

Delivering food security

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Food security has become a watchword of Governments worldwide. In Wales the Welsh food system is inextricably integrated with the UK, EU and global food systems. In order to ensure food security for Wales what key European and global policy decisions must Wales seek to influence?

The volatility of global food security was brought to the attention of policy makers when rising food prices in 2007 and 2008 led to violent protests worldwide and drove an additional 115 million people to hunger. This led Professor John Beddington, UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor, to warn that the world is entering a 'Perfect Storm' of food, water and energy shortages. By March 2011 the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation recorded the highest Food Price Index since records began.

Rising food prices

As a net importer of food, Wales is vulnerable to changes in food prices which have been increasing since 1988. In addition, since 2007 UK food inflation has often been higher than general inflation, affecting the affordability of, and access to food in Wales. Household expenditure on food in Wales increased almost 20 per cent between 2006 and 2009 and a family that usually spent £100 per week on food in 2007 would have to spend over £600 more during the whole of 2008 for the same food.

The diversity of sources of food imported to the UK and Wales offers some protection against interruptions to supply and the UK is around 59 per cent self-sufficient for food, providing some resilience against major disruptions to food supply.

However, self-sufficiency does not protect against disruptions in supply of imported commodities critical to food production which

Key Drivers: Food Security

Food security is achieved when there is sufficient food available and sufficient access to that food to provide everyone with a balanced diet.

A Foresight report on the Future of Food and Farming identified six key drivers affecting food security:

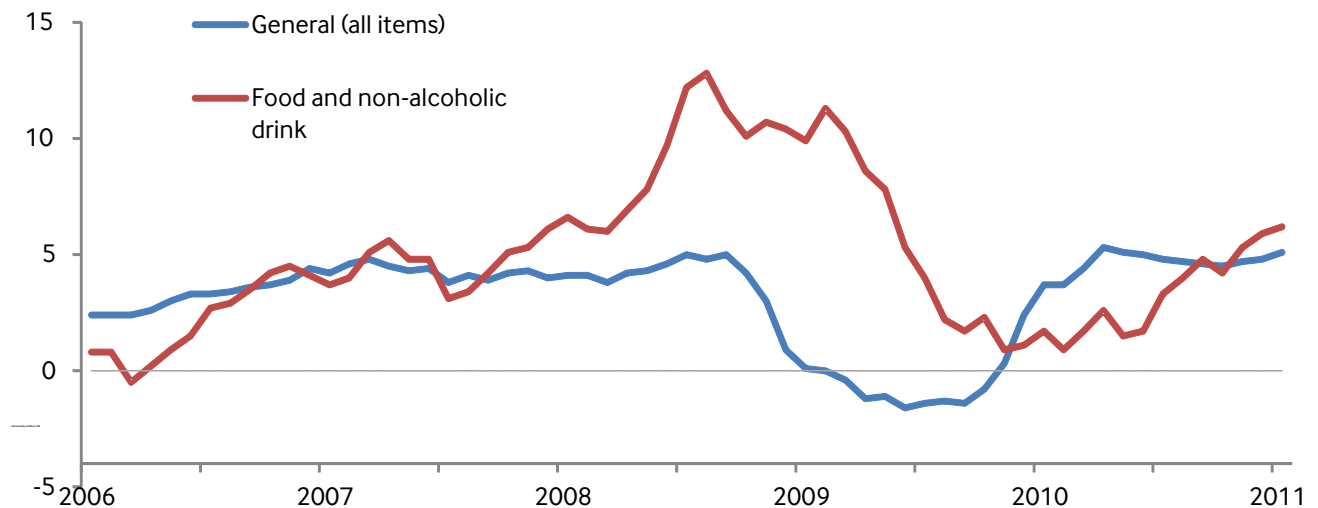
- global population growth;
- changes in demand for food;
- changes in the ethics and values of consumers;
- competition for resources;
- climate change; and
- governance of the food system.

Wales and the UK cannot produce in sufficient quantities.

For example domestic food production is heavily dependent on imported livestock feed and would be threatened by a disruption in supply of this commodity.

Many of the key policy tools available to the Welsh Government to deliver food security are designed and driven by legislation and policy created at an EU level. Two of the most important of these are the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and authorisation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) as they directly influence the future production of food in Wales.

Food inflation January 2011



Source: ONS/Inflationstats

Reforming the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The CAP provides subsidies and financial support to farmers, producers and rural communities in Wales. The original aims of the policy were to provide food security and a fair income for farmers.

More recently the policy has focused on sustainable production and environmental challenges. The next two years will see the conclusion of the latest negotiations on the reform of the CAP.

Given the reliance of the agriculture sector in Wales on this policy to make a profit and stay in business, the reform is likely to have a significant impact on the ability of a Welsh Government to deliver food security for Wales.

The Welsh Government will be largely reliant on the UK Government to carry out formal negotiations on its behalf. To date there has been little agreement between the UK Government and devolved administrations on the reform of this policy. The devolved administrations called for a well-funded CAP that directly supports farm incomes while the UK Government has called for a reduction in the

size of the CAP budget and more market-orientated reform.

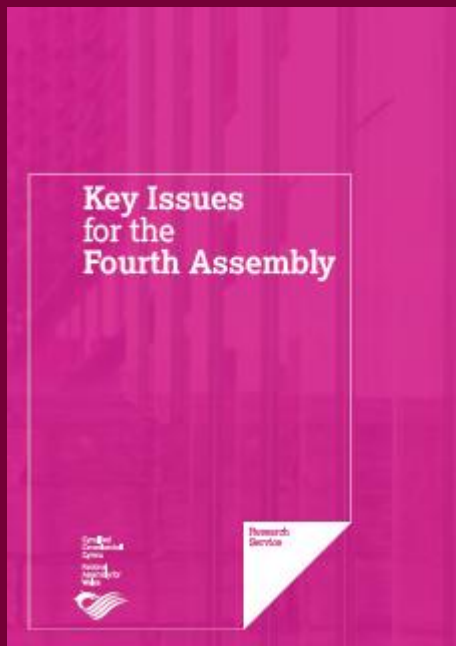
Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

GMOs is another area of legislation and policy which will be decided upon over the coming two years. The debate surrounding the use of GM crops is closely linked to the food security debate. Proponents of GM crops argue that modifying crops could lead to increased crop resilience and yields while opponents state that they will threaten the environmental security needed for food production.

Of importance to Wales will be whether or not the new European proposals can be implemented at a regional level and whether a future Welsh Government if they so wished could ban the cultivation of GMOs in Wales with any certainty.

The decision reached in Europe on these policy areas in the next few years will significantly influence how access to a secure food supply in Wales is delivered. It will be up to the new Welsh Government and Assembly to ensure that Wales' voice is heard in these important negotiations.

Article taken from Research Service publication



Key Issues for the Fourth Assembly

This document has been specially prepared for Assembly Members by the Research Service. It sets out some of the key issues likely to matter to Members during the Fourth Assembly.

[Key Issues for the Fourth Assembly](#)

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