

**International Development Committee Inquiry: The UK Government's
work on achieving SDG2: Zero Hunger**

November 2023

**Written evidence submitted by the Catholic Agency for Overseas
Development (CAFOD)**

About CAFOD

1. CAFOD is the official aid agency for the Catholic Church in England and Wales; part of the global Caritas confederation of national organisations, each governed by their national Bishop's conference and linked to national Catholic commissions on health, education, and peace/justice issues. CAFOD partners with diverse local NGOs, including both faith-based groups and others working on human rights and other issues regardless of religion or culture.

Executive Summary

2. Reform of the current food system is long overdue. The food system is currently based on an industrialised model of agriculture, which is responsible for 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions¹ and 80% of deforestation in some parts of the world.²
3. While we welcome the Government's commitment to strengthening the food system and ending hunger in the International Development White Paper, this submission analyses why the UK Government will fall short of achieving SDG2 with its current approach.
4. The Government has not prioritised ODA for the most food insecure countries. For example, South Sudan has the highest rates of food insecurity globally, but the UK cut funding to the "South Sudan Humanitarian Fund" from \$22m in 2017 to just \$3m in 2022³.

¹ Crippa, M., et al. (2021). Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions. Available here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00225-9>

² UN Convention to Combat Desertification. (2022). Summary for Decision Makers. Global Land Outlook, second edition. Available here: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-04/GLO2_SDM_low-res_0.pdf

³CAFOD and Development Initiatives. (2023). Food insecurity in South Sudan: Financing to local actors. Available here:

5. In the long term, the UK is not effectively targeting its ODA towards supporting sustainable agriculture, such as agroecology programmes. Currently only 4% of the UK aid budget goes towards agriculture,⁴ and only a fraction of this supports sustainable approaches. There are currently no UK climate finance programmes targeting sustainable agriculture.
6. The UK's support for multi-lateral organisations, such as the World Bank, also upholds an industrialised model of agriculture which has little poverty alleviation benefits.⁵
7. Therefore, CAFOD is calling on the UK Government to adopt the following recommendations:
8. **Recommendation 1: Create an international agriculture strategy**
 - a. The UK has not updated its international agricultural strategy since 2005. An updated strategy should include research funding targeted at working with small-scale farmers to develop the tools they need to build diverse, climate-resilient production systems that provide decent livelihoods. This would put the White Paper commitments on localisation and genuine partnership into practice.
 - b. Furthermore, to ensure coherence with the UK Government's overall engagement with low and middle-income countries, an international agriculture strategy must be adopted by all government departments including those responsible for the UK's trade and investment policies.
9. **Recommendation 2: Shift UK aid towards agroecology**
 - a. The FCDO should shift more UK ODA towards agroecology programmes, as part of its climate and development finance portfolios and open specific agroecology funding windows that are available for local actors, including women's groups.

https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/4NOemEHMC8Mz7CasKRBUc/338a9b25b003a222b7f9d5f200f0b946/Food_Sector_Financing_to_Local_Actors_in_South_Sudan.pdf

⁴CAFOD and RSPB. (2021). Harnessing the potential of agriculture for people and nature: the role of UK aid. available here:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/b51bbaf779e0b18b4f0957a22995f51e8b942c4d9b76acfaee583702db356e45/24689aa99d16e43e766cb85656c5641f/CAFOD-RSPB_POLICY-BRIEF_AGRICULTURE-FOR-PEOPLE-AND-NATURE_MAY2021.pdf

⁵Kenner, D. and Segal, R. (2023). Sowing the seeds of poverty: How the World Bank harms poor farmers. Available here:

<https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/1qOHddSjT4v5KmuFAsD0EA/35b3ef1587a12b52dd9b3c4fd7a01714/Sowing-the-seeds-of-poverty-2023.pdf>

10. **Recommendation 3: Promptly introduces the resilience adaptability fund**
 - a. This fund must be focussed on local actors and include mechanisms to hold international NGOs to account for their commitment to localisation
11. **Recommendation 4: Scale up funding for food systems transformation in humanitarian contexts**
 - a. Given their knowledge and rootedness in communities, funding should be scaled up for local actors to build long-term resilience and transform local food systems to meet the needs of current and future generations.
12. **Recommendation 5: Use its influence and vote to urge the World Bank to champion the rights of smallholder farmers**
 - a. The World Bank should end support for restrictive seeds laws that undermine the ability of farmers to save, share and sell seeds as they have done for generations.
 - b. Furthermore, the World Bank can shift its investments to support farmer seed systems as a vital first step in building agroecological production systems.

Assessment of the UK Government's approach in achieving SDG 2

13. CAFOD welcomes the strong focus around food systems that was set out in the International Development White Paper.⁶
14. We welcomed commitments to “help farmers to secure their livelihoods through sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems” and also to “repurpose inefficient fossil fuel and agricultural subsidies”.
15. However, the White Paper was light on detail on how the UK Government would deliver a “food-secure future”. The core of the Government’s approach to strengthening the food system centred on an over-reliance on investing in new technologies, strengthening scientific partnerships, and scaling up

⁶ FCDO. (2023). International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change: A White Paper on International Development. Available here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655b44b6046ed4000d8b9bb6/international-development-in-a-contested-world-ending-extreme-poverty-and-tackling-climate-change.pdf>

technology. This does not address the wider issues of excluding farmers from decisions that affect their lives, from the land to local markets.

16. While we welcome progress in innovative technologies, technology must work for the benefit of smallholder food producers, as farmers do not use technology that does not meet their needs. This is well-evidenced by a 3-year research programme conducted by CERES2030, which received funding from the FCDO, this reviewed agricultural research on interventions to tackle hunger.⁷
17. The research found that over 95% of the studies examined were not relevant to the needs of smallholder farmers and communities. Few of the studies examined involved farmer participation, and most studies focused on new technologies, while overlooking the existing reality of farmers and what would work best in their situations.
18. Therefore, the FCDO should ensure that its research and investment priorities are focussed on smallholder farmer needs.

Aid effectiveness of achieving SDG 2

19. Despite the UK Government recognising that “increased agricultural productivity centred on the smallholder farming sector, and backed by secure land tenure, creates jobs, improves local food security and spreads growth more evenly”⁸, CAFOD and the RSPB’s report shows only 4% of UK ODA goes to agriculture, and much of this goes via British International Investment (BII) towards large-scale agricultural development that does not meet the needs of majority of small-scale farmers.⁹
20. For example, when analysing ODA going towards agricultural projects, CAFOD and RSPB found that from 2013-2019, BII and other UK aid-funded institutions such as the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG),

⁷ Nature editorials, Vol 586. (2020). To end hunger, science must change its focus. Available here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02849-6.pdf>

⁸FCDO. (2023). International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change: A White Paper on International Development. Available here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655b44b6046ed4000d8b9bb6/international-development-in-a-contested-world-ending-extreme-poverty-and-tackling-climate-change.pdf>

⁹ CAFOD and RSPB. (2021). Harnessing the potential of agriculture for people and nature: the role of UK aid. available here: https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/b51bbaf779e0b18b4f0957a22995f51e8b942c4d9b76acfaee583702db356e45/24689aa99d16e43e766cb85656c5641f/CAFOD-RSPB_POLICY-BRIEF_AGRICULTURE-FOR-PEOPLE-AND-NATURE_MAY2021.pdf

invested at least £125.5m of UK aid in Indorama Eleme Fertiliser, a fossil gas-based fertiliser producer based in Nigeria. In the same period, total reported bilateral UK aid to Nigeria for agriculture and rural development was just £26.3m, a fifth of the amount.¹⁰

21. Furthermore, BII, which is a key mechanism in how the UK Government delivers its ODA, has not been able to prove its investments can reduce poverty, and has repeatedly been questioned by independent enquiries into aid effectiveness.¹¹ This is a significant cause for concern about the effectiveness of UK Aid as BII has received £4,132bn of UK aid money from 2015-2022.¹² This means that BII's assets were approximately the same size as the entire FCDO aid budget, which was £8,115bn in 2021/22.¹³
22. While we welcome the Government directing BII to become more transparent and to spend half of its annual investments in low-income and fragile countries¹⁴, we are disappointed that there is no commitment to stronger oversight from the FCDO to ensure that the investments are alleviating extreme poverty.
23. The FCDO should shift more UK ODA towards agroecology programmes, as part of its climate and development finance portfolios and open specific agroecology funding windows that are available for local actors, including women's groups.

Programme effectiveness of achieving SDG2

24. Analysis of UK aid programming on agriculture and land use from CAFOD and RSPB also showed that the Government's approach was incoherent,

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹International Development Committee. (2023). Investment for development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions. Available here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41461/documents/203966/default/>

¹² FCDO, Annual Report and Accounts. (2021-22). Available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1095304/FCDO_Annual_Report_2021_2022_Accessible_290722.pdf; BII Annual Accounts 2021. Available here:

<https://assets.bii.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/05074646/BII-Annual-Accounts-2021.pdf>

¹³ FCDO, Annual Report and Accounts P87. (2021-22). Available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1095304/FCDO_Annual_Report_2021_2022_Accessible_290722.pdf

¹⁴ FCDO. (2023). International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change: A White Paper on International Development. Available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6560874b0c7ec8000d95bdcf/international-development-in-a-contested-world-ending-extreme-poverty-and-tackling-climate-change.pdf>

with no evidence of a clear guiding vision.¹⁵ Furthermore, the majority of UK spending is currently being directed into projects that show little or no consideration of their potential impacts on nature or climate, or their effect on land rights and participation in the decision-making of local communities.

25. The report assessed UK bilateral aid programmes, reporting over £2 million of spend on agriculture in 2019, directed to just 25 programmes.¹⁶ Approaches to agriculture and land use programme design, management, performance assessment and reporting varied widely, making it difficult to accurately assess the scale and effectiveness of UK aid to the sector.
26. For example, our assessment showed that only eight had any nature and climate indicators, while 17 programmes had no relevant indicators.
27. Therefore, we recommend that the FCDO, and all relevant departments disbursing ODA, uses a coherent set of social, environmental and climate change criteria that will be used in the design and assessment of all UK aid projects and programmes on agriculture and land use. This should be based on the Agroecology Principles developed by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition.¹⁷

Transforming the food system to work for smallholder food producers

28. The food system must be transformed in a way that works for smallholder food producers.
29. CAFOD and our partners support agroecological principles of food production as these practices work in harmony with the local environment and for the benefit of local people. Agroecological approaches that focus on diversifying crops, reintroducing indigenous species where these have been lost, reforesting and restoring land and marine areas not only help communities adapt through greater dietary diversity, greater crop diversity

¹⁵ CAFOD and RSPB. (2021). Harnessing the potential of agriculture for people and nature: the role of UK aid. available here: https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/b51bbaf779e0b18b4f0957a22995f51e8b942c4d9b76acfaee583702db356e45/24689aa99d16e43e766cb85656c5641f/CAFOD-RSPB_POLICY-BRIEF_AGRICULTURE-FOR-PEOPLE-AND-NATURE_MAY2021.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition. (2019). Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Available here: <https://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf>

and therefore greater resilience to climate change, but they strengthen biodiversity and soil quality, can increase carbon capture, and provide viable livelihood strategies.¹⁸¹⁹

30. Small-scale farms are also highly efficient, producing around 35% of global food production on 12% of the land.²⁰ They also usually produce a wider diversity of crops than larger (bigger than 2 hectares) farms, contributing both to environmental and nutritional diversity and resilience.

31. The UK Government must develop a strategic vision to deliver resilient agriculture and secure food systems. This must be rooted in respect for the rights and participation of local producers and communities, and must reflect the central role that agriculture can play in supporting livelihoods, tackling climate change, and protecting and restoring nature.

32. Therefore, the UK Government should:

33. Recommendation 1: Create an international agriculture strategy

c. The UK has not updated its international agricultural strategy since 2005. An updated strategy should include research funding targeted at working with small-scale farmers to develop the tools they need to build diverse, climate-resilient production systems that provide decent livelihoods. This would put the White Paper commitments on localisation and genuine partnership into practice.

d. Furthermore, to ensure coherence with the UK Government's overall engagement with low and middle-income countries, an international agriculture strategy must be adopted by all government departments including those responsible for the UK's trade and investment policies.

34. Recommendation 2: Shift UK aid towards agroecology

a. The FCDO should shift more UK ODA towards agroecology programmes, as part of its climate and development finance

¹⁸ IPBES. (2019). Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/6417333>

¹⁹ Pimbert, M. and Moeller, N. (2018). Absent agroecology aid: on UK agricultural development assistance since 2010. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/2/505>

²⁰ FAO. (2021). News release: Small family farmers produce a third of the world's food. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1398060/>

portfolios and open specific agroecology funding windows that are available for local actors, including women's groups.

UK Government's approach in tackling food insecurity

35. From a humanitarian perspective, the UK has not prioritised its efforts on the world's most food insecure countries. For example, despite South Sudan experiencing the most severe food insecurity in the world, funding for the food sector has been estimated to have decreased by over a third (38%).
36. In fact, the UK, as well as the wider international community, has significantly reduced its funding to South Sudan. Since 2017, the amount provided to South Sudan in the "South Sudan Humanitarian Fund" by the UK has dropped from \$22m to just \$3m in 2022. The UK aid budget for South Sudan was also cut by 59% in 2021, resulting in cuts to critical work across the country.²¹
37. CAFOD and Development Initiatives' report further highlights that only 0.4% of humanitarian funding for food sectors to South Sudan goes directly to front-line local aid organisations.²² This is shocking as local and national organisations are fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of development and humanitarian interventions. This is especially important when dealing with protracted crises as it is difficult to move beyond immediate humanitarian response into the recovery and reconstruction phases.²³
38. Within the overall development and humanitarian financial flows, funding for long-term solutions through resilience-building that will reduce the impacts of future droughts is a fraction of all spending in crisis-hit contexts. For example, in South Sudan, funding for resilience-building in food systems has made up just 11% of all humanitarian and development food sector spending since 2017, with similar figures across the whole of the Horn of Africa.²⁴ Without long-term investment in resilience-building, we risk a

²¹ CAFOD. (2023). News article: New research finds South Sudan has most severe food insecurity in the world. Available here: <https://cafod.org.uk/news/media/press-releases/south-sudan-food-insecurity>

²² CAFOD and Development Initiatives. (2023). Food insecurity in South Sudan: Financing to local actors. Available here:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/4NOemEHMC8Mz7CasKRBUC/338a9b25b003a222b7f9d5f200f0b946/Food_Sector_Financing_to_Local_Actors_in_South_Sudan.pdf

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

repeated cycle of food crises and global humanitarian appeals that remain unfulfilled.

Strengthening food security through local actors

39. While we welcome the UK Government's commitment in the International Development White Paper to create a local leadership strategy, and to see a commitment to take more risks in programming,²⁵ it is crucial that funding instruments and percentage targets are included in the strategy so that quality funding reaches local actors.

40. Furthermore, the FCDO should also create a new approach to local first responders in complex, dynamic and often very dangerous crisis situations. We welcome the Government's commitment to "scope a separate fund of up to 15% of our humanitarian provision to allow us to build in resilience and adaptation alongside delivery of humanitarian relief".²⁶ However, too often, FCDO funding through international agencies onto local organisations involves expecting them to take on risks that international agencies cannot, without adequately supporting them to do so.

41. To change this, the Government and other donors should hold international agencies and funding mechanisms accountable for how they fund and partner with local organisations.

42. Therefore, CAFOD recommends that the UK Government:

43. **Recommendation 3: Promptly introduces the resilience adaptability fund**

- a. This fund must be focussed on local actors and include mechanisms to hold international NGOs to account for their commitment to localisation.

44. **Recommendation 4: Scale up funding for food systems transformation in humanitarian contexts**

- a. Given their knowledge and rootedness in communities, funding should be scaled up for local actors to build long-term resilience and

²⁵ FCDO. (2023). International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change: A White Paper on International Development. Available here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655b44b6046ed4000d8b9bb6/international-development-in-a-contested-world-ending-extreme-poverty-and-tackling-climate-change.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid

transform local food systems to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Achieving SDG2 in multi-lateral fora

45. We admire the UK Government's ambition in "galvanising action to achieve zero hunger and end malnutrition"²⁷ at the Global Food Security Summit. However, the Summit focussed on top-down technocratic approaches and farmer experiences were often overlooked.
46. The UK Government's wider approach of working in multi-lateral fora, such as through the World Bank, has also undermined progress towards SDG2 and food security. This is because the World Bank has facilitated market expansion for agribusinesses to promote hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers, rather than focusing on actions to reduce poverty and food insecurity.
47. Through its subsidy programmes and promotion of seed certification laws, the World Bank has encouraged environmentally destructive agricultural practices and created farmer dependency on unaffordable commercial seeds, fertilisers or pesticides.
48. For example, the World Bank has required governments to use public money to subsidise industrialised seeds and chemical inputs, resulting in increased sales by large agribusiness companies. According to the Oakland Institute, fertiliser company Yara East Africa and seed companies such as Syngenta and Bayer, rather than farmers, were the main beneficiaries of a 2019 loan to Kenya that promoted an e-voucher fertiliser subsidy programme.²⁸
49. The World Bank has also required the implementation of seed regulations as a condition on its financing. These regulations are restrictive, often dictating which seeds can be certified, how certification takes place and what seeds can be sold. The World Bank has facilitated these laws in the Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mozambique

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Mousseau, F. and Currier, A. (2020). World Bank's COVID-19 Assistance to Kenya Benefits Multinational Agribusiness and Agrochemical Firms. Available here: <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/blog/world-bank-covid-19-assistance-kenya-benefits-multinational-agribusiness-agrochemical>

and Nigeria.²⁹ These laws have often supported the growth of the commercial seed sector and undermined farmer seed systems.

50. For example, in Ghana, around 52% of the labour force is employed in agriculture. Agriculture provides around 90% of the country's food needs, with Ghana's agricultural sector consisting mainly of smallholder, traditional and rain-fed agriculture.³⁰ However, when the Ghana 2020 Plant Variety Protection Act was introduced, it created much uncertainty and insecurity for farmers.³¹ Edwin Baffour from Food Sovereignty Ghana said in late 2022: "In an unprecedented manner, Ghana is proposing and telling the world that anyone who is found exchanging, saving or selling patented seeds can get a minimum sentence of 10 years. Almost 50 per cent of the population of Ghana are somehow connected to farm work, [and] if this kind of very rigid 10-year minimum sentence is going to apply, even for those of us who work in the industry it is difficult to recognize a pile of GM cowpeas and a pile of conventional cowpeas. So, there's a very big grey area and it's an uncomfortable situation we find ourselves in."³²

51. The approach taken by the World Bank undermines SDG 2.5, which states the importance of seed diversity, especially through "soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels". There is particular emphasis on the "access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge".³³ Access to diverse seeds is also protected under the UN's International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, of which the UK is a signatory, which protects farmers' rights to "save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed and propagating material".³⁴

²⁹Kenner, D. and Segal, R. (2023). Sowing the seeds of poverty: How the World Bank harms poor farmers. Available here:

<https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/1qOHddSjT4v5KmuFAsD0EA/35b3ef1587a12b52dd9b3c4fd7a01714/Sowing-the-seeds-of-poverty-2023.pdf>

³⁰ FAO. (2023). Webpage: Ghana at a glance. Available here: <https://www.fao.org/ghana/fao-in-ghana/ghana-at-a-glance/en/>

³¹ Republic of Ghana. (2020). Plant Variety Protection Act 2020. Available here: <https://wipo.lexres.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/gh/gh039en.pdf>

³² FIAN International. (2022). Food Sovereignty Ghana fights for right to seeds. Available here: <https://www.fian.org/en/news/article/food-sovereignty-ghana-fights-for-right-to-seeds-3005>

³³ UN SDGs. (2023). SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Available here: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2#targets_and_indicators

³⁴ Andersen, R. (2020). What are Farmers' Rights?

52. However, CAFOD's report shows that commercial seeds and chemicals are unaffordable and inaccessible for many smallholder farmers. Commercial seeds especially ignore the needs of women farmers because cultural barriers prevent women from going to markets where commercial seeds are sold, and studies have found that women do not want to grow commercial seed varieties.³⁵ For instance, research conducted in Ethiopia and Kenya found that women prioritised certain qualities differently when choosing which seeds to plant. For commodity crops such as maize, women chose varieties with a smaller grain size, because they are easier to grind into flour, and chose varieties that stored well.³⁶

Influencing the World Bank to champion the rights of smallholder farmers

53. Given the UK Government is a Board member and major shareholder in the World Bank, CAFOD recommends that it:

54. **Recommendation 5: Use its influence and vote to urge the World Bank to champion the rights of smallholder farmers.**

- a. The World Bank should end support for restrictive seeds laws that undermine the ability of farmers to save, share and sell seeds as they have done for generations.
- b. Furthermore, the World Bank can shift its investments to support farmer seed systems as a vital first step in building agroecological production systems.

³⁵ Kenner, D. and Segal, R. (2023). Sowing the seeds of poverty: How the World Bank harms poor farmers. Available here:

<https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/1qOHddSjT4v5KmuFAsD0EA/35b3ef1587a12b52dd9b3c4fd7a01714/Sowing-the-seeds-of-poverty-2023.pdf>

³⁶ Adam, R. and Muindi, P. (2019). Gender Dynamics in Seed Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and Worldwide Lessons Workshop: Report of Proceedings of the Multi-stakeholder Technical Workshop. Available here: <https://repository.cimmyt.org/handle/10883/20702>