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Briefing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development: Johannesburg 2002.¹

At the end of August, heads of state from across the globe will meet in Johannesburg for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the 10-year follow up to the Rio Earth Summit. The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 represented the first major international effort to install universal environmental protection standards, while the attending leaders agreed on conventions from biodiversity to climate change and adopted the 300-page Agenda 21. Agenda 21 is a plan from the international to local level for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. Most relevant to the aims of Sustain is chapter 14 of Agenda 21, addressing sustainable development and rural development. Johannesburg will provide the world the opportunity to both analyze the progress made since 1992 and reinforce agreements for action, not rhetoric, in the next 10 years.

Unfortunately in the last squeeze before the WSSD, governmental ministers and NGOs alike are feeling the discomfort of uncertain successes. The last of the Preparatory Committee meetings (PrepCom IV) held in Bali, Indonesia ended to pessimistically mixed reviews. Government and media sources have remained neutral to the outcome of the session, while NGOs have decidedly declared the meeting a failure. The dialogue consisted of the same vague views and statements discussed in the three previous PrepCom meetings, with a lack of clear objectives and timetables for the WSSD. As declared in an opinion piece published by Greenpeace, agreements represented “the lowest common denomination”.ⁱ Although most nations rushed quickly closer to settlement at the end of the session, “other parties, in particular the United States, blocked any further movement towards agreement”.ⁱⁱ Additionally, the G8 Summit held recently in Canada failed to produce any obligations to the environment from any head of state, including commitments to personally attend the Summit in Johannesburg.ⁱⁱⁱ These unwelcome signs from world leaders leave the outcome of the approaching World Summit on Sustainable Development floundering with loose ends and a shaky foundation.

Background: The Rio Earth Summit 1992

¹ This briefing was prepared by Michelle Fosnaugh on her internship to Sustain from the US

Sustainability is, in Brundtland's definition, the capacity to provide for the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability to provide adequately for future generations.^{iv} Sustainable development therefore provides increased well-being for people while simultaneously supporting economic efficiency, environmental quality, and social responsibility.^v Food, as a vital human requirement, must be provided by a farming and food sector that is aware, responsible, and accountable. Sustainable food security therefore must be obtained through increased production on currently cultivated land, conservation of natural resources, protection of remaining wild lands and waterways, so that production can continue on our agricultural lands for generations to come.

Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, developed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, lays the foundation for sustainable agriculture plans at the international, national, and local levels. In summary, it calls for:

- The development of databases at the national and local levels discussing varied subjects, such as flooding, agriculture, resources, and land.
- The development of regional and international trade and environmental principles.
- The promotion of rural farm and non-farm organizational, credit infrastructure, and local training programs.
- Research on sustainable technology, including knowledge from indigenous peoples.
- The up-date and dissemination of information relevant to farming and farm policy.
- The implementation of programs for the reclamation of degraded land and areas at risk, including conducting periodic surveys.
- The conservation of genetic plant material with greater use of the PGRFA.
- The preservation of animal breeds and establishment of facilities for artificial insemination.
- Research into diminishing the use of chemical pesticides, and improvement of integrated and alternative pest management systems.
- The creation of strategies to measure and improve soil fertility and plant nutrient management.
- The transition from unsustainable to sustainable energy sources in rural areas, including research into pilot projects and energy crops.^{vi}

Each agreement is specified as to the level of implementation needed and often a proposed date for completion is incorporated. World leaders have agreed on the importance of these measures to the future on our natural world, and have individually taken the initiative to implement these agreements. By 1994, over 100 nations had organized councils or other bodies to develop national Agenda 21s, however there is little evidence that changes in national policies have resulted in many of the cases.^{vii} Additionally, as described by the Friends of the Earth “*There's no nation on Earth where sustainability has become a reality*”.^{viii}

In the UK

In *This Common Inheritance* 2nd Year Report, the MAFF (not DEFRA) planned on creating a national Agenda 21 plan before the end of 1993, and addressing the

implementation of such plans with NGO's at the local level at the UK Conference in 1993.^{ix} DEFRA also called for community strategies to be developed under the Local Government Act 2000. In reports made to the United Nations, the UK also promised more detailed reforms, such as the development of 150 indicators of sustainable development.^x DEFRA has made progress in creating legislation and bodies, but has failed to provide evidence of real progress in most areas.

The UK and Agenda 21 by chapter subtitle

- *The development of databases at the national and local levels discussing varied subjects, such as flooding, agriculture, resources, and land.*

DEFRA has provided information pertinent to agriculture in the form of surveys and databases for years before the Rio Earth Summit, and continues to do so on an extended basis. They have provided economic appraisals of different measures and their impact on farmers, expenditure and food surveys, farm business surveys, an agricultural and horticultural census, national weather and soil databases, and research on the productivity of agriculture. Since the Rio summit, they have created the Analysis of Inputs Task Force and carried out four special studies on the Cost of Countryside Management, Lowland Sheep Production, Pig Production, and Potato Production. Currently, DEFRA is developing a forecasting model to show the economic impact of agricultural policies on different areas.^{xi}

- *The development of regional and international trade and environmental principles.*
- The EU stresses several key points for achieving sustainable development in the agricultural sector, including the broad goals of increased global equity and partnerships, better coherence internationally, adoption of environment and development targets, and more effective international and national monitoring. The UK and EU need to strive to make multilateral environmental agreements of more importance than WTO and other trade agreements.^{xii} Recent proposals to review the highly damaging European Common Agriculture Policy have revealed significant movement towards a desire to support sustainable agriculture and rural development.^{xiii}

The UK DFID attempts to accomplish its goal of “enhancing the ability of developing countries to themselves manage policy, programming and planning activities, not later than 2005”^{xiv}, by providing £ 190 million (in 1999/00) for the rural poor and through additional funding to the WWF.^{xv} They have also built partnerships with poor nations, pressing them to adopt Northern-created poverty reduction and environmental strategies, which may cause more harm than good in such dissimilar environments. The most positive policy adopted by the DFID has been debt relief for the poorest countries, including the elimination of £1.2 billion in debts and an additional \$50 billion under the HIPC Initiative.^{xvi} Most importantly, the UK needs to support the EU in its attempts to allow duty free access for the agricultural products of the Least Developed Countries.^{xvii}

- *The promotion of rural farm and non-farm organizational, credit infrastructure, and local training programs.*

The Government has developed many initiatives to address rural welfare such as the Rural White Paper, The Rural Affairs Forum and the Policy Commission on the Future of

Farming and Food. It has created plans to expand farm employment opportunities and establish databases on all forms of rural employment. DEFRA provides hundreds of published consultation findings a year for interested parties and they are available free of charge on the DEFRA website. They also run the Vocational Training Scheme, Rural Enterprise Scheme and the Processing and Marketing Grant.^{xviii} The Government's rural body, the Countryside Agency revealed in its latest report that such initiatives are still very relevant as problems of exclusion and access to services are still acute in many rural areas.^{xix}

- *Research on sustainable technology, including knowledge from indigenous peoples.* Publicly funded research on sustainable agriculture and rural development still focuses heavily on new technologies and efficiency improvements, including biotechnological solutions. There is inadequate research on organic farming although the recently announced Organic Action Plan contains new resources for organic research and Development.^{xx} DEFRA do provide advice for farmers but it is limited in scope and there are significant barriers to farmers uptake of conservation based farming options. There are new initiatives to develop a demonstration farm network to disseminate good practice following the recommendations of the Policy Commission on Farming and Food.^{xxi}

- *The up-date and dissemination of information relevant to farming and farm policy.* The 2001 Food and Mouth Epidemic revealed major gaps in official knowledge of both animal production and movements and also an inadequate communication strategy between farmers and the state. This certainly needs to be improved. Publications and videos are available from DEFRA covering a range of subjects and can be obtained by contacting their office. Some of these resources are available free but most farmers are unaware of their existence.^{xxii}

- *The implementation of programs for the reclamation of degraded land and areas at risk, including conducting periodic surveys.* The UK has programs for reclaiming and conserving high landscapes, wildlife areas, land of historic value, and degraded land. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme is the largest voluntary program in the UK for the conservation of up to 15 percent of all agricultural land. The Nitrate Sensitive Areas Scheme currently applies in areas where there is a need to reduce or neutralize nitrate levels in water supplies. The Organic Farming Scheme offers payments to farmers who switch to organic farming techniques. There are also programs aimed at specific landscapes for preservation, known as Countryside Stewardship agreements. In 1998, MAFF introduced two Arable Stewardship Schemes to benefit wildlife. All schemes are voluntary, as are the smaller Moorlands Scheme and Habitat Scheme. The UK still spends far less of promoting sustainable farming and husbandry than other European countries and schemes of this nature would do more good if delivered by all producers, not only those who volunteer, allowing wide-ranging protection and conservation.

- *The conservation of genetic plant material with greater use of the PGRFA.* Ninety percent of crop varieties have already disappeared from the British Isles, and the total number is continuing to dwindle.^{xxiii} The Royal Botanic Gardens Millennium

Seed Bank was opened in 1997 as a major international conservation program based in the UK, preserving over 24,000 plant species.^{xxiv} The UK is also a supporter of PGRFA (Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture), operated by the FAO.^{xxv} However, DEFRA could do more in promoting the use of many different varieties of plants in agriculture. They also need to complete a review of seed marketing techniques and plant breeder's rights.

- *The preservation of animal breeds and establishment of facilities for artificial insemination.*

One half the animal breeds native to the British Isles have been lost because of replacement of local varieties by improved or exotic species, and only 17 main fishing areas are at or above sustainability.^{xxvi} Unfortunately, very little attention is given to the preservation of farm animal breeds at the national level. The United Kingdom is a member of DAD-IS, the information system for the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources, operated by the FAO,^{xxvii} but much more attention needs to be devoted to conserving animal genetic resources within the UK.

- *Research into diminishing the use of chemical pesticides, and improvement of integrated and alternative pest management systems.*

DEFRA commissioned a Working Party on Pesticide Residues and implemented a large-scale pesticides observation program. They have secured £20 million for 3 years to promote organic farming, minimize the use of pesticides, and complete research on non-chemical pest control. DEFRA also indicate that they need to continue work toward identifying the indirect non-target effects of pesticides, and improving storage facilities in order to fight pests.^{xxviii} Research has also begun on “the awareness, use and promotion of integrated pest management and integrated crop management techniques for farmers and growers.” DEFRA should increase programs encouraging farmers to reduce the amount of pesticides used and investigate non-chemical forms of pest management.

- *The creation of strategies to measure and improve soil fertility and plant nutrient management.*

Soil quality is not a widespread problem in the UK, however localized erosion, acidification, and other contamination does occur on a small scale.^{xxix} Indicators that have been developed, and support this assertion, are 1) the net loss of greenfield soils to development and 2) concentrations of organic matter in agricultural topsoil.^{xxx} There have also been incidences of the loss of nitrates and phosphates from the topsoil, which can be remedied.^{xxxi} On a regional level, the European Union is in the process of developing a draft soil strategy.

- *The transition from unsustainable to sustainable energy sources in rural areas, including research into pilot projects and energy crops.*^{xxxii}

When considering energy use in food production, it is important to distinguish between direct (electricity, heating, etc) and indirect (manufacturing, chemicals, machinery, etc) uses. The food industry is a high energy user. As reported by DEFRA, the total energy use from agriculture is less than 1 percent of the total national use. Fertilizers make up four times the indirect consumption than any other input. For agriculture to become more

sustainable, it is imperative for the Government to focus on reductions in fertilizer and pesticide use by a move toward organic farming and a reduction in petroleum use by a move toward fewer food miles in the food chain.^{xxxiii} DEFRA also recognizes the need to increase research on the bioenergy crop breeding program.^{xxxiv}

What needs to be done?

Sustainable development and food security must be achieved within the UK and around the world with a focus on minimizing harm to the environment and achieving the following goals:

- Introduce policies and programs to preserve genetic diversity within agricultural animals and plants in order to provide resistance to disease, preserve our heritage, and enrich our diets.
- Careful monitoring of natural resources, including the soil, and preparing for a switch to the use of more renewable resources.
- Preservation of natural habitats for the well-being of wildlife and the enjoyment of humans.
- Production of food that does not compromise our resistance to infection and is free from toxins. This requires the abolition of antibiotic use in animals as growth promoters and a reduction in the amount of pesticides and fertilizers applied.
- Production of a food supply for all that is nutritious and fiber rich. This food needs to be accessible to all especially children and those who are ill.
- Create jobs in the farming and processing sectors that provide good working conditions and skills training, while preventing the loss of current farmers along with their experience and skills.
- Creation of education programs to provide knowledge of food and health issues to everyone.
- Provide easy access to information on food production, traceability, food labeling, and genetically modified food products. It is also imperative to promote social participation in the farming sector.
- Provide consumers with choices of food products and access to organic products and diets.
- Reduce the number of food miles and petroleum used in transporting agricultural products. This would cut our dependence on petroleum and therefore reduce pollution, while also providing fresher products to local areas.
- Introduce programs to reduce the amount of fatty and sugary foods consumed and promote fruit and vegetable consumption instead. It is also important to end the marketing target on kids for unhealthy fat and sugar products.
- Increased investment in food safety law enforcement and monitoring.

- Stop UK and EU dumping of surplus agricultural products in the developing countries, undermining their local farming sectors and families, and open EU markets for duty free agricultural products from the Least Developed Countries.
- Increase in the amount of public funding for agricultural research, so as to receive the fairest results unskewed by business interests.
- Emphasis on ‘fair trade’ instead of trade liberalization to the developing nations.
- Development on a more coherent long-term agricultural strategy and better-targeted national and local policies.
- Encourage the agricultural sector to reduce the amount of waste they produce.
- Support multinational agreements that subordinate trade to the health and income needs of people.
- Eliminate subsidies within the agricultural sector, and pressure other countries to do the same.
- Create alliances within the public, academic, and industry sectors to enhance research and development programs.
- Promote the preservation of regional, cultural, and ethical values in each area.
- Support the development and use of multi-modal mass public transport systems.
- Introduce programs and policies for the transfer of technology on energy efficiency and energy conservation. Increase research on the bioenergy crop breeding program.
- Move away from agreements and controls of agriculture created by the WTO and World Bank, and agreements in other areas as well.
- Create a binding accountability framework on multinational corporations.
- Completion within the UK of a review of seed marketing techniques and plant breeder’s rights, and the promotion of different varieties of plants within farming.
- Create a high visibility national conservation database for animal genetic material, and devote attention to its establishment and maintenance.
- Do not allow poverty elimination to overshadow the need for environmental protection and sustainable development.

National and international attention to sustainable development and food security must be kept high in order to move multilateral agreements past words to deeds. By implementing the above suggestions at multiple levels, a nation will be able to improve environmental quality, food supplies to their people, and the future of generations to come. Plans have been charted and agreements have been signed, but implementation and action must be the immediate steps for those programs not underway and increased performance is required of the others.

The World Sustainable Development Summit (see Diary below) will present such issues to diverse heads of state simultaneously, and provide the opportunity to produce visible achievements on the Rio Earth Summit and Agenda 21 foundation. There is a real danger

this will not happen given the very effective lobbying against ambitious goals by certain governments and industry.

Diary of Up-coming Events

8 July, 2002	Development Policy Forum 2002, by DFID	Birmingham ^{xxxv}
13-14 July	'Party at the River'	Elbe, Magdeburg ^{xxxvi}
14-19 July	World Civil Society Forum	Geneva, Switz.
18-19 July	UNDP Roundtable on Trade and International Sustainable Development	Abuja, Nigeria
19 July-12 Aug	United World Colleges Youth Action Summit 2002	Utrecht, Nether. ^{xxxvii}
25 Aug-4 Sept SA ^{xxxviii}	World Sustainability Hearing at WSSD	Johannesburg,
~30 Aug	Day of Hunger, Agriculture, Water, + Food Security	
26 Aug-4 Sept	World Summit on Sustainable Development	Johannesburg, SA ^{xxxix}
~2-4 Sept	Heads of State attend WSSD	

What can individuals do to make a difference?

- Buy locally produced and/or organic foods.
- Buy Fair Trade products with clear traceability where possible.
- Demand stricter and mandatory environmental schemes from DEFRA, as well as the reform of agricultural support systems.
- Try to find ways to support sustainable development in their area and region through investigating local and regional food supplies, growing their own food etc.
- Visit the websites of organizations provided on page 9 of this briefing. Write a letter to their MP and MEP, DEFRA, Tony Blair, and Kofi Annan expressing their interest in the agreements made at the Summit.
- Contact Friends of the Earth and join their campaign "*Make a noise at the Earth Summit*" (www.foe.co.uk).
- Visit the websites of organizations provided on page 9 of this briefing.

Contacts and Publications

EARTH ISLAND INSTITUTE	www.earthisland.org
FOOD FOR ALL: HUNGER CAN BE HALVED	www.panos.org.uk/food_for_all.htm
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH UK	www.foe.co.uk
FROM RIO TO JO'BURG	www.rio-plus-10.org
GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FARM ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES	http://dad.fao.org/en/Home.htm
GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL	www.greenpeace.org
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	http://iisd1.iisd.ca/
LOCAL AGENDA 21 UK	www.la21-uk.org.uk
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION	www.lga.gov.uk
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES (MSPs)	www.earthsummit2002.org/msp

ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT	www.oecd.org
STAKEHOLDER FORUM	www.stakeholderforum.org
SUSTAIN	www.sustainweb.org
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL	www.susdev.org
THE EARTH COUNCIL	www.ecouncil.ac.cr
THE UK FOOD GROUP	www.ukfg.org.uk
THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EARTH SUMMIT 2002)	www.johannesburgsummit.org
UK DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD, & RURAL AFFAIRS (DEFRA)	www.defra.gov.uk
UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	www.dfid.gov.uk
UK SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE	www.sustainable-development.gov.uk
UNDP	www.undp.org
UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ASSOCIATION	www.fao.org
UN HOMEPAGE	www.un.org
WORLDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF-UK)	www.wwf-uk.org

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organizations working at international, national, regional, and local level.

www.sustainweb.org

This briefing has been prepared by Sustain as background information. It does not represent the views of Sustain or any of its member organizations.

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- ⁱ Parmentier, Remi. “Bali Paradoxes”. June 12, 2002, www.greenpeace.org/earthsummit
- ⁱⁱ Mittler, Daniel. Friends of the Earth, www.rio-plus-10.org/en/positions/59.php
- ⁱⁱⁱ www.greenpeace.ca/g8/en/0627023.php
- ^{iv} World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, 1987. Oxford University Press. This concept, and its application to the farming and food sector, is explored in more detail in Sustain’s response to DEFRA’s consultation document, *A new department- a new agenda*. 2001, unpublished.
- ^v www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/508/Farming_systems_for_sustainable_agriculture.html
- ^{vi} Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21chapter14.htm
- ^{vii} www.ecouncil.ac.cr/about/ftp/riodoc.htm
- ^{viii} Coward, Ros. “From Rhetoric to Reality” *Earthmatters: Friends of the Earth*. Iss. 52, summer 2002. Pg 13.
- ^{ix} *This Common Inheritance* 2nd Year Report. London: HMSO, Oct. 1992. Pg 10 & 14.
- ^x www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/uk_strategy/quality/life/03.htm
- ^{xi} MAFF/IB/FC Departmental Report 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/dep/dep/2001/default.htm, Ch.10.
- ^{xii} Coward, Ros. “From Rhetoric to Reality” *Earthmatters: Friends of the Earth*. Iss. 52, summer 2002. Pg 12-15.
- ^{xiii} Sustain Press release CAP reforms not enough, 10 July 2002 and Sustain/UKFG briefing *The CAP Doesn’t Fit*, July 2002.
- ^{xiv} Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21chapter14.htm, 14.8 (b).
- ^{xv} www.difd.gov.uk
- ^{xvi} [A better quality of life: a strategy for sustainable development for the UK](#), Cm 4345, The Stationery Office, London: ISBN 0-10-143452-9. May 1999.
- ^{xvii} MAFF/IB/FC Departmental Report 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/dep/dep/2001/default.htm, Ch.3.
- ^{xviii} MAFF/IB/FC Departmental Report 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/dep/dep/2001/default.htm, Ch.6.
- ^{xix} State of The Countryside, Countryside Agency, 2002
- ^{xx} See Media Release and briefing, Organic Targets Campaign, 29 July 2002, www.sustainweb.org
- ^{xxi} The Future of farming and food, Cabinet Office, 2002.
- ^{xxii} MAFF/IB/FC Departmental Report 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/dep/dep/2001/default.htm, Ch. 7.
- ^{xxiii} www.ukfg.org.uk/pages/focus%20areas/pagbio.htm
- ^{xxiv} Royal Botanic Gardens, www.rbgkew.org.uk/seedbank/msb.html
- ^{xxv} www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/AGRICULT/AGP/AGPS/Pgrfa/wrlmap_e.htm
- ^{xxvi} www.ukfg.org.uk/pages/focus%20areas/pagbio.htm
- ^{xxvii} <http://dad.fao.org/en/Home.htm>
- ^{xxviii} MAFF/IB/FC Departmental Report 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/dep/dep/2001/default.htm, Ch. 11.
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- ^{xxx} www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/uk_strategy/quality/life/03.htm
- ^{xxxi} www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/pilotind.pdf
- ^{xxxii} Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21chapter14.htm
- ^{xxxiii} Eating Oil, Sustain 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/pilotind.pdf . Pg 42-43.
- ^{xxxiv} MAFF/IB/FC Departmental Report 2001, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/dep/dep/2001/default.htm, Ch. 11.
- ^{xxxv} www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/wssd/wssd9.htm#july2002
- ^{xxxvi} www.rio-plus-10.org/en/info/rio+10/50.php
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- ^{xxxviii} www.earthisland.org/wosh
- ^{xxxix} www.johannesburgsummit.org