

North Somerset Full Council 16th September 2025

NSC & WECA Food Security Plans, Strategies and Policies

In December 23 I asked Cabinet to address and support farming, food production and food security across all of the council's plans, strategies and policies. I now ask for this to be applied to any Combined Authority considerations and decisions affecting North Somerset. I also note that all current reports to council consider a number of implications such as financial, legal, equality and corporate, so I also ask that Food Security is added to the Climate Change and Environmental Implications, to help achieve a more considered strategic approach to food security.

As a resident, and parish councillor with a portfolio for Food Security, Climate Change and Biodiversity, I have particular concerns about how land use policies will be decided at WECA level. I feel that there is a lack of clarity with regards to the potential role and responsibilities of WECA in relation to any loss of existing democratic processes, powers and functions at local levels. Key concerns include the centralisation of power - with the risk that power flows upwards not downwards; WECA making strategic planning decisions at regional level - bypassing existing local consultation processes and influence; a lack of meaningful engagement with Town & Parish Councils and residents - as consultation doesn't guarantee influence; and a focus on economies of scale - rather than local governance. I assume these types of concerns will be addressed during the public consultation period, along with those raised in 2017, when the council chose not to join WECA last time.

In July 24 a resident asked Cabinet to declare a Food Security Emergency, and as far as I'm aware, this still hasn't been called. If this council truly believes that there is a Climate and Nature Emergency, and food production depends on both of these factors, why hasn't it called for one? The council's current Local Plan land use policies appear to sacrifice food production locally, risking greater environmental harms abroad. How will local residents be able to influence these types of decisions at WECA regional level if it's not sufficiently protected locally via the Local Plan? For example, has this council increased or decreased its offering of smallholdings in its future plan? How is it supporting current and future farmers, especially tenant farmers? How will joining WECA protect and improve farming and Food Security?

A recent study of UK Food Security, with an Outlook to 2050, indicates that due to competing land use demands, Britain is at risk of sleepwalking into a food security crisis, that domestic self-sufficiency is around 60% today, and if government policies for housing, net zero, carbon schemes, BNG, tree planting and nature restoration are fully implemented nearly 24% of farmland is at risk. If a projected population of up to 80 million is factored in, per capita domestic food production could decline by 39% within one generation! Greater reliance will be put on imports, households would experience rising prices and supply chain shocks. Current just in time policies also assume that other countries are not implementing similar land use policies, and are able to continue to export food to this country, especially during global conflict.

https://www.scienceforsustainableagriculture.com/_files/ugd/f77b24_768efc488c9e441aa763bb088575230a.pdf

I agree with the report that "food security can no longer be treated as an afterthought in land and environmental policy". That it "must be a central objective, considered alongside climate and biodiversity"... that "in pursuit of laudable environmental goals", we may inadvertently "neglect the basic necessity of feeding ourselves". Government ministers are constantly telling us that food security is national security, I ask that this council match those words with policy action.

In summary, I ask that all council and Combined Authority plans, strategies and policies address and support farming, food production and food security, and protect and improve the current level of food production and availability. Also, that Food Security is added to the Climate Change and Environmental Implications in all reports, to help achieve a more considered strategic approach to food security.

Thank you for listening to me today - I will send a copy of my concerns to you for reference.

WECA Membership Process Agenda Item 9

<https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=169&MId=1281>

Video at 17mins <https://www.youtube.com/live/nkkgMU5JFFE>