

Food Security: Who feeds Bath & North East Somerset?

Periods of extreme weather and the increasing demands on land are affecting the UK's ability to feed itself.

Should we plan for food security at the local and national level, or bury our heads in the sand...?

The persistent wet weather during 2012 made it the wettest year on record for England and, according to the NFU, the UK's wheat production was down to the levels of the early 1980s. But there are now 7 million more mouths to feed in the UK with the population having risen from 56 million in 1980 to just over 63 million today.

This highlights how extreme wet, dry and hot weather arising from climate change coupled with unmanaged population growth makes a direct impact on the carrying capacity of the UK and can and will have a drastic effect on food supplies and food prices.

Why destroy green belt land before you know if you are going to need it in the future?

We need to protect our green belt and agricultural land to make sure we provide sufficient headroom to take account of a rising demand for food whilst climate change induced extreme weather reduces our agricultural land's capacity to produce food. The UK will always have to import some food, **the UK is currently about 60% self-sufficient in food**, but imports are likely to become less reliable or affordable in the future.

Who feeds B&NES?

Although diet and other factors affect this, we can assume (from various data sources) that we need, on average, 1 acre of land to feed one person.



B&NES has a resident population of 176,015 (2011 Census). Thus if B&NES was to feed itself it would need to have 176,000 acres of agricultural land whereas the whole size of B&NES is 220 square miles or 140,000 acres. This shortfall of 36,000 acres does not take account of land used for the built environment, leisure, transport infrastructure etc. and the fact that Bristol's own food footprint includes all of the West of England including B&NES and extends into Wales.

Securing our future food supply

Food security is going to become an increasingly important issue for the UK and B&NES as 2012 has highlighted. A long term strategic approach is needed at the national and local level.

Saltford Environment Group is lobbying B&NES Council. We have asked (i) that B&NES creates its own resilient food plan and (ii) that it will resist any attempts by central Government to impose housing numbers in the B&NES Core Strategy that would require development on Green Belt land that could be used for food production purposes (and wildlife habitat that in itself supports food production) should the future need arise.

Our website carries the latest information and data on this increasingly important issue. See our Green Belt page for further information.

Saltford Environment Group
towards a sustainable future for our village
www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk