate third-party insurance; likewise, the insurers’ policing and penalties would help to disqualify dodgy operators.*** For instance, livestock farmers must produce evidence of rigorous and frequent inspections by independent vets. ***Whereas meat inspection has been removed from local to national control, in keeping with recommendations in 1990 by the Richmond Committee, EHOs and TSOs have been left under local authorities. We suggest that their powers and efficacy in these conditions needs review and possible overhaul. As with the MHS these jobs can be arduous, stressful, and subject to intimidation.***

People, Animals, Crops, Land, and Countryside

- 11.1 England is a densely populated part of the British Isles, with several inhabitants per hectare of arable land, limited possibilities for agricultural outputs in aptly-named less favourable areas and none in sprawling urban and industrial cover; and roads, airports, etc; tree cover is sparse and nearly 90% of our timber requirements are imported, and space and possibilities for orchards and for cultivations of important crops such as hops are few and disadvantaged. Latitude, altitude, and climate determine conditions conducive for grass and grazing, mainly in the wetter western counties, in which sheep farming and dairying (milk, beef, and veal) dominate. The cereal-growing hectares in the eastern counties are the country's breadbasket, as well as being suppliers of concentrates for the many intensive units (mainly pigs and poultry) that have been developed in the area. Proximity to deep-sea European ports such as Rotterdam, from which imported feedstuffs from all over the world are broken down and distributed through ports on Britain's east coast, supports the provisioning of the intensive units. Fishmeal too comes in from ports such as Grimsby. This division is inconvenient for the dairy farmers of the west, who are in effect operating intensive systems and need concentrates, home-grown and imported, and straw for bedding. Transport costs are proportionately high, especially for straw, which is bulky. Straw is almost a waste product in areas such as East Anglia, and breeders have produced short-strawed cereal cultivars in the pursuit of 10-ton/ha (or higher) yields of grains. Grass, rather than grasses, is the word for meadows and pastures, for this is essentially monotonous perennial ryegrass with none of the variety in transitional cultivations. Two or three cuts of silage a year for winter forage rather than hay-making overcome difficulties imposed by the weather and conditions for drying, but spoil the environment, reducing its variety. Use of desiccant chemicals and Roundup to clean up land immediately after harvest (now completed by September) allows, with almost no break, for an autumn sowing of the succeeding crop, which will be "showing its face to the sun" well before the traditional spring broadcasting on land left untilled through the winter.
- 11.2 Winter conditions in the U.K. are generally unsuitable for typical dairy-cows, so they are housed in cubicles or straw-yards for about six months of the year. Yields from cows kept at grass, as in New Zealand, will run at about 4,500 litres a year for modern dairy-breeds, being simultaneously pregnant and lactating for half the year; this is four or five times the demand on a cow in a suckler-beef herd, in which the calf would run with its dam for up to eight months. Use of concentrates can double yields from dairy-cows; some are giving over 10,000 litres (10 tons) a lactation. Organic producers go for such high yields and also resort to such questionably "natural" devices as getting cows in calf by artificial insemination. The stress on the dairy-cow leads to early breakdown and culling due to "production disease", among which BSE may be counted: it hardly occurs in beef suckler-herds. ***For these reasons we include the dairy/beef/veal system among the profligate and cruel intensive systems due by government action and application of food technologies for replacement by alternatives.*** Purely beef systems are less objectionable, especially as feedlots, such as those in North America and Australia, are not used in the U.K. British beef would cost more to the customer and consumption would drop.
- 11.3 Dairying runs up relatively high costs in labour and farm maintenance, but it is attractive in commercial farming in sustaining a steady cash flow. The suckler-herd manager's investment is more precarious; for the intensive pig or poultry farmer, finishing two or three "crops" a year, the cash flow is fairly steady and nearly three-quarters of his running cost go on feed. Mass medications and vaccinations in feed and water supplies counter arrests and breakdowns

in production due to disease. These systems inflict heavy penalties on animal welfare, disposals of wastes, offals, and “5th quarter” by-products, and they suffer from slim profit margins and from imports from other countries that, they claim, undermine their endeavours for improvements. Such complaints and excuses are common all through farming economics. The strength of the pound (as it affects imports and exports of foods, feeds, fertilisers, etc.) is also adduced in pleas that invariably invoke the level playing field.

- 11.4 Farmers also lament the power of the supermarkets, through which customers exert much more muscle than heretofore and sometimes unsettle agricultural policies with importunate and fickle innovations. Farmers have brought some of these consequences on their own reading of the market or errors, e.g. in producing too much animal fat and in failing to avert food “scares”. It is difficult to assess whether conversions and reforms in farming, e.g. for organic and non-GM, will be completed before this opportunity for value-adding exhausts itself. As an example, the supply of organic milk now exceeds the demand. Will the international companies and legislators overcome the anti-GM campaign, and when? We urge the Government to work with farmers, manufacturers, and retailers to favour co-operative enterprises to explore innovations that answer demands for research and reforms in the interests of human and animal welfare and health and for the environment. We must not allow level playing field arguments to halt or suppress continuing improvements on these social issues. ***It is an indictment of latter-day British agricultural applications in these connections that we are being surpassed by Scandinavian countries. The Government can honourably restore Britain’s status in such reform. It is a constant challenge and we duck our responsibilities by exporting the problems.***
- 11.5 British farming will provide a diminishing quantity and choice in the British food-supply. The Government’s economists must calculate show far we can regulate and accommodate the demand for imports and how much can be saved by improvements in safety, health, the environment, social services and rural life at home by salutary initiatives towards low-input mixed farming and forestry improvement. The countryside is an invaluable asset in amenity, leisure, and holiday opportunities, offering outlets for diversification for the farming industry, notably for tourism. Farming interests overdo the benefits they and their animals have brought to our landscapes. In fact, the visitor to the countryside sees too many fertiliser bags flapping in the breeze, abandoned equipment endangering the animals, many of which are limping, the lambs doing their best in overstocked and depleted areas less favoured for livestock, and many ugly units crammed with thousands more lame and unhappy animals. ***Farmers must increasingly become custodians: we need more national parks, as well as wilderness, which is the natural habitat of wild life and a territory for the occasional intrepid human wanderer.***
- 11.6 Slaughterhouses are hardly an uplifting aspect of country life. Statistics on the numbers of slaughterhouse are better cited in terms of capacity and accessibility measured in working days. Any of these premises is a blemish on the rural scene, but a full service for casualty slaughter will have to be maintained. Abolition of hunting (either by law or, as now, by the consequences of FMD) will need overhaul of the provision for casualty slaughter, knackers’ yards, and disposals. The FMD epidemic has finally taught the inadequacy and hazards associated with the livestock markets and dealers. Alternatives must be developed so that animals are involved in as few journeys as possible and travel directly in journeys of short duration from farm to slaughterhouse. Loading and unloading and mixing groups cause most stress; suitably-designed vehicles can be driven on short journeys with little distress in the animals (although pigs suffer from motion sickness).

- 11.7 Britain is overpopulated in domestic livestock, of the human kind and comprising pets and farm animals. The concentration and overstocking, especially in England, militate against a comfortable existence. The contrary efforts at stimulating the reproduction of farm animals while curbing increases in the human population are misguided. The recommended changes in consumption and reduction of intensive farming would relieve the crowding, but examples in the Royal Family and by the Prime Minister and his wife indicate that their efforts for sustainability in the human species ignore the signal advances in lowering the culling implicated in juvenile mortality (farmers and vets are much less effective in the animals in their care). Demographers must advise on the pressure of human populations and of their ageing and consequences on the quality of life. Restoration of farming fortunes must comprehend the price of land and the ability of skilled workers to populate villages in affordable accommodation. Speculators buying up farms with the view to develop only the buildings for non-farming purposes must be deterred unless such investments comply with tasteful alterations for tourist purposes. Increasing prosperity has led to a demand for second homes in the country. This trend may be beneficial if the incomers try to integrate into country life in a discreet way and display more commitment than popping down on the occasional weekend into property that is vacant for most of the week.
- 11.8 Government initiatives to raise the value of food and the worth of farming and rural life will raise prices paid in the shops but relieve the Exchequer of the heavy burden of aid it is committed to at the moment. Poor people will have to be helped in a better way than through the few welfare foods and medicaments they may now be able to claim. ***Present systems of subsidy have the effect of benefiting the big spenders on food more than the poor. Food subsidies would be much better directed selectively at the needy, whose choice and diets are already poor and whose health is disproportionately compromised.*** Choice and variety account for much of the pleasure of a varied diet. ***Citizenship, which would include subjects such as home economics, food production, and nutrition, should be included in school syllabuses, and school meals (which could advantageously include breakfasts) should be competently and imaginatively offered.*** Administration of benefits on foods by, say, vouchers should be explored. Its effect has a value beyond remedying the frank signs of classical deficiency diseases such as anaemia, scurvy, and rickets but also to inadequacies in cognition and behaviour and the decline into depression and inanition. Provisions for the elderly should accommodate their special needs with tasty and nutrient-dense fare.
- 11.9 Definitions of poverty and the need for aid in purchases of food are sometimes muddled by descriptions of rights to buy certain high-quality foods based on their contents of calories and protein. This right has been excessively applied, to the detriment of healthy choices for supposedly expensive foods such as fruit and vegetables. Few people aspire to exercise their right to eat meat and fish with frequent meals of fillet steak and caviar. Adjustments of taxes and subsidies must reflect the broader values of nutrition and health, in harmony with the reforms we recommend, for they represent tactics within strategies to overcome the tragic inequalities of wealth among citizens of a nation purporting examples of lifestyle for primitive and developing communities to follow. A fundamental right in this context is the support and accommodation of breast-feeding well beyond the average performance in England and nearer, for the health of mother and child, the practice in supposedly primitive communities.

12. Conclusions

Urgent changes in farming as a result of BSE and FMD will dictate almost a halving of home production of beef in little more than a decade. The threat of BSE masked by scrapie in sheep could tell the end or at least a break in home-produced sheepmeat. Opportunities have vanished for the export trade.

We describe opportunities for bold initiatives out of the ills of live/deadstock industry and the toll it has taken of the nation's health and environment. Adjusting taxes and subsidies with the provision of an unequivocally healthy and enjoyable basis, together with subventions for custody of the environment, support for rural economies and communities and for animal welfare, are achievable long-term aims.

Animal-derived foods must incur selective impositions of VAT, as a sharp indicator of the costs incurred by the nation, by way of subsidies and compensation, in the production of foods whose consumption should fall, in the first instance, by about 10%. Nutritional and dietary benefits would ensue and the pernicious trends of cheap food policies and intensification for quality rather than quantity must be reversed. This policy reflects true costs met at the till, rather than large amounts subsumed in payments by taxpayers.

The price of food to the consumer must rise to accommodate the increasing costs of training and monitoring right through the food-production chain. Food would achieve its rightful place in the allocation of outgoings by citizens in the UK. Our recommendations would entail a trend towards low input, low-footprint husbandry, improved care and amenity in the countryside and wild habitats, and it would order the now-established demand for year-round out-of-season supplies into responsible forms of trading and importation, exhibiting the expansion of local farming at least to the bounds of the EU and subsequently to the choices offered (but not necessarily accepted) in global trading.

Some subventions would have to be moved to enable poor people the means of choosing and buying the essentials of a healthy and varied diet. This should be only an expedient not a substitute for the removal of such poverty among our community nor for responsibilities in the countries with which we trade.

The Farming and Food Commission hasn't the competence, nor has it been given the time, to appraise these bold and salutary changes. More decades of fudge and mudge will harm national esteem and invite further ruinous drawings on the Treasury. Reforms of the CAP must be anticipated. If the Commission has been denied time, so have commentators in the numerous groups, many being NGOs, with experience in issues of farming, food, health, and the land. Their testimony cannot be collated with the speed with which the vast food-industry can mobilize.

The Commission should therefore spend its first few months engaged in research, education, and hearings before embarking on pronouncements acknowledging the importance in wresting advantage out of the sad legacy of bad policies and malign husbandry. The exhaustive report of the Phillips BSE Inquiry demands thoughtful attention and deserves close study.

Abbreviations

BSE Bovine Spongiform
Encephalopathy
BVDV Bovine Viral Diarrhea Virus
CSF Classical Swine Fever
FMD Foot and Mouth Disease
FSA Food Standards Agency
GM Genetically Modified
MHS Meat Hygiene Service
MAFF Ministry of Agriculture
Fisheries and Food
(now DEFRA, Department of
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)
MLC Meat and Livestock
Commission
NGO Non-Government
Organization
RSPB Royal Society for Protection
of Birds
RSPCA Royal Society for Prevention
of Cruelty of Animals
SE Spongiform Encephalopathy
SEAC Spongiform Encephalopathy
Advisory Committee
VAT Value Added Tax
VEGA Vegetarian Economy and
Green Agriculture
WTO World Trade Organization