

Green policies and producing food

Defra is keen that our new farming policy should be ultra green. If that means we value and look after our fields and farmland, and protect our forests and wild areas, I am all in favour. The good news is we can do that at the same time as expanding the food we produce and meeting more of our own food needs.

I trust the Defra Secretary will take on board from his current consultations a strong feeling in the rural community that we need a farming policy that puts food production into a more central role than it achieved during the years of the Common Agricultural Policy. There are good environmental reasons to cut down the food miles, as well as good economic reasons why it would be better to cut the balance of payments deficit.

Over the last winter I was pleased to find I could largely rely on home produce. There were good home grown potatoes, carrots, cauliflowers, leeks and onions available most of the time. For much of the winter there were excellent English coxes and varieties of pears. More recently I have turned to New Zealand for their fruit when English has not been available.

It was difficult to find oranges from anywhere other than Spain thanks to EU tariffs, though some citrus fruits from Israel, North Africa and South Africa did find their way to UK supermarkets. A new agriculture and tariff policy after we leave could be a big boost for our farms and a bonus for our consumers.