

ENDING  
RURAL  
HUNGER

# ENDING RURAL HUNGER

Contributions by the U.K.

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# Abbreviations

ACF – Action Contre la Faim (French Action Against Hunger)  
AFSI – Aquila Food Security Initiative  
CAP – Common Agricultural Policy (of the EU)  
CGIAR – Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research  
CSO – Civil Society Organization  
DAC – Development Assistance Committee of the OECD  
DEFRA – Department for Environment, Forestry and Rural Affairs (U.K.)  
DFID – Department for International Development (U.K.)  
ERH – Ending Rural Hunger (a Brookings Institution project)  
EU – European Union  
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
FNS – Food and Nutritional Security (see Definitions)  
FSWG – Food Security Working Group (of the G-7)  
GAFSP – Global Agriculture and Food Security Program  
G-7 – Group of 7 industrialized countries  
GNR – Global Nutrition Report  
GLOPAN – Global Panel on Agriculture and Nutrition  
ICAI – Independent Commission on Aid Impact (U.K.)  
ICAN – International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition  
IDA – International Development Association (World Bank)  
IDC – International Development Committee (U.K.)  
MOFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization  
N4G – Nutrition for Growth (Conferences, Network)  
NTB – Non-Tariff Barrier  
ODA – Official Development Assistance  
OECD – Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development  
QuODA – Quality of Aid Index  
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal  
SUN – Scaling Up Nutrition (network)  
U.K. – United Kingdom  
WTO – World Trade Organization

## Key definitions used in this report

Food and Nutrition Security: (FNS) “Exists when all people at all times have physical, economic, and social access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (1996 World Food Summit, with “social” added later by FAO). This definition is associated with the “four common pillars” of FNS: *availability, access, stability* and *utilization* (ERH 2015, Box 2.1).

Hunger-sensitive programs: (as in, counting toward 2015 Conservative Party Manifesto pledge on additional global reach of U.K. “nutrition-related” interventions). Programs intended to address hunger/food insecurity that do not meet nutrition-sensitive criteria (as defined below). They must have an explicitly monitored objective to improve food security outcomes at household level, such as increasing food quantity, diversity, accessibility, quality, or safety. (DFID 2015 (ii)).

Nutrition-specific (N-specific) interventions and programs: Interventions or programs that address the **immediate determinants** of fetal and child nutrition and development—adequate food and nutrient intake, feeding, caregiving and parenting practices, and low burden of infectious diseases. Examples: maternal dietary or micronutrient supplementation; promotion of optimum breastfeeding; diversification, fortification and deworming for under-5 children; treatment of severe acute malnutrition (Ruel, M. and Alderman, H, Lancet 2013).

Nutrition-sensitive (N-sensitive) interventions and programs: Interventions or programs that address the **underlying determinants** of fetal and child nutrition and development— food security; adequate caregiving resources at the maternal, household and community levels; and access to health services and a safe and hygienic environment—**and incorporate specific nutrition goals and actions**. Examples: agriculture and food security; social safety nets; water, sanitation, and hygiene; women’s empowerment (Ruel and Alderman, *ibid.*).

Keywords for identifying hunger-sensitive and/or nutrition-sensitive projects (from G-7 FSWG Chairman’s report, Dec 2016)

Hunger-sensitive: Food security; Food insecurity; Hunger; Access to food; Food availability; Food utilization; Food stability; Food price; Hunger gap; Lean season; Food self-sufficiency; Food poverty; Food trade; Dietary diversity; Food policy; Right to food; Food sovereignty; Food fortification; Food systems; Food stocks; Biofortification; Food Preferences; Food Preparation; Feeding Practices; Food Storage; Food Safety; Wild Foods; Food Reserves; Food consumption; Net consumer household.

Nutrition-sensitive: Aflatoxin; biofortification; breastfeeding; cash transfer; child feeding; CMAM(community management of acute malnutrition); deworming; diarrheal disease; diet; dietary diversification; direct feeding; enteropathy; feeding; feeding program; feeding program food intake; food intake; food security; food subsidy; food voucher; fortification; GAM(global acute malnutrition); garden; gastrointestinal illness; global nutrition coordination; growth monitoring; growth monitoring and promotion

# Executive Summary

This report assesses the U.K.'s contributions to ending rural hunger in developing countries, both through its agricultural trade and subsidy policies and via its external assistance to broader food and nutrition security (FNS). It is part of a global monitoring exercise tracking the FNS needs, policies, and resources of developing countries and various developed countries' responses to them.

The U.K.'s trade and agriculture policies are today mainly determined at European Union level, so Brexit raises both opportunities to do better and potential risks of collateral damage to producers in low-income countries.

The U.K.'s FNS aid, on which the report mainly focuses, presents a surprisingly mixed picture, especially given the country's reputation as a global champion of FNS. Particularly striking is the U.K.'s low share of direct FNS spending in its total aid to all recipients (4 percent). One key objective of this report is to probe and explore how to rectify this apparent contradiction.

The political profile of the U.K.'s support to FNS was greatly raised after the global food price crisis of 2008 and parallel advances in nutritional science, often associated with the "Lancet Series" list of highly effective interventions against malnutrition. This complemented—and some believe, quickly eclipsed—the longstanding emphases on broader food sufficiency and improved rural livelihoods.

These two strands—agriculture and nutrition—map to different professional groupings within DFID, the agency responsible for international aid, and to complementary sets of international commitments and NGO advocacy efforts. Foremost among these commitment sets are the G-7 Aquila Food Security Initiative, subsequently broadened into the Schloss Elmau (2015) G-7 commitments leading into the SDGs, on the one hand, and the Nutrition for Growth commitments also championed by then-Prime Minister Cameron, on the other.

The latter are the only major financial commitments on FNS aid now binding the U.K., including its headline goal of 4.5 billion pounds (\$5.6 billion in April 2017) of total additional qualifying aid between 2013 and 2020. Accountability for them is based on classifying projects by the degree to which they tackle specific immediate, or underlying, determinants of mother-and-child malnutrition (respectively, nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive projects). A related U.K. "reach" goal of improving the nutrition of 50 million more women and children with such interventions was introduced as part of the Conservative Party Manifesto in 2015, whose commitments were binding on the subsequent Conservative government<sup>1</sup>.

A dense and vocal network of civil society organizations and think-tanks supports and develops this framework both directly, and by stimulating debate in and around the U.K. Parliament, especially through its International Development Committee and Independent Commission on Aid Impact, which have conducted recent enquiries and evaluations on FNS.

**U.K. performance against the Ending Rural Hunger (ERH) project's metrics:** The U.K. scores better on aid for FNS (9th out of 29 Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members) than on its agricultural trade and subsidy policies (22nd out of 29). EU policies largely drive the latter score, and within those the U.K. is marked down by being a heavy net contributor to the Common Agricultural Policy. That will almost certainly change with Brexit.

Its score on FNS aid decomposes into a mediocre result (11th) on bilateral FNS aid volume expressed as a share of national income, partly compensated by good rankings on country targeting and quality

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<sup>1</sup> A general election has just been called for June 8, 2017. An addendum to this report will comment on any significant changes on global FNS approaches contained in the 2017 party manifestos, which are expected to be published by mid-May.

of implementation (5th on both counts). The volume ranking if anything understates the problem of its low relative spending priority for FNS, as the U.K. has one of the higher overall ratios of aid to GNI in the DAC, having reached the U.N. 0.7 percent target in 2013. Only the smaller basic nutrition component of its FNS spending (13-14 percent of DAC total spending on nutrition over 2010-2014) is commensurate with its share of DAC ODA.

There are mitigating factors, based on the quirks of the DAC reporting system and the ERH baseline's exclusion of multilateral and humanitarian aid for FNS, where the U.K. is relatively strong. Significant new U.K. aid related to agriculture may also now be reported under other codes, such as private sector development. But most such adjustments would also improve the scores of other DAC comparators and are judged not likely to reverse the headline perception that agriculture and rural development cannot be shown to be as high a priority in practice, contrary to its stated list of major aid priorities and international reputation.

Country targeting of FNS aid is an area of U.K. comparative strength. Decomposing this score, the explanation is mainly that the U.K. focuses FNS aid exceptionally well on low-resource countries (equal 1st of 29). It scores much less well on targeting of aid to high-needs countries (15th) and worse still on targeting countries with strong FNS policies in place (23rd). On closer inspection, the portfolio score of DFID is slightly better, but the overall U.K. score is being dragged down by assistance from other departments to relatively low-need, high-resource countries, such as Brazil. As the U.K. government implements its intention to raise the share of ODA implemented outside of DFID, this coherence should be kept under review. A further potential problem arises because of the recent graduation from direct bilateral aid of large FNS beneficiaries like India. Will this FNS support now be reprogrammed to countries with high needs but lower resources, or through multilateral channels still benefitting MICs, or to other ODA priorities altogether?

The U.K. is also a strong performer across a large battery of indicators on the quality of FNS aid implementation, such as gender and climate change focus—though there is no room for complacency with increasing drought-related pressures—aid fragmentation, and to a lesser extent, volatility. This tends to confirm generally positive external assessments of U.K. aid management overall, including the DAC peer review series.

**To what extent is FNS then a real priority for U.K. aid?** Getting behind the U.K.'s unsatisfactory raw FNS aid effort result, there is qualitative support for the idea that agriculture and improved farm incomes and productivity remain central to U.K. international development strategies, particularly structural transformation for growth and climate change adaptation. There could be more benign explanations for their relatively low share of U.K. aid, for example, that it takes time for new programs in, say, agricultural value chain development and improving agricultural resilience to climate change to build momentum. Perhaps also some of these new growth areas are supply-constrained, through skills bottlenecks in either DFID or the rest of Whitehall. Finally, spending on social-protection and “hanging in” agriculture and livelihoods projects with lower economic returns, but positive social externalities, have arguably become politically less attractive now compared to other investments, thus dragging down the total agriculture-related spend until and unless “high return” opportunities arise.

**Does the U.K. pursue an integrated approach to FNS?** On balance, not really, at least not until recently, under a largely nutrition-led accountability framework, which also includes the only major financial commitments for which the U.K. is now directly accountable. In theory, this should not matter too much, providing it is widely understood both that food insecurity is a root cause of poor diets, and that achieving food security will not by itself improve dietary quality for vulnerable groups. DFID already has an elaborate methodology in place for measuring and encouraging both N-Specific (immediate determinants) interventions and N-Sensitive (underlying determinants) interventions, the latter mostly in agriculture, health and social protection, which needs to be mainstreamed and improved on (for example by the more recent introduction of “hunger-sensitive” markers).



**Small farmers, growth and poverty reduction: how to strike the balance?** The U.K.'s conceptual approach to smallholders recognizes their diversity and vulnerabilities, as well as their growth potential and wider economic transformation spillovers, in the right contexts and with effective support. It also enables staff to argue more forcefully for agriculture investments within the context of a larger Economic Development Strategy, just released (February 2017), which helps balance parallel agendas on protracted humanitarian crises and climate change resilience. In the short term, however, it is possible that the U.K.'s FNS aid priority pendulum has swung away from holding support to vulnerable and non-viable small-holders ("hanging in"), and toward "stepping up or stepping out" investments, which may not be increasing very rapidly at least for a transition period. This trajectory needs to be monitored carefully from a FNS as well as an income poverty perspective. At the time of writing, a devastating famine is looming over the Horn of Africa. In the wake of the humanitarian response, there will be opportunities to revisit the size and shape of longer-term social and environmental protection programs.

**Prospects for agricultural trade and producer subsidy reform post-Brexit:** There are compelling arguments for reform including: pressure from consumer interests for lower prices; a major potential source of fiscal savings; environmental benefits; greater equity between large and small U.K. farmers; and the future removal of conflicting interests on the part of EU countries that are more exposed to developing country agriculture than the U.K. is. The archetypes for future subsidy regimes include (1) complete subsidy removal, as occurred in New Zealand in the 1980s (2) a shift to insurance-based policies, as in the U.S. and Canada and (3) a wider system of rewards to farmers for generating specific environmental and other benefits (rather than rewards for producing commodities that can distort markets). Various combinations and transitional scenarios have been mooted. Shifting significantly toward more, as against less, output-driven incentives, as with insurance models, saves money but carries more risk in terms of impact on world markets. In the meantime, it should be a source of political concern that public policy statements on Brexit do not mention the potential vulnerabilities of low-income countries, for example to preference erosion caused by other bilateral arrangements.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Published aggregates for FNS aid spending could be used by DFID as a second-line check on the level and composition of U.K. aid.
- DFID should assess whether there is significant misreporting of programs that could be shown under FNS purpose codes, and correct any egregious discrepancies.
- The upcoming Taormina G-7 Summit could endorse an improved FNS aid accountability framework, and a list of priority countries with greatest needs that can be used in part to rate donor country focus.
- Comparable data could also be used to check whether FNS spending by other U.K. departments is coherent with U.K. FNS policy.
- The alignment of DAC reporting on FNS with the SUN accountability framework could be greatly improved, including by U.K. and G-7 endorsement for the introduction of one or more FNS "markers" (see Annex 2).
- In the aftermath of humanitarian responses to the current famine, the U.K. should revisit the shape and extent of its social protection programs in rural Africa.
- There needs to be more explicit consideration of the possible impacts of alternative designs of agricultural subsidy and trade policies post-Brexit on low-income countries.

# 1. Introduction

## 1A. The task

Ending Rural Hunger (ERH) ([www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)) is an initiative supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and developed by the Brookings Institution. It benchmarks where developing countries stand vis-a-vis their rural food and nutrition security (FNS) status and assesses developed countries' and their agencies' efforts to promote FNS.<sup>2</sup> The U.K. is one of a series of developed country and development agency case studies, after the U.S. and along with Canada and others, to be undertaken.

The essence of the ERH monitoring framework is twofold: first, to identify how and where developing countries experience major FNS *needs*, to what extent they have sound FNS *policies* in place, and whether they lack sufficient domestic *resources* to achieve maximum potential progress. Second, to check how well developed countries are matching their support to these needs, policies, and resource requirements. This U.K. case study falls squarely within this second aim. It addresses four main policy questions:

- To what extent is FNS a major spending priority for U.K. aid?
- Does the U.K. pursue FNS as an integrated goal?
- Are smallholder farms still central to the U.K.'s international development strategy?
- Does Brexit offer a major opportunity to improve U.K. trade and subsidy policy for FNS?

## 1B. The international context: The U.K. and its comparators as moving targets

The ERH developed country rankings, tracking the 29 DAC<sup>3</sup> members, reinforce the truism that one's position in such tables inevitably depends both on one's own performance and on others'. The most recent full FNS aid rankings, based on 2010-2014 DAC data, reviewed below, show the U.K. in 9th place. Iceland takes the top spot and Ireland, Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg and three other Scandinavian countries also rank above the U.K.<sup>4</sup>

The aid targeting score, the key link between the ERH developing and developed country indices sets, is sensitive to the entry (or exit) to (from) a donor's portfolio of just a few large recipients exhibiting exceptionally strong or weak scores, such as Ethiopia (low policy, high need) and Brazil (high resources, low need) in the case of the U.K.. The trade/subsidy policy index, for which the U.K.'s ranking is a relatively poor (22nd of 29), can likewise be affected even year-on-year by the introduction and removal of trade restrictions, especially non-tariff barriers, as notified periodically to the WTO.

The U.K.'s EU Referendum ("Brexit") vote in June 2016 has put the future of its agricultural trade policy and domestic producer support regimes, among other important matters, into yet uncharted territory. Under the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), comparing the U.K.'s agricultural trade and subsidy policies to those of other EU members is not a particularly illuminating exercise. In most substantial respects, and crucially in the matter of not being able to change them much at national level, they are very similar, though overlaid on different national land use and consumption patterns, external trade

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<sup>2</sup> For the meaning of FNS and other key terms used in this report, see Key Definitions.

<sup>3</sup> Developed Assistance Committee (of the OECD). Now with 30 members, since the accession of Hungary to the DAC in December 2016. The European Union (represented by the Commission) is a DAC member in its own right, and subject to FNS aid effectiveness metrics on the pooled resources it manages. However, it is less meaningful as a standalone part of a trade and subsidy index, when considered in parallel to its member states.

<sup>4</sup> Preliminary analysis of the 2011-2015 DAC FNS data series compared to 2010-2014 show that this picture is relatively stable, though total disbursements recovered in 2015 to their 2013 levels, with most of the growth in nutrition.

links, and budget contribution shares. This picture could change considerably, for better or worse, in the post-Brexit context from 2020 onward, and I explore that prospect in Section 4 below.

## 1C. Structure of the report

I begin (Section 2) with a summary review of the U.K. FNS policy context and of U.K. Government positions, as they have evolved since around 2010. This includes major instances of U.K. political leadership and use of its convening power as a global champion for FNS, and efforts by the government as well as Parliament and CSOs to create and maintain strong accountability systems for all such commitments.

In Section 3, I look at the U.K.'s FNS "report card" as it emerges from the ERH dataset, breaking down an overall "tries hard, could do better" rating into specific sub-areas, especially those where the relative lack of progress is more striking and/or where improvement prospects look brighter. Within aid, the U.K. performs surprisingly poorly on FNS spending volume, despite a rapidly rising overall aid budget, but does noticeably better in terms of its country focus and quality of Implementation-I unpack all three areas.

In Section 4, I take a closer look, briefly, at the four policy questions introduced above.

Section 5 concludes with tentative recommendations for U.K. policymakers and advocates based on the above analysis, as well as some emerging lessons that the ERH process overall, and other developed countries in particular, could draw from the U.K. case study.

## 2. The U.K.'s evolving FNS policy and institutional context

### 2A. A brief history, with 2009 as the watershed

While the moral imperative of relieving chronic hunger and famine is arguably hard-wired into the U.K.'s collective consciousness,<sup>5</sup> for a long time FNS did not really exist as a systematic focus for long-term development assistance programs.

There had long co-existed, to be sure, as well as humanitarian and social protection interventions, separate but complementary programs to improve agricultural production technology and market access, particularly for vulnerable subsistence farmers; upgrade rural infrastructure, including water and sanitation; and tackle leading causes of mortality and morbidity, including malnutrition as both a direct and aggravating cause. Until about 2010, however, there was no robust policy framework connecting and leveraging these strands, and raising their combined political profile. Symbolically, perhaps, the U.K. Cabinet-level Department for International Development (DFID), created in 1997, did not appoint its first full-time senior nutrition advisor until 2009 (though many of its health advisors had been nutrition-aware, and engaged, before then<sup>6</sup>).

At about this time, well-publicized scientific advances (such as evidence of irreversible damage to child cognitive development from nutritional deficits incurred during the “first 1000 days”) and the demonstrable effectiveness of a specific battery of affordable interventions (Lancet series (2008), Lancet series (2013), SUN (2009), and subsequent years) helped mobilize academics, NGOs, politicians, and aid agencies around an emerging common agenda. This focused on attaining tangible human outcomes, like fewer stunted and wasted children and maternal and infant deaths, with relatively modest outlays, rigorously applied. While these calls to action ultimately had global reach, many of their leading exponents were British and/or hosted by U.K. and U.K.-supported institutions. A parallel tradition, more familiar to food-aid and agriculture circles, and promoted by the relevant U.N. specialized agencies, continued to emphasize broader food balance sheets and overall calorie-protein sufficiency—arguably necessary, but not sufficient, to attain specific nutritional outcomes (Steve Wiggins, personal communication, November 2016).

To some extent these two complementary strands—nutrition and overall food security—still coexist within global FNS advocacy today, although it is fair to say that nutrition now dominates in the U.K. context. Whether improved nutritional outcomes for rural populations are sustainable in the absence of underlying food security—and, if not, whether U.K. is emphasizing food security enough—is a question to which I return in Section 4.

### 2B. DFID organization and capacities for FNS

Within DFID—which currently administers about 85 percent of U.K. FNS disbursements, as reviewed in Section 3—a similar array of institutional perspectives exists, with arrangements in place for internal coordination and coherence. The global agriculture team (created in 2014), now responsible for agriculture in three dimensions: business, livelihoods and natural resource management, is located within the DFID Directorate responsible for economic development. The nutrition advisory role, along with health, fits under a separate policy division.

But this anchoring of U.K.-based thematic leads, whose geometry changes periodically, is arguably less important than the staffing patterns in field offices, to which the bulk of program design and

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<sup>5</sup> Thus, for example, Oxfam was created as the Oxford Famine Relief Committee, initially supporting war-torn Greece, in 1942.

<sup>6</sup> The author declares an interest here, having been Head of the Human Development Group in DFID (then combining health and education responsibilities) between 2006 and 2008, and having argued for such a nutrition focal point at the time.

implementation powers are devolved (as compared with many other DAC agencies, according to successive DAC Peer Reviews). FNS-related programs are as likely to be managed by crosscutting generalists, or advisors in related fields like governance, social and humanitarian protection, climate, and private sector as by specialist health, agriculture and livelihoods, or nutrition advisers.

DFID's accredited livelihoods advisor cadre, the largest single cluster working on FNS, has remained broadly stable at around 50-55 for several years. All of the cadre have the capability to work on food security issues, while a core of health advisors is systemically expanding DFID's capacity in nutrition across a range of cadres (Emmanuelle Begin, personal communication, February 2017). Actual FNS program mix and intervention design, right up to approval of investments by ministers, is likely to be the product of cross-disciplinary internal discussions and, of course, signals from senior management informed by U.K. policy priorities and initiatives.

## 2C. International partnerships and U.K.-led initiatives

The food price crisis of 2008 and the U.N. secretary-general's "comprehensive response" to it, coordinated by a task force led by Dr. David Nabarro (coincidentally, ex-DFID), paved the way for integrating FNS aims into a series of international platforms, including the L'Aquila G-7 Food Security Initiative of 2009, which continue to resonate today.

In support of, and to enable these initiatives, DFID presented a major U.K. position paper, "Scaling Up Nutrition 2011-2015" (DFID 2011). DFID remains a founder member and major sponsor of the eponymous SUN Movement, the Global Nutrition Report series (GNR 2013-2016), and more recently of GLOPAN, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Nutrition, as well as pooled multilateral facilities such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) hosted by the World Bank. A successor DFID nutrition strategy has been mooted for some time and is reportedly due for publication in the next few months.

David Cameron as U.K. Prime Minister from 2010 to 2016 took up this cause, most visibly by convening first an informal Hunger Summit on the margins of the 2012 Olympics then a global Nutrition for Growth (N4G) summit in London in 2013, at which participants collectively pledged to major new FNS policy and financial commitments. Over 15 billion pounds in additional funds were committed to prevent 20 million children from stunting by 2020 and save the lives of 1.7 million pregnant women and children. (I look at U.K.-specific performance metrics below).

In 2015, the Conservative Party manifesto, to which the current Government and DFID remain bound, identified a new U.K. target of reaching 50 million women and children under-5 with nutritional improvements (requiring a new methodology to define interventions which would qualify as "reach" in this sense, which I examine further in Section 4).

The G-8, by now G-7, continue to track and enhance their commitments in FNS, with active support by the U.K. (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs May 2016, and report by the G-7 Food Security Working Group, Dec 2016, extracts in Annex 2). The G-7 announced a broad-based response to food security, incorporating but not limited to nutrition, in Schloss Elmau, Germany, in July 2015, pre-figuring the approval of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) just a few months later. The G-7 pledged, "As part of a broad effort involving our partner countries, and international actors, and as a significant contribution to the Post 2015 Development Agenda, we aim to lift 500 million people in developing countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030."

The U.K. has also endorsed the ambitious framing of SDGs 2.2 in 2015 to "end all forms of malnutrition" by 2030. Further, SDG 2.1 calls for the broader ending of hunger and "ensuring universal access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food," as well as SDG 2.3 calling for doubling productivity and income of small producers, ensuring climate sustainability and much else besides. DFID has also supported the

U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to develop the global indicator for measuring food insecurity under SDG 2SDG2.2, the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, which the Inter-Agency Working Group endorsed in 2015 as the indicator for this goal.

## 2D. A mainly nutrition-centered strategic framework

Perhaps understandably, given this nutrition-based pedigree stemming from the Lancet series, DFID does not today base its program spending decisions on targeting any specific basket of FNS activities, such as the one defined by ERH. Indeed, it does not impose any particular sector-specific allocation rules onto bottom-up country office allocation proposals, which however are subject to scrutiny in terms of how they help meet important policy commitments, such as the N4G ones summarized below and the Conservative Manifesto nutrition pledge of 2015 (discussed in Section 4B).

Programs must, where relevant, distinguish between a set of nutrition specific (N-specific) programs, which have to meet stricter focus tests and a complementary but larger test on nutrition sensitive (N-sensitive) programs. The latter can be anchored in several related areas including agriculture, rural development, and health, but must also aim to improve the nutritional status of specific populations through recognized interventions. Where the full project is found to have N-sensitive objectives, outcomes, and indicators (N-sensitive “dominant” projects), 100 percent of spending counts as N-sensitive. Where it also addresses other outcomes, it is considered N-sensitive “partial,” and 25 percent of the project spend scores (Ibid.).

In the headline U.K. commitment made at the N4G Summit in 2013 of a total additional \$4.5 billion spend (nearly a third of the global partnership total), the expected ratio of N-Specific to N-Sensitive spending by 2020 was over 1:3 (\$1,304 million to \$3,244 million). A per-annum increase by 2020 (over the 2010 baseline) of \$572 million for N-specific core funding was also pledged and others offered a further \$427 million offered as “leverage” funding if matched 2:1. The corresponding pledged, per-annum increase in N-sensitive spending by 2020 was \$922 million. Progress against these U.K. pledges has been monitored independently by GNR (2016, Appendix 7) using the agreed SUN definitions, and found to be on target toward the seven-year goal, based on 2013 and 2014 combined disbursements of over \$1 billion. However the average N-specific to N-Sensitive ratio fell, to closer to 1:4.7 This ratio has fallen further since to around 1:7 (De Souza et al, 2015).

## 2E. Other commitments

The U.K. has made other, not (directly) nutrition-related, spending commitments to FNS, though the largest of these have lapsed or are nearly complete. For example, under the 2009 L’Aquila G-7 Food Security Initiative, the U.K. pledged \$1.7 billion for 2010-2012, with around \$300 million in additional pledges, and has delivered just under \$2 billion (Japan G-7 Progress Report, May 2016). Of this, nearly half went through multilateral channels, including the World Bank and Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), and by far the largest bilateral rubrics were, in declining order, scored under the DAC codes for agriculture, forestry, and fishing; rural development; and food aid/food security assistance. Under the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition for Africa, a U.S. G-7 (Camp David) undertaking in 2012, the U.K. has disbursed around \$420 million in two years, in line with “expected funding” and overall donor performance, which itself however is well below initial expectations with a few notable exceptions such as Canada and Japan (Japan G-7 2016, op.cit.).

At the time of writing, there are strong indications that a further FNS-related initiative, perhaps also involving support for refugees and displaced persons, could be sponsored by the May 2017 G-7

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<sup>7</sup> The same review found several of the other donors to be off track to meet their pledges, including the US, despite the latter using a considerably broader/more generous definition for nutrition-sensitive spending. A sensitivity test applying the US definitions to U.K. data increased the latter’s performance by over \$200 million, or 20 percent).



Summit hosted by Italy (in Taormina). This is plausible given the focus of the U.N. specialized agency cluster based in Rome and Italy's longstanding interest in FNS. If true, this could be another opportunity to focus U.K. governmental and civil society advocacy on an integrated set of FNS objectives. I return to this topic in sections 4 and 5.

## 2F. Civil society and FNS

Another institutional feature that sets the U.K. case apart from other ERH donor countries is the sheer size and strength of its civil society movement, including the many for whom global FNS is a major part of their daily mission and going well beyond the humanitarian imperatives already mentioned. It is estimated (BOND, 2015) that at least 20,000 people<sup>8</sup> are employed in the U.K. by development NGOs, including five of the world's 11 largest international NGOs which originated in the U.K. DFID channeled 1 billion pounds through them in 2014, or about 10 percent of its ODA, not counting humanitarian assistance (ibid.).

It is their research and policy advocacy, even more than direct investment, role which has arguably most helped shaped the U.K.'s overall FNS profile, including especially government policy on malnutrition in developing countries. Major NGO actors and umbrella platforms like Action Against Hunger, Results U.K., Concern Worldwide (the latter with Irish roots), Save the Children U.K., and many others formed the International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN) ahead of the 2013 N4G summit, previously known as Road to Rio. ICAN continues to push for greater commitments and accountability on FNS by the U.K. government and its allies in the G-7 and elsewhere.

A recent case in point is the report "Increasing the U.K.'s Contribution to Tackling Malnutrition" (de Souza, Francis, Shiroor et al, 2015), which pushed for a "refreshing" of the DFID 2011-2015 strategy. This includes calling for a broadening of DFID's target set to incorporate wasting alongside stunting; a doubling of its nutrition-specific share of overall nutrition aid from 12.5 percent to 25 percent; use of multilaterals to impact malnutrition in MICs; and continued U.K. championing of the N4G process through the then-planned summits alongside the Olympics of Rio in 2016 and Japan in 2020.

More generally, U.K. researchers and civil society network with, and often directly sponsored by, official initiatives that frame and subsequently monitor U.K. and international donor accountability to FNS commitments. It is as if, paradoxically, the U.K. government were seeking additional external accountability instruments binding it, and its allies, to its already benign intentions. Examples of international monitoring platforms have already been mentioned, and these are fully permeable to campaigning NGOs. Independent researchers, including ODI and development initiatives, which also receive funding from DFID, have often been tasked with assessing compliance and publishing those results (see for example, Development Initiatives 2015, on tracking the U.K.'s progress with the N4G pledges).

Finally, NGO voices also reach officialdom via local and national parliamentarians and civil society representations to independent scrutiny bodies under the authority of the U.K. Parliament, such as the Independent Commission on Aid Impact, and the International Development Committee, both of which have reported recently on FNS-related topics (IDC 2013, ICAI 2016), calling for and obtaining specific responses from the government. In the case of the IDC 2013 enquiry into FNS, which was published just before the N4G Summit, and its substantial additional commitments, 39 specific recommendations led to as many specific written government responses, mostly in full or partial agreement, on items ranging from setting aside EU-mandated biofuel targets for transport to introducing nutrition programs in the few country cases where DFID did not have interventions planned already, and much more.

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<sup>8</sup> Based on an analysis of 2013 Linked-In registrations, for only U.K.-resident staff and excluding ancillary positions such as charity shops. A further 20,000, from the same survey, work on, study, or research international development in the U.K. outside of Government, but are not employees of NGOs.

There are also influential but unofficial advisory committees—All Party Parliamentary Groups—in place, with considerable NGO participation which lobby for FNS results, including notably the group on Agriculture and Food for Development, Science and Technology in Agriculture, and Food and Health.

It is this robust civil society “ecosystem” that arguably offers the best guarantee that FNS, in its distinctive U.K. framing, will not fade as a U.K. Government policy priority anytime soon, while ministers and even prime ministers may come and go.



## 3. Analysis of the U.K.'s FNS performance

### 3A. The FNS policy profile: summary

The U.K. scores poorly on the index of non-aid policies related to agriculture (and livestock and fisheries), which is primarily based on its trade barriers (tariff and non-tariff) and domestic agriculture and fisheries subsidies (it ranks 22 of 29). Its external *trade* profile, especially on tariff levels and peak tariff shares, is fully aligned, for now, with those of the other EU members dictated by the requirements of the Customs Union to set common external tariffs, and decide at EU level on non-tariff barriers (NTB).

Its ERH *producer subsidy* score falls below even the generally unsatisfactory EU DAC average, for the 18 countries that belong to both organizations. This positioning, however, is largely an artefact of the ERH subsidy scoring method, which intentionally allocates the EU-CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) spending pool to national level using national contribution shares to the EU budget as a whole. The underlying logic is that in the end, countries that are major net funders of the CAP enable its current shape throughout the Union.<sup>9</sup> The U.K. “funds” EU subsidies to a far greater extent than it benefits from them itself, and its recorded subsidy share in the ERH framework is therefore high relative to its proportionately small agricultural sector.

In fact, the U.K.'s per-acre subsidies (land-based support is now the dominant CAP direct payment basis) are actually below the EU-15 average (European Council, 2011), mainly due to the U.K.'s, and particularly Scotland's, historical patterns of relatively low land use intensity. If the national CAP shares used for ERH were instead directly assessed via actual domestic producer support spending, the U.K.'s performance would score above the average of the 18 EU DAC countries. This average is less intensively subsidized than are a few non-EU countries (e.g., Japan or Norway), though higher than the U.S. or Australia and New Zealand, relative to agricultural production value. The U.K. is arguably, therefore, a mid-table player after this adjustment, moderately better than its raw ERH score suggests.

I examine future prospects for U.K. agricultural trade and subsidies post-Brexit in Section 4D below. (NB the ERH framework does not attempt to aggregate the two distinct but complementary policy and aid dimensions). The rest of this report will focus on FNS aid.

### 3B. The FNS aid profile: summary

The U.K., as mentioned, scores considerably better on its FNS aid performance (9th of 29) than it does on non-aid policies (Figure 1).

The aid score decomposes, in turn, into three main elements: “Volume” (Figure 2), measured by the share of the FNS aid basket in gross national income (GNI); “Targeting” (Figure 3), measuring the extent to which this aid goes, on average, to countries with high needs, strong policies, and limited resources; and “Quality” (Figure 4), measured by a battery of indicators covering untangling, fragmentation, gender and climate focus (using DAC markers), and research content.

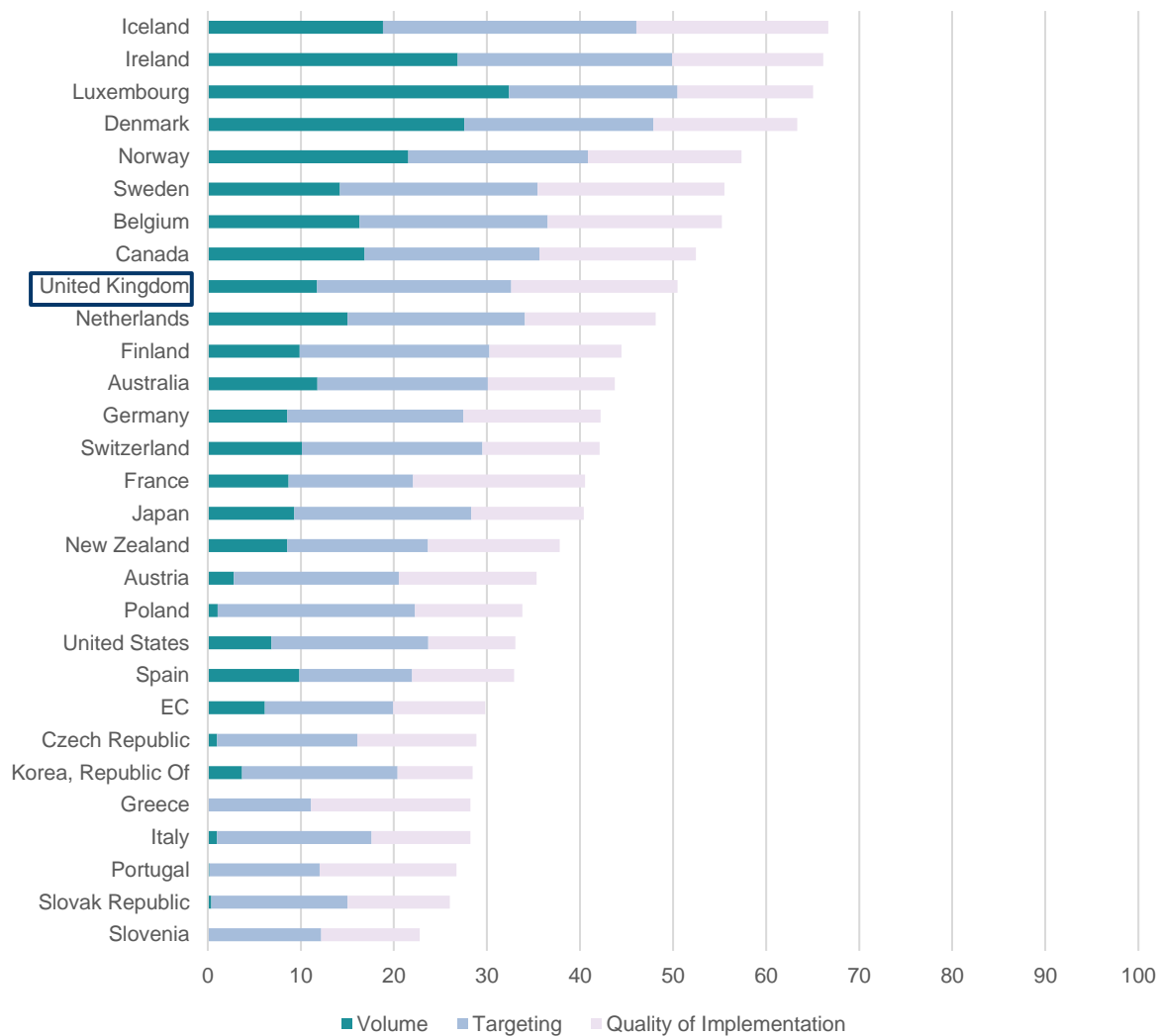
I review the results in detail below, but the headline findings are that (1) the U.K. has a mediocre score (11th place) in terms of Volume; (2) however, country Targeting continues to score well above average (fifth place), with a relatively stronger U.K. focus on low-resource- and high needs-countries, and weaker country selectivity based on good policies; and (3) the U.K. was also strong all round on Quality

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<sup>9</sup> Homi Kharas, senior fellow, Brookings Institution and project leader, ERH, personal communication. This approach does not factor in the U.K.'s *ex post* budget rebate, originally negotiated by Margaret Thatcher, and justified specifically by the large structural imbalance between the U.K.'s higher gross contributions to the CAP and lower subsidy receipts from it.

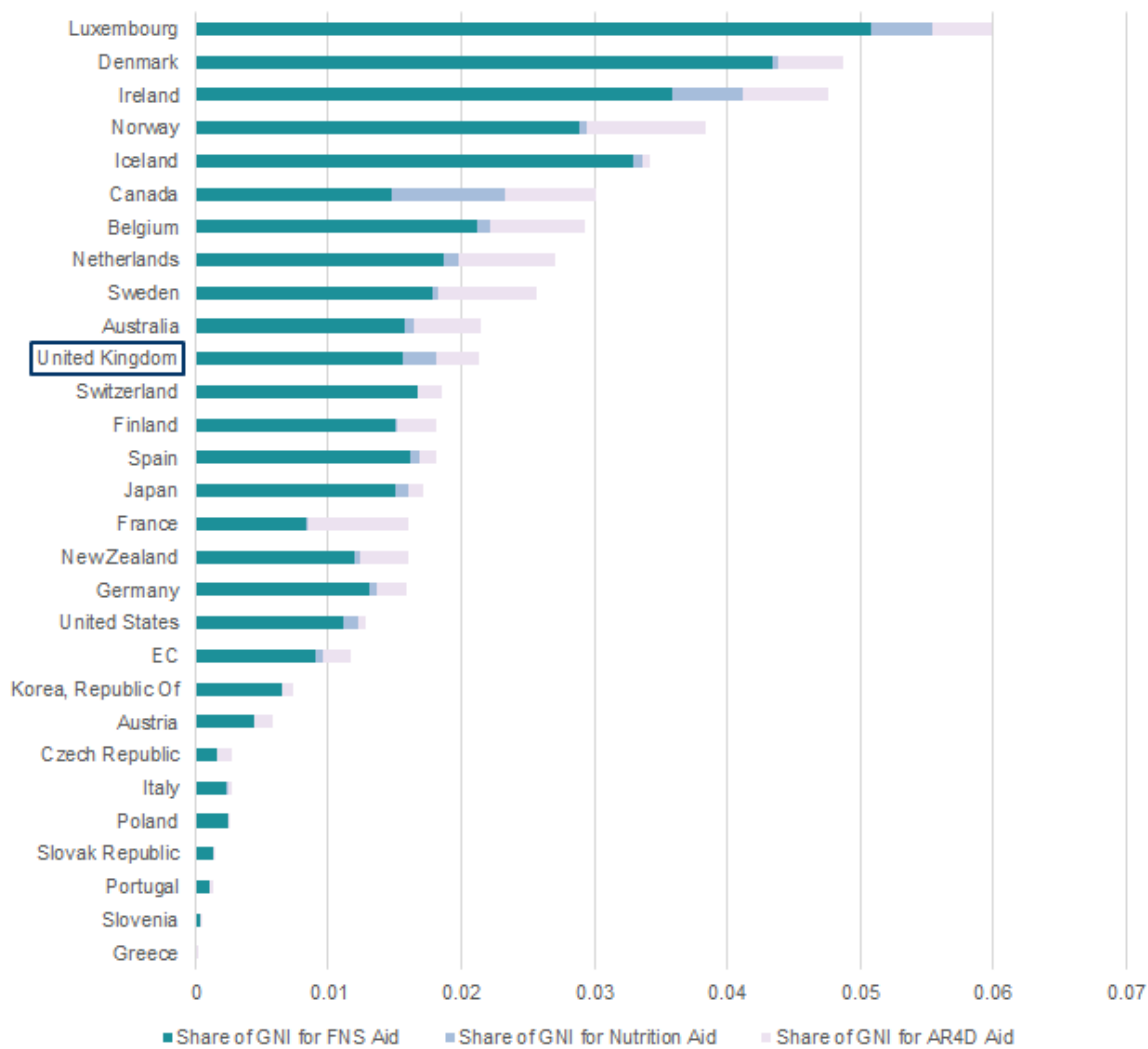
(fifth), especially on gender focus and on reducing aid fragmentation, with comparatively weaker spots on aid volatility and research content.

Figure 1: FNS aid policy rankings 2010-2014



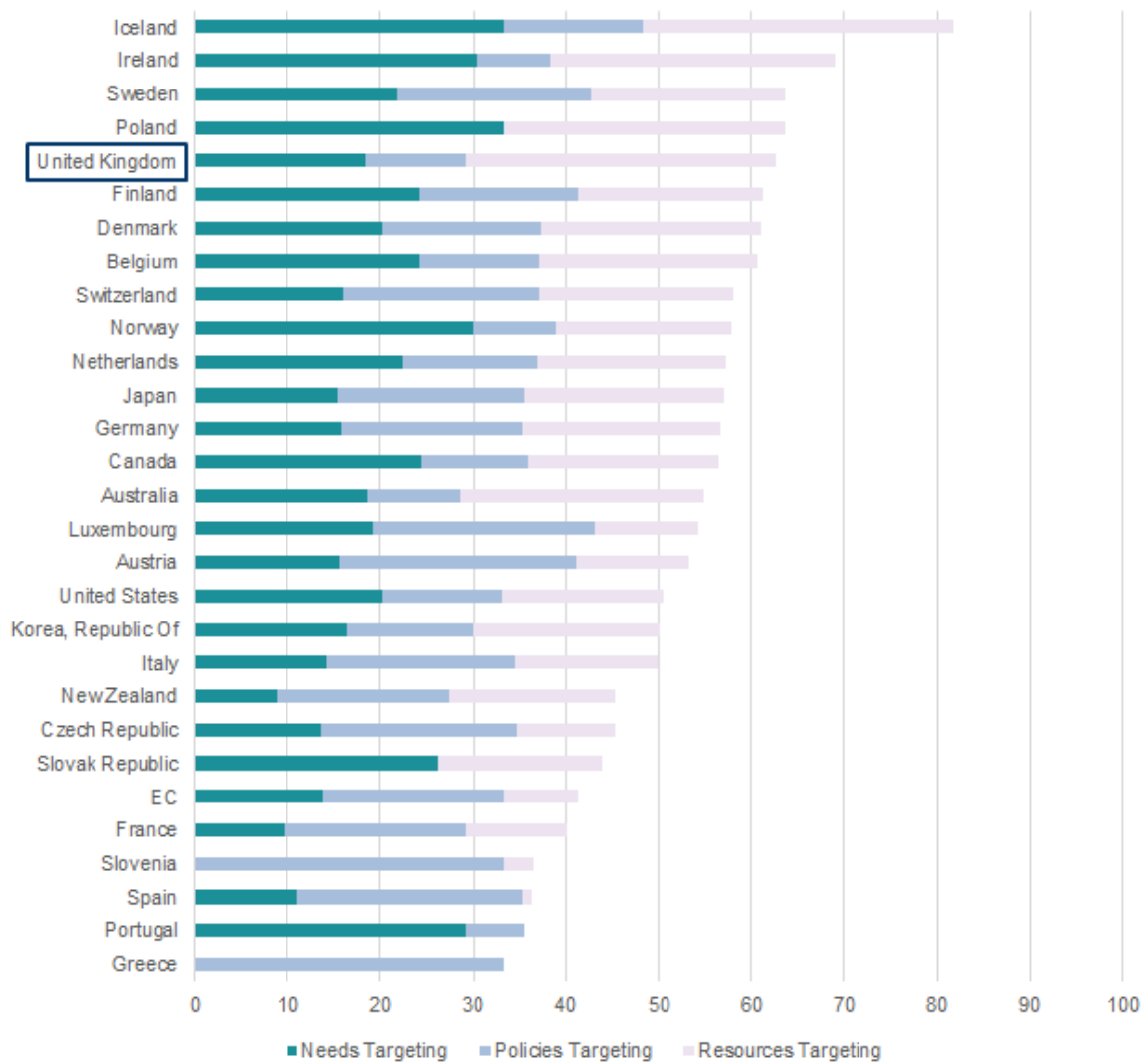
Source: [www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)

Figure 2: FNS aid volume rankings 2010-2014 (% of GNI)



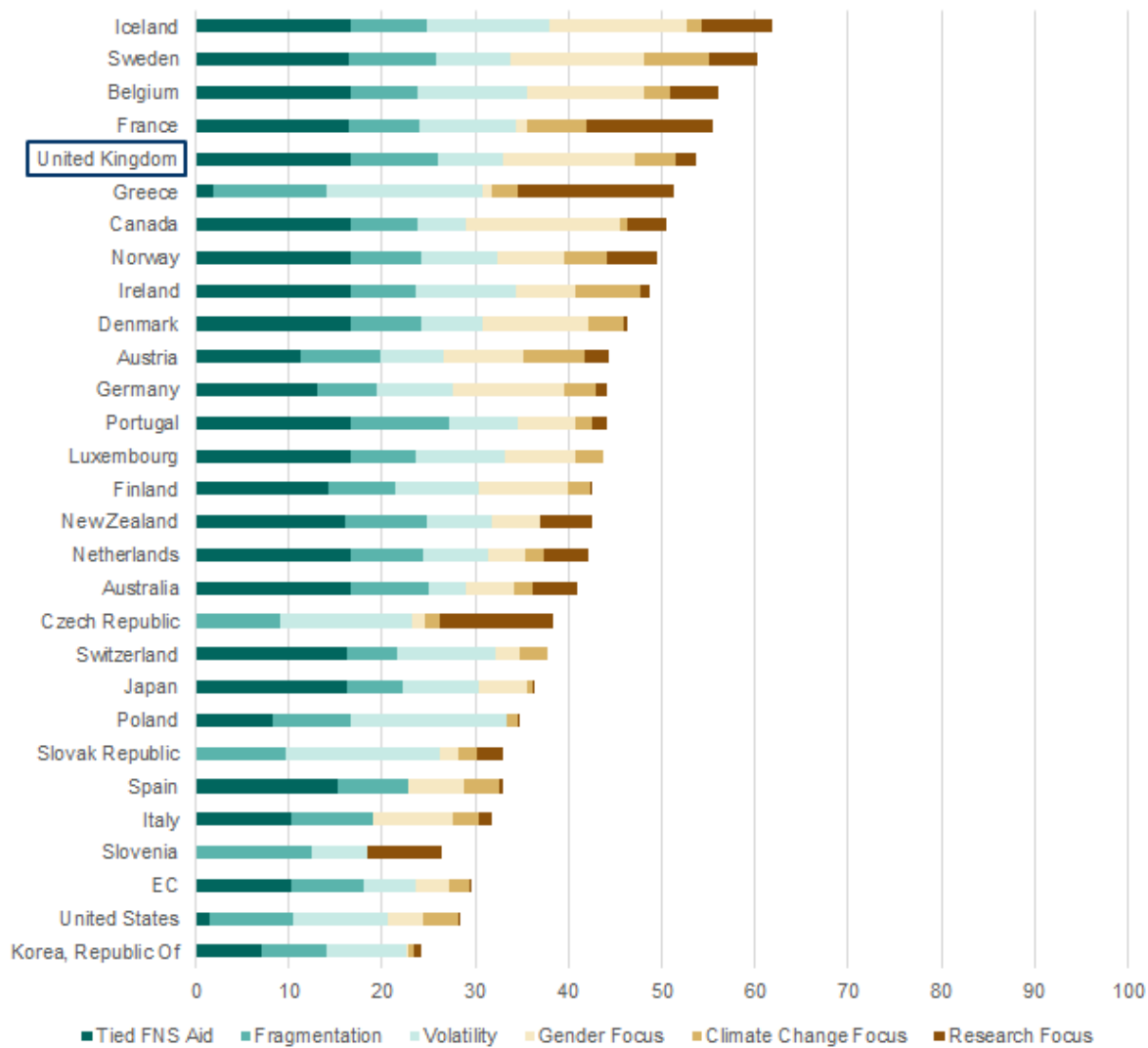
Source: [www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)

Figure 3: FNS country targeting rankings 2010-2014 (rescaled scores)



Source: [www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)

Figure 4: FNS aid implementation quality rankings 2010-2014 (rescaled scores)



Source: [www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)

### 3C. Aid volume: The overall U.K. spending priority for FNS is questionable

The U.K. spends under 4 percent of its ODA (0.02 percent of GNI) directly on the basket of FNS activities, as defined in the ERH framework and recorded under the relevant DAC sector codes (Annex 1).<sup>10</sup> By this definition, the U.K. share of the DAC's FNS ODA (about 6 percent) falls far short of its share of overall DAC ODA (13-14 percent).<sup>11</sup> The U.K. has only recently started to spend slightly more of its share of DAC's overall ODA even on basic nutrition (at 16 percent of total DAC ODA for nutrition in 2015<sup>12</sup>), than would be expected, given the same share of DAC ODA. This makes it hard to claim that either FNS or basic nutrition are major U.K. aid priorities.

By far the largest portion of the U.K.'s FNS spending, as is the case for most other donors, goes to agricultural production improvement and rural development programs, plus smaller shares to basic nutrition (in which the U.K. is a positive outlier in terms of its share of GNI, behind only Canada and Ireland among major donors in 2014) and agricultural research.

The U.K.'s aid spending on FNS, under this multiyear umbrella definition, is slightly above the DAC average regarding its share of GNI, but also fell in absolute terms between the five-year periods ending 2013 and 2014. It went from \$692 million, to \$570 million, despite a period of exceptionally rapid growth of the U.K.'s overall ODA, which hit the 0.7 percent GNI target at the end of 2013. In 2015, the single-year FNS disbursement recovered to just under \$700 million, i.e., 4 percent of a slightly rising ODA.<sup>13</sup>

It would be tempting to conclude from this snapshot that FNS is simply not a major priority for the U.K., relative to its other aid objectives. This characterization is not fully justified, as argued below, but it is also clear that there is ample room for improvement. As discussed in Section 4 below, the relationship between nutrition and food security, and the importance of an integrated approach between the two, may not be understood and/or emphasized in the same way as it is by other large developed country actors reviewed by ERH.

There are some legitimate reasons why it might be reasonable to expect the U.K.'s share of FNS aid to be low. One of these is the fact that bilateral FNS aid does not fully credit the U.K.'s higher-than-DAC average giving to multilateral agencies that tend to do support FNS more intensively than bilateral donors. For example, some 50-60 percent of DFID's budget is routed as either core or earmarked funding to, or via, multilaterals and agriculture and rural development are no exception; DFID funds FNS heavily via, inter alia, IDA (World Bank) operations, GAFSP and CGIAR. Of course, other donors also contribute to multilaterals, so a comparative perspective must account for that, too. When each donor is credited with a share of multilateral FNS spending proportionate to its share of multilateral financing, the results change, but the broad story remains intact. The U.K. would then be credited with an extra \$669 million in FNS aid in 2015, almost equal to its bilateral total of \$694 million, but its share of total ODA to FNS (now including imputed multilateral spending) would still be slightly below (12 percent) its share in total DAC ODA (13-14 percent).

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<sup>10</sup> This definition includes all rural development, so some general rural infrastructure investment with at best an indirect link to FNS. Conversely, it omits some agricultural market and climate-smart development, which is often scored under growth and environment rubrics, respectively, in donor DAC reporting. (If so, that could also affect other donors, so not necessarily improve the U.K.'s ranking). DFID's online Development Tracker, which is on a commitments basis, capturing an overall budget of just under 10 billion pounds for 2016/17, or five-sixths of U.K. ODA, shows 366 million pounds, or 3.77 percent of DFID's budget, committed to agriculture. Nutrition is listed under basic health as 118 million pounds, adding about another 1.2 percent. The combined total therefore approximates 5 percent of DFID spend, or 4.2 percent of U.K. ODA, which is roughly consistent with the ERH findings. In the Tracker, agriculture emerges as only the 7th of 12 sector priorities ranked by budget shares. Health, including nutrition, is the second, at nearly 11 percent.

<sup>11</sup> For overall and FNS flows, this figure concerns only DAC countries, omitting EU Institution, which are a full member of DAC, but which are recipients of DAC country aid as well. Add bilateral and multilateral aid would potentially double-count ODA.

<sup>12</sup> Bilateral basic nutrition ODA of all DAC spending in developing countries, including the European Union.

<sup>13</sup> All data above are from the December 2016 release of the OECD DAC CRS.

Another caution in interpreting the volume of FNS ODA involves the recognized deficiencies of the DAC codes, both for agriculture when many relevant programs may come under private sector or climate change codes, for example,<sup>9</sup> and also for basic nutrition with respect to the more nuanced SUN methodology, discussed further in Section 4A.

Such adjustments would make the U.K. FNS aid effort picture look rather less bleak in comparison to other DAC donors, but that by themselves they are unlikely to change its ranking dramatically (remembering that its close DAC comparators also tend to have large multilateral shares, and to perform well under the SUN definitions).

The bottom line is that the U.K. has probably been spending (as a share of GNI), as well as scoring, less in the past 5-6 years, relative both to several other donors and its own growing ODA, on agriculture and rural development-though increasingly on nutrition, and as I have shown in the previous section, especially on nutrition-sensitive activities anchored in other sectors. How serious a problem is this volume issue? Would an integrated set of FNS programming objectives based on ERH, incorporating but going beyond the nutrition-related ones, be helpful or confusing? I discuss both related, but separable, issues in more detail in Section 4.

### 3D. Country targeting of U.K. aid, mainly to resource-poor countries

The better news is that U.K. FNS aid, though not as large as it might be, is typically well-focused geographically as well as (discussed in Section 3E) thematically. Indeed, the U.K. has one of the best overall scores (5th place) on FNS country focus in the DAC.

The construction of this index relates the share of each country in the donor’s rolling portfolio to its (unweighted) scores in the FNS developing country indices for “needs” (N), quality of “policies” (P), and availability of “resources” (R). This calculus inevitably involves trade-offs in terms of donor selectivity. While it is in theory conceivable that a country simultaneously exhibits (1) severe food/nutritional needs, combined with (2) excellent policies in place to address them, but (3) minimal domestic resources to invest, making it a perfect candidate for aid in our model, this idealized NPR combination will not occur often. Dire needs, especially in the poorest contexts, tend to correlate with less-good domestic policies and stronger policies with stronger resource bases, for example, pulling the overall country score in different directions, which is why the disaggregation can be revealing.

Table 1 below shows the top 14 of 64 countries receiving U.K. FNS aid. Together they account for over 83 percent of its FNS portfolio. I also show for each their absolute NPR scores and whether these are better (green) or worse (red) than the median values for the entire developing country pool. A few, subjectively judged, borderline cases are shown in amber.

Overall statistics for the developing country 2016 ERH dataset are as follows (index scores for N and P, and per capita rural dollars spend for R):

Table 1: ERH developing country overall statistics

	Mean	Median
<b>Needs</b>	43.7	41.5
<b>Policies</b>	49.8	47.9
<b>Resources</b>	\$114.5	\$72.5

Source: [www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)

Table 2: Top U.K. FNS aid recipients and their N, P, and R scores, 2010-2014<sup>14</sup>

COUNTRY	TOTAL U.K. FNS ODA \$ MILLION (AVERAGE 2010-2014)	PER RURAL CAPITA U.K. FNS ODA \$ (AVERAGE 2010-2014)	NEEDS	POLICIES	RESOURCES
BANGLADESH	115	1.09	49	42	16.02
ETHIOPIA	76	1.03	69	37	24.51
INDIA	53	0.06	52	45	20.97
COLOMBIA	24	2.11	32	59	70.91
MALAWI	24	1.81	71	45	40.20
AFGHANISTAN	23	1.04	65	34	41.42
ZIMBABWE	19	2.00	63	32	20.77
MYANMAR	18	0.50	50	32	8.56
RWANDA	15	1.93	62	41	34.61
NIGERIA	14	0.15	59	39	12.20
BRAZIL	13	0.44	18	68	255.51
TANZANIA	13	0.38	65	42	14.24
NEPAL	13	0.55	47	40	15.91
SOUTH SUDAN	8	0.90	59	32	15.91

<b>Total top 14</b>	\$429 million
<b>Total all U.K. 64</b>	\$509 million
<b>Share of top 14</b>	83%
<b>Share of top 5</b>	58%

Source: [www.endingruralhunger.org](http://www.endingruralhunger.org)

The U.K. aid country-focus story emerges relatively clearly from this table. There is a remarkably high concentration on a few large beneficiaries. Conversely, there a “long tail” of some 30 countries (not shown here) each receiving less than \$1 million a year annually, though many of these are programs just ending, or barely starting. Just five countries, two of which (India and Colombia) have since graduated from new DFID bilateral aid commitments, account for well over half of U.K. FNS aid. They receive between just \$0.06 and over \$2 per rural person per year, or between \$1 and \$2 per rural person/year, roughly, once populous India is excluded. This also raises the question of how the U.K., and DFID in particular, will reprogram the substantial FNS support previously provided to countries graduating from aid. Will they increase support to other countries with lower FNS resources and still-high high FNS needs, or toward other thematic priorities for ODA altogether?

Within the top 14, there is a reasonably strong focus on FNS “needs,” with two egregious anomalies (Brazil and Colombia, the latter, however, having a major internally displaced population burden). Second, this also presents a good picture in terms of the U.K. systematically aiding countries with low domestic “resource” bases relative to their rural populations, again with the same two exceptions (Colombia being borderline this time). The relatively poor U.K. score out of the three is “policies,” but this does not heavily drag down the overall score, partly because most of the U.K.’s poor-policy partner countries are not far below the median ERH score. The worst cases within the group are Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and South Sudan, fragile contexts where humanitarian considerations were, or are still,

<sup>14</sup> Amounts in constant 2013 \$.



determinant. India and Bangladesh are more borderline cases, with just below-average domestic policies, but slightly above-average needs and well-below average resources.

In fact, the resolute focus on low-resource countries sustains the U.K.'s favorable overall focus rating. It comes in equal first on that element, as against only 15th on needs (clustered quite closely together with other DAC members) and 23rd on policy focus. The primacy of focus on low-income, low-fiscal capacity countries, and indeed fragile states now, is built into DFID's statutory mandate of low-income selectivity, and is not therefore that surprising, though its score relative to other DAC members is remarkable.

Again, the obvious upper-middle-income anomaly is Brazil, with Colombia a borderline case. On further investigation, both these FNS investments were reported by Defra, the U.K. agriculture and environment agency, and relate partly to climate-change objectives, implemented through earmarked trust funds managed by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. This is a double-edged sword for DFID: on the one side, it shows its own allocations to be very equitable; on the other, the action of other departments looks, at least based on this limited instance, much less so. As the government has decided to reduce DFID's share of U.K. ODA progressively to about 70 percent from its current level of near 80 percent (85 percent for FNS), the scope for such tensions between institutional objectives will increase.

### 3E. Quality of FNS aid implementation: also good

In the ERH framework, this area, inspired by the well-known Brookings–Center for Global Development “quality of aid” or QuODA Index (Brookings-CGD 2009 and subsequent updates), looks at publicly available data on some of the classic indicators of aid quality which are associated with better implementation and higher-quality outcomes. (It does not, to note, attempt to evaluate donor FNS programs and their impact directly).

It is the largest battery of FNS aid sub-indicators, 10 of them, in ERH, spread over six clusters. These cover the donor's (1) Food aid untying share (2) Fragmentation (the relative financial significance of a donor's FNS footprint in-country) (3) Volatility of ODA at country level (standardized variance of disbursements) (4) Gender focus and (5) Climate focus, using shares of the relevant “markers” reported to the DAC, and finally (6) Share of FNS aid to agricultural research, as a proxy for the R+D content of FNS assistance.

The U.K. comes in 5th out of 29 overall in the 2016 report on this “quality” dimension. This is just one place below its 2015 report rank. Its absolute quality score also fell slightly, with the worsening of the volatility score (linked to some sharply falling country budgets in 2014, as already discussed), counteracting smaller improvements in gender, climate and research focus.

Food aid “untying” is no longer an issue for the U.K. and most European DAC members, who are effectively 100 percent untied, so this indicator, though positive, is not particularly revealing in the U.K.'s case. The U.K. also scores very well on “fragmentation,” or rather the lack of it, which is the flipside of its high country portfolio concentration, discussed above. No major FNS donor quite matches it. It comes in around mid-table on FNS aid “volatility,” however, as it did in 2015, but a little worse, given some abrupt reductions at the larger end of its portfolio (the subsequent rebound for the single year 2015 is itself evidence of volatility). The U.K. comes in fourth on “gender” focus, as self-reported (but quality monitored) through the DAC marker system, which gives double weight to projects rated as having principal, as against significant, gender objective. DFID has long had this as an area of high institutional priority and relative strength in its performance, across all sectors, but it is especially valuable in FNS terms.

The U.K. also has a respectable fifth place score on “climate change” markers (mitigation and adaptation) in FNS projects, and this score is modestly rising. With climate change, drought, and other extreme weather-related catastrophes, as well as conflict again threatening famines, especially in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, there is no room for complacency on this score. Finally, once again, the U.K. falls to mid-table ranking on its “research” share of FNS spending.

### 3F. Questions for further discussion

The above snapshot is, of course, at best the start of any systematic discussion on what makes for a high-quality FNS program and whether the U.K. has reached, or could quickly attain, that standard. This approach nonetheless has the merit of using internationally comparable public-source data as a jumping-off point for additional analysis and discussion.

Arguably the most important four such issues arising, presented in the introduction, are:

- To what extent is FNS a major spending priority for U.K. aid?
- Does the U.K. pursue FNS as an integrated goal?
- Are smallholder farms still central to the U.K.’s international development strategy?
- Does Brexit offer a major opportunity to improve U.K. trade and subsidy policy for FNS?

These are discussed in turn in the next section.

## 4. Special topics

### 4A. To what extent is FNS a real priority for U.K. aid?

I showed above that based on a given DAC FNS purpose code basket (which has its acknowledged deficiencies, but applies equally to all other DAC members), the U.K., even when imputing its contribution to multilateral institutions, accounts for a smaller proportion (12 percent) of the DAC's FNS ODA than its overall 13-14 percent ODA share would predict, and only recently a slightly higher share (16 percent) on nutrition.

Nonetheless, there is considerable qualitative evidence that agriculture, improved farm productivity and agri-business and value-chain development remain important to DFID's strategy for growth, particularly in Africa (e.g., DFID 2015 (1), and Secretary of State Patel's evidence to IDC, 2016). This perspective recognizes that sustainable African economic transformation must hinge on lasting productivity improvements in agriculture, allowing labor to be released for higher-productivity, off-farm and urban employment in services and manufacturing, and supporting real wages in the rest of economy by containing food price inflation.

Along with this wider perspective has come, arguably, an institutional re-emphasis on agricultural and agro-business markets and value-chains, as well as on international research and development and support, including through pooled global instruments such as GAFSP. As another proxy indicator of priority, DFID's global agriculture team has strengthened from three to eight staff members in the past three years since its creation. It may also well be that there is a lag involved between the new policy directions now in place and the expansion of relevant programming, and our detailed DAC data may not yet reflect 2015 fully, let alone 2016.

Over and above this logic comes the sharply increased profile of the U.K.'s global commitment to ending hunger and malnutrition, both through broad-based commitments such as in the G-7 context (though there are no specific, current, non-nutrition-related financial targets there yet) and for nutrition. The latter include highly cost-effective interventions on micronutrients and systemic approaches to community sanitation, early childhood monitoring and school health and deworming, etc. The impact of such interventions is less closely related to their absolute cost, almost by definition, than is the case with expenditure on, for example, traditional rural infrastructure. Moreover, the U.K. government and within it, DFID are still consistently perceived by civil society observers as major conveners, thought leaders, supporters and active participants in global FNS partnerships and high-profile commitments since 2008, as introduced above.

There remains the nagging question of why then is U.K. aid funding for FNS, if truly important both for its own sake and as central to the wider DFID growth strategy, to valuable global partnerships, and to the SDGs overall and especially to health, just barely converging at least with the U.K.'s overall share of ODA?

Might the U.K./DFID, for example, face supply-side human capacity constraints in preparing FNS programs, especially in the (relatively) new potential growth areas of agricultural and agri-business markets, trade policy advice, and value chain development? Could that be in in turn perhaps because some of these skills are also in critically short supply across the U.K. government?<sup>15</sup> Or, conversely, are some of these opportunity areas already developing fast, but not yet accurately reported as being

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<sup>15</sup> The author has seen no cross-departmental skills data that might help validate or disprove this hypothesis, which remains therefore purely speculative.

FNS-linked, as some DFID staff consulted have suggested (in which case presumably better reporting by DFID would go some way to closing the gap)?<sup>16</sup>

Some DFID respondents also drew attention to an underlying lack of political support, at least in the short term, for the kind of “hanging in” and social protection interventions that could underpin rural livelihoods and food and income security for those large sections of small farmers for whom there are no immediately viable on-farm intensification or off-farm diversification options. Such protection, at least outside of humanitarian crises, is not such an easily defensible investment in the current political climate (see also Section 4C). If so, absent strong new political signals in favor, for example, of large-scale funding of climate change adaptation (e.g., building rural resilience to drought and soil erosion), the U.K.’s share of non-humanitarian agricultural/rural spending might continue to stagnate for some time, before new program opportunities can be developed.

This report therefore recommends that the ERH (FNS basket) aid volume indicator, and its major component parts, or some similar admittedly crude measure, be used by DFID as a “canary in the coalmine,” at least to trigger broader periodic discussions of how food security, as well as nutrition, funding is evolving in the round.

#### 4B. Does the U.K. pursue an integrated approach to FNS aid?

At this point it is worth revisiting briefly why food security and nutrition should be integrated at all. This is not a trivial question, and branches into two distinct tracks that are complementary, but not always well reconciled within aid agencies. First, nutrition advocates point out that tackling underlying food insecurity alone—whatever the investments involved, however effective they may be—will not by itself lead to an improvement in the dietary quality of vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and infants. Thus, food and agriculture programs must also incorporate explicit nutrition objectives and indicators, to improve their impact and to enable better tracking of results.

Conversely, food security and rural-livelihoods advocates emphasize that chronic food insecurity (stemming perhaps from low farm incomes, or inadequate crop diversification) is a root cause of poor diets, and if not tackled as such, will eventually undermine nutritional progress. In this view, a good nutritional strategy should be anchored in a food security one, as well as *vice versa*.

This “dialectic” is fully consistent with the Lancet framework (see Definitions) in which FS falls squarely under the heading of major underlying determinants of fetal and child nutrition, and (most) N under immediate determinants, and interventions addressing each category fall under the rubrics, respectively, of N-sensitive and N-specific. The distinction underpins a multi-stage process to mark where and to what extent project aims and components are linked to “monitorable” nutritional outcomes. It is an integrated approach in its intent, though not all development actors may perceive it as such.

Compared to this framework, the current FNS DAC reporting codes, as used by ERH, are frequently criticized as providing an inaccurate picture of N-specific investments, in particular, and an underestimate of N-sensitive ones for donors like the U.K. Civil society organizations (led by the French Action Against Hunger initiative with the help of some donors, including the U.K.) are trying to improve

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<sup>16</sup> Some DFID agricultural market and value-chain investment programming is reportedly scored under private sector development purpose codes (Emmanuelle Begin, personal communication). Determining the extent of such (plausible and probably unavoidable) overlaps is beyond the scope of this report. It is also unlikely that such project coding issues would be unique to DFID within the DAC.

this situation, including perhaps by introducing new DAC markers that are better aligned to the SUN definitions.<sup>17</sup>

FNS-related measurement requirements faced by DFID staff have become more complex since the 2015 Conservative Manifesto pledge to “improve the nutrition of 50 million people who would otherwise go hungry.” To monitor this requires detailed knowledge of (1) the comprehensiveness of the package of nutrition-related services and (2) whether this package is (directly or indirectly) targeted to the population in need. This is broken down further into categories of “high, medium, and low intensity” nutrition reach, with the first two requiring higher standards of targeting and the latter no targeting (DFID, 2015 (2)). The qualifying target population includes all women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, and children under 5.

It is a thorough and elaborate framework, involving some 11 pages of exposition and a number of possible permutations. Within it, the further term “hunger sensitive programs” is introduced, defined as “programs that intend to address hunger (i.e., food insecurity) that do not meet nutrition-sensitive criteria.” Such programs can contribute to the overall (reach) indicator “if these are delivered alongside nutrition-specific interventions that will deliver improvements in nutrition as well as food security.” To qualify as hunger-sensitive, programs must also have, and monitor, specific food security outcomes at household level, such as improved quality and diversity of food, accessibility of food (including via household income diversification and lower prices), and food safety or quality.

It may be worth DFID checking to what extent generalist field staff and managers responsible for making programming choices, supported by nutrition advisers based in the field, are both conversant with this guidance framework and actively factor it into their decisions.

To the extent that this set of metrics is indeed mainstreamed into regular business planning processes, it further strengthens the already strong institutional incentives built around nutrition goals, as above. Moreover, it potentially also encourages stronger linkages between food security (agriculture and livelihoods, loosely speaking) and nutrition, as such combinations score toward the headline political targets whereas “standalone” agriculture does not. (There are no standalone U.K. financial targets for this, currently.) It also reinforces the requirement for the design of broader food security interventions (agriculture, market and private sector support, infrastructure, etc.) to identify and track specific outcomes or impact at household level—which is not a given for FNS programming in general.

### **Conclusion:**

- (1) Given DFID’s already quite elaborate reporting framework, and an already high U.K. aid nutritional priority profile and results-focus, it may not make sense to introduce systematic institutionalized targeting of any further FNS spending volume aggregates. However, it is strongly suggested that DFID use the ERH framework at least as a periodic check on the composition of the U.K.’s overall FNS portfolio.
- (2) A point worth exploring in DFID is the extent to which the scoring of “hunger sensitive” interventions, as already foreseen within the nutrition measurement context, could not be spread to other programs, as a partial way of tracking the FNS priority overall
- (3) The current CSO-led attempt to align DAC reporting codes for FNS, and especially for basic nutrition, more closely with the SUN methodology, perhaps by introducing a food and nutrition security marker, deserves official support.

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<sup>17</sup> *Nutrition-sensitive* makes up the bulk of U.K. financial commitments toward nutrition (and food) security, yet there is no way of tracking these directly in the CRS, and as mentioned, there may also be underestimation of N-sensitive (and FNS) spending in other areas than agriculture. *Nutrition-specific* interventions should mostly fall under the DAC basic nutrition (12240) purpose code. This however includes some nutrition-sensitive interventions that do not qualify as nutrition-specific (such as school feeding), but conversely excludes nutrition-specific interventions which are included under other purpose codes. According to a recent R4D policy brief (R4D, 2016) 43 percent of this code does not align with the Lancet’s definition of nutrition-specific interventions.

#### 4C. Small farmers, growth, and poverty-how to strike a balance?

Is DFID turning away from (marginal) smallholder agriculture too soon? This question, also touched on by several NGO and academic interviewees, deserves unpacking.

The starting point is DFID's Conceptual Framework on Agriculture (DFID 2015(1)), introduced above, and published less than 18 months ago, which emphasizes long-term structural transformation both within the agricultural sector and beyond to potentially higher-productivity, off-farm and urban employment. For agriculture in low-income countries to continue to shed labor, and yet underpin affordable food access for an urbanizing workforce, farm labor productivity must rise. This can happen through technology improvements, physical capital injections (e.g., mechanization), land consolidation, improved technical education and farm management skills, and a variety of supporting product, input and financial market improvements. Land intensification (rising productivity per acre) and shifts to higher-value crops are likely concomitants of this process, especially in the very small median farm sizes that characterize most of Africa and Asia.

In this view, not all types and sizes of farms will be able to participate equally in this secular transformation, since it assumes that there are smallholders who will be more and less able, given their starting land, financial, and human capital endowments, to invest and upgrade their productivity, and bear the required risks. Many—a majority initially—will inevitably experience extended periods of both food and income insecurity, either when sustainable on-farm improvements do not prove feasible or when adequate off-farm employment alternatives do not materialize, or both. Yet, “agriculture growth and related downstream growth, if it can be achieved cost effectively, is likely to have a bigger impact on poverty reduction than growth in other sectors” (ibid.), with appropriate caveats on the contexts in which this will be feasible. Two of the major caveats (DFID 2016 (1), evidence paper on agriculture and poverty) are those on farm size limitations to the efficiency of new technology, and quality of land constraints.

This approach leads DFID to a “twin strategy... promoting agricultural transformation, focused on commercialization and agroindustry development... and... facilitating rural transition, from subsistence agriculture to off-farm job opportunities as these emerge.” The first track is labeled “stepping up” and the second either “stepping out” or “hanging in,” the latter being a holding, and protective, strategy during the transition process, the former focused on developing off-farm opportunities and linkages (DFID 2015(1)).

There has been a lively discussion for the past few years (e.g. Collier and Dercon (2013), Dercon and Gollin 2014) on whether this type of approach reverses a traditional DFID focus on chronically vulnerable smallholders, especially female-headed farms and those in ecologically fragile areas, for most of whom neither “stepping up” to commercialization nor “stepping out” into the rural non-farm economy and beyond is possible in the near future. Understandably, generating opportunities for “stepping” in either direction may capture stronger institutional buy-in than mounting a long rear-guard action on “hanging in,” unless there is a much more explicit social protection imperative invoked (i.e., high implicit or explicit social weights, to compensate for lower expected economic returns).

DFID states, on the contrary, (DFID 2015 (1)) that two-thirds of its direct bilateral in-country investment had (as of 2013) a significant focus on building resilience and promoting food security of the poorest rural households (the “hanging in” strategy, effectively), compared to only a quarter on market development and commercialization (“stepping up”). Whether this balance has been sustained since, especially given the new conceptual framework, and whether the large share of U.K. FNS aid channeled through multilateral organizations follows a similar pattern emphasizing smallholder vulnerability, are both open questions (need DFID updates on this if available).



We do know from DAC 2014 data captured in ERH (Section 3 above) that absolute U.K. FNS disbursements are low as a share of U.K. ODA by comparison to several major donors and have not been rising much, even more so for agriculture and rural development, as nutrition (even in the flawed DAC definition) did rise sharply in 2015. It is also plausible that some increased “stepping up” expenditure, for example, on agricultural value chains is being scored as private sector development, which would point to an even smaller share, as well as lower absolute amounts, allocated to “hanging in.”

**Conclusion:** The U.K.’s conceptual approach to smallholders recognizes their diversity and vulnerabilities, as well as their growth potential and wider economic transformation spillovers, in the right contexts and with effective support. It also enables staff to argue more forcefully for agriculture investments within the context of a larger economic development strategy, just released (February 2017), which helps balance parallel agendas on protracted humanitarian crises and climate change resilience. In the short term, however, it is possible that the U.K.’s FNS aid priority pendulum has swung away from holding support to vulnerable and nonviable small-holders (“hanging in”), and toward “stepping up or stepping out” investments, which may not be increasing very rapidly at least for a transition period. This trajectory needs to be monitored carefully from a FNS, as well as an income poverty, perspective.

**Postscript—Humanitarian and social protection dimensions in protracted crises:** DFID is right now, and for months if not years to come at least, once again fully engaged in responding to a major Horn of Africa (and Yemen) food security crisis. While ERH is not primarily about humanitarian assistance, the vast scale of the present famine problem makes a powerful claim for political attention. What its longer-term implications for FNS might be is difficult to speculate on, but social protection approaches for both rural and urban populations will undoubtedly need revisiting in the aftermath of the immediate crises. Rural social protection programs are also a good way to promote food and nutritional security integration in practice. The same applies to cash transfer programs related to food security, and hunger safety net programs as DFID has supported in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh.

#### 4D. Prospects for agricultural trade and producer subsidy reform post-Brexit

Some degree of structural reform of U.K. external agricultural trade and domestic producer subsidies, once freed from the constraints of EU membership, makes eminent political sense, for several reasons:

- **First**, U.K. domestic production patterns are relatively less exposed to low-income country exports than are those of many other EU member states who now help determine the CAP and common external tariff schedules.<sup>18</sup>
- **Second**, there is a longstanding U.K. voter preference, and business stakeholder pressure, for passing the lowest possible food prices through to consumers via the country’s comparatively efficient sourcing, distribution, and processing value chains. Sterling depreciation only increases this sensitivity.
- **Third**, for direct producer supports, there is also the pressing need to generate some budgetary savings post-Brexit, or at least to contain and then reverse the momentum of EU-legacy domestic spending, of which this is easily the largest component (unlike other large member states, the U.K. does not have significant access to regional and social funds).
- **Fourth**, the skewed size distribution of U.K. farmland holdings makes the current, largely land-based, producer support system manifestly inequitable, as well as inefficient (as flat per-acre subsidies do not correct for economies of scale).

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<sup>18</sup> Care should be taken however not to conflate low income, mainly tropical, countries, or least developed countries, with the case of large emerging middle-income economies, some of which are highly competitive in grain and meat products also produced in industrialized countries including the U.K.

- **Fifth**, though a small portion of the current CAP subsidy regime in the U.K. (0.7 billion pounds as compared to 2.4 billion pounds for ordinary land-based payments) pays for environmental and landscape improvements, arguably the least damaging form of subsidy in terms both of global markets and of public goods, much more could be done to accelerate this shift.
- **Sixth**, better food, farming, and trade policies can help to cut greenhouse gas emissions and promote healthier diets to combat major non-communicable diseases.

The first two arguments point toward more open agricultural trade arrangements, when on offer, and the last four for finding different, cheaper, fairer, and greener domestic support mechanisms.

A number of alternative options to the EU-CAP status quo are potentially under consideration, subject of course to their continued compliance with longstanding WTO rules on trade-distorting subsidies (Devlin et al. 2017). The archetypal scenarios include (1) complete subsidy removal, modelled for example on the New Zealand experience of the 1980s, (2) insurance-based support mechanisms, as practiced notably by the U.S., or (3) explicit rewards to farmers for producing public goods (mainly in ecological and rural heritage space, however defined). Various combinations and transitional stages have been mooted, including (ibid.) a universal per-farm payment, which would level the playing field for small-scale U.K. producers.

Under the present CAP payments system, which is now almost entirely decoupled from production, the effect on member states' output and productivity, and thence on opportunities for producers in the global South, is already estimated to be very small (Urban et al, 2016). Land-based direct payments could nonetheless allow some domestic producers to sell below cost to the extent the loss is covered by the subsidy, so are not completely "safe" in terms of trade distortion and hence indirect FNS impact. But their complete removal, as historically in New Zealand, might then have been expected to lead to a worsening of the country's agricultural trade balance, when in fact this strengthened considerably. The counterfactual is unclear (perhaps exports might have grown even faster with subsidies in place), but their removal was not a major barrier to exports, at the least (Devlin et al, 2017)

Crop insurance schemes with publicly subsidized premiums tend to be cheaper, relative to output, than outright subsidies, as they are contingent on market prices falling below pre-defined thresholds, and partly covered by private premium payments (about 38 percent, in the U.S. case). So a shift in that direction could mechanically improve the U.K.'s ERH policy score, all else equal. But they are coupled to specific products and thus potentially more production- and trade-distorting than the current CAP system, which is why the latter is under the "green box" under WTO rules, and the U.S. system is under the "amber box" and subject to strictly monitored limits. However, the U.S. scheme's impact on production has been found to be small, and its likely impact on developing country producers therefore also small, though probably negative (Devlin et al, 2017)

This remains a complex and speculative subset of an as-yet unclear wider set of Brexit negotiating options, and transition arrangements after those negotiations have played out, for which this case study cannot provide specific answers. It is striking however—and slightly alarming—that the February 2017 Government White Paper on Brexit makes no mention of the potential impact on developing countries of different agricultural trade or subsidy policies (or indeed, of the impact on developing countries of changes in the U.K.'s trade arrangements more widely). The often-stated U.K. intention to enter into bilateral free trade agreements as soon as possible with its larger non-EU trading partners—some of whom have huge vested agricultural export interests—also poses the question of how to cushion preference erosion for developing countries that are further back in the trade negotiations queue.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For a rough sense of what is potentially at stake, consider that Belize sent nearly 25 percent of its exports by value to the U.K. from 2011 to 2015. Other vulnerable countries include Mauritius (20 percent), Fiji (15 percent), and Bangladesh (10 percent). (Jones, ICSTD, 2016).



## 5. Tentative conclusions and recommendations

1. Over the last decade, the U.K. has made global FNS into a high policy and political priority, especially for its international aid, mostly centered around improving specific malnutrition outcomes. It is less convincing in linking up food and nutrition security in a broader context, as ERH does, especially in terms of external trade and U.K. subsidy policy priorities, and in its recent trajectory for non-nutrition FNS spending, which is surprisingly low and needs careful monitoring.
2. The U.K. makes deliberate and systematic use of international partnerships and multilateral action on FNS; it has, for instance, one of the highest multilateral shares in FNS of any major DAC donor.
3. The U.K. has a broad, vibrant, and demanding civil society/NGO apparatus, which is deeply rooted in political advocacy around FNS, and especially nutrition, to the point that even if high-level political attention were to falter, there is enough policy momentum, and specific commitments subject to accountability, to ensure several more years of progress at least.
4. Brexit offers opportunities to re-calibrate external trade with low-income countries and the (mildly negative) global market effects of U.K. agriculture subsidies, to achieve positive FNS outcomes. Equally, there are options that could potentially make things worse for those countries, and a worrying lack of any apparent international development concern in published Brexit policy statements.
5. DFID has set itself a complex set of targets around nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming, including methodologies for estimating key populations reached. This set of metrics and targets leaves open the possibility of further falls in FNS expenditure not scoring under this system, particularly in agriculture and rural development, so the published ERH aggregates, drawn from the DAC and improved as necessary by the latter, could be used as a second-line check.
6. The new agricultural policy approach, which subdivides smallholder agriculture into those who can “step up” to commercialization, “step out” to productive off-farm and urban employment, or “hang in” with transitional support where neither of the other two approaches is feasible, rightly anchors DFID’s approach to agriculture in the wider arena of secular economic transformation. However, it is entirely possible that the third and least economically, and perhaps therefore politically, attractive leg—supporting the chronically vulnerable—becomes under-financed within this strategy, and that balance should be kept under review.
7. There are some potential short-term opportunities and “quick wins” available to the U.K., especially on the FNS reporting and accountability front. For example, the upcoming Taormina G-7 Summit could usefully endorse an improved FNS aid accountability framework, to assess donor country aid focus. In addition, the alignment of DAC reporting on FNS with the SUN accountability framework could be greatly improved, including by U.K. and other donor support for the introduction of an FNS “marker.” There are other modest but potentially powerful improvements to be captured, such as mainstreaming the use of “hunger-sensitive” programming already introduced in DFID.

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## Annex 1: DAC CRS sector codes used to track FNS in Ending Rural Hunger

CRS SECTOR CODE	CRS SECTOR NAME
12240	Basic nutrition
31110	Agricultural policy and administrative management
31120	Agricultural development
31130	Agricultural land resources
31140	Agricultural water resources
31150	Agricultural inputs
31161	Food crop production
31162	Industrial crops/export crops
31163	Livestock
31164	Agrarian reform
31165	Agricultural alternative development
31166	Agricultural extension
31181	Agricultural education/training
31182	Agricultural research
31191	Agricultural services
31192	Plant and post-harvest protection and pest control
31193	Agricultural financial services
31194	Agricultural co-operatives
31195	Livestock/veterinary services
31310	Fishing policy and administrative management
31320	Fishery development
31381	Fishery education/training
31382	Fishery research
31391	Fishery services
32161	Agro-industries
43040	Rural development
52010	Food aid/Food security programs

## Annex 2: Extract from statement by G-7 Food Security Working Group (FSWG) Chair, December 2016

Regarding nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, the OECD/DAC's WP-STAT has been discussing the ways to enhance monitoring of such interventions.

- (1) It is proposed that the OECD members amend the list of nutrition actions within the CRS "Basic Nutrition (12240)" purpose code, and align it with the Lancet definition of nutrition-specific activities recognized by all member states.
- (2) Regarding the nutrition-sensitive investments, there are three options:
  - a. Introducing a multiple purpose code system/multiple reporting system and setting up a new purpose code for "nutrition sensitive aid" under the 400 category "multi-sector, cross-cutting", which is to allocate the project shares to different codes;
  - b. Introducing a nutrition-sensitive marker by agreeing on the criteria for eligibility; or
  - c. Applying predefined imputed percentages to the expenditures through nutrition-sensitive related OECD/DAC CRS codes.

The result can be reflected in the Elmau Indicator 2-5, once the DAC's methodology is set up and the data become available. Also, the G-7 will continue its engagement on food security and nutrition with the OECD/DAC and other relevant international organizations and research institutions for better monitoring and alignment with efforts to achieve the SDGs.