



THE GRASSROOTS CONSUMER WATCHDOG

Stephen Steele  
CAP Reform and EU Strategy  
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs  
9 Millbank  
c/o Nobel House  
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6th August 2008

Dear Sirs

**Consultation on proposals for the 'Health Check' of the EU Common Agricultural Policy**

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Stakeholder meeting on the subject and respond to this consultation.

Consumer organisations long campaigned for the reform of the CAP, low income families spend a higher proportion of their income on food and so pay more tax as a result of the CAP than the rest of the population.

Although this is a complex subject for consumers, we would broadly support the UK Government's approach calling for a level playing field and a speedy end to distortions in the market. A CAP move to full decoupling with no variations across the EU and with a greater policy coherence would be fairer. The changing global food demand needs to be taken into consideration, negotiations in world trade talks will be required to allow fairer trade. Consumers realise the difficulty of addressing fairness across the increased EU. Any future funding to support such things as local diversity or innovation should be viewed as short term.

NCF members have been pleased to note environmental improvements to parts of the countryside, and there has been published evidence of increased biodiversity, as a result of such policies as 'set aside'. We feel an EU appraisal of the risk and benefits to the consumer of the food versus biofuel crops policy is required. The UK Government need to monitor land use for fuel so that it doesn't get out of balance, but a backtrack on CAP for environmental reasons will not keep the price of food as low as possible for low income level families. We hope UK farmers, whilst developing

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their market production, will be encouraged to continue to seek environmental benefits.

There has been consumer concern expressed over the security of UK food, farmers producing food at fair market prices and caring for the countryside in a sustainable way should be the UK aim. Local foods for local people can make us more self sufficient and boost food security. We are pleased to note that supermarkets are sourcing more foods locally and labelling to aid consumer choice.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Payne  
NCF Food Policy Group

#### **NATIONAL CONSUMER FEDERATION**

##### **FOOD POLICY GROUP AIMS:**

- a) For Choice, Information, Representation, Access to goods and services, Quality, Fairness, Safety and to identify and promote the interests of consumers, with reference to the key guiding principles of Redress.
- b) To consult with and represent grassroots members, to circulate, publish and disseminate their views and where appropriate to respond to consultation on their behalf in food related issues.