

*Letter to Doctor Ian Gibson, Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Agriculture and Food for Development.*

Dear Dr. Gibson

Unless you really wish to get involved with the detailed history of how Seale-Hayne came to be closed, (with which I would be delighted to furnish you), I think it would suffice for me to say that the whole process was contentious from the beginning (back in 1989) and still is. The University has not done itself any favours in the eyes of the community in the way that they have closed this respected college.

But I strongly believe that we all need to move on. What has happened has happened and we will never re-create the old Seale-Hayne. The important thing is not to let the opportunity that is available now be missed.

So what is the opportunity that is available now? You probably don't need me to point it out, but I will anyway!

We have the chief scientific advisor to the Government telling us that food security will create the "Perfect Storm" by 2030 and that this "storm" will create war, unrest and mass migration. Beddington says (SDUK 09); *"We've got somewhere like reserves (of food) of around 14% of our consumption. That implies, give or take, 38 or 39 days of food reserves if we don't grow any more. It's the lowest level that we've actually had. Is that a problem? Well the answer is yes it is going to be a problem. We saw the food spike last year; prices going up by something in the order of 300%, rice went up by 400%. We saw food riots. We saw major issues for the poorest in the world, in the sense that organisations like the World Food Programme did not have sufficient money to buy food on the open market and actually use it to feed the poorest of the poor. So this **is** a major problem. We're not growing enough food. We're not able to put stuff into the reserves. And so what I expect to occur is significant volatility in food prices with the consequent problems for the poorest."*

Beddington sited the new Obama Government in the U.S. as actually getting their act together to mitigate against the impending global food and water shortages.

Barack Obama says; *"It's important to listen to what scientists have to say, even when it's inconvenient. Especially when it's inconvenient."*

The Minister of State (Department of Energy and Climate Change & Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Lord Hunt of Kings Heath says (Jan 09); *" ..... Research and development lies at the heart of innovation in*

*agriculture. It has never been more important. Climate change will affect production patterns, yields, incidence of pests and diseases, and produce an increased incidence of extreme weather events with the potential to disrupt markets and cause price volatility. My department understands very well its importance and will promote it. Food security, in the context of climate change, growing world population and instability in many parts of the world, is a point very well taken."* Lord Hunt went on to total up some £958m of investment from various Government departments into these issues.

Dr Jacques Diouf (Head of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO)), at your own APPG Evidence Session said; *"there was an increase of 75 million in the number of hungry people in 2007, with 40 million more in 2008 taking the total to 963 million, almost 1 billion hungry people – in contrast to the Millennium Development Goals. The UNFAO are very concerned that because of the financial and food crises affecting the world, and difficulties in access to markets, this situation is likely to get worse."*

It has taken me very little time to find these references from very learned and very important people about the problems that the world is facing relating to global food security and sustainability issues. I suspect that there are many more references available.

The opportunity? To seize the chance in this country to do something about it! On the one hand we have a purpose built educational establishment with its own research farmland available immediately with vacant possession, where the seller wants to turn its green fields into houses for their own financial gain, and doesn't seem particularly concerned about what happens to its empty lecture theatres, research laboratories and other facilities. And on the other hand there seems to be an endless list of people like those I have quoted above who believe that research and education into food, agriculture and sustainability issues is a global priority if we are to avoid worldwide conflict in the future. But nobody seems to be able to bring those two things together. If just a fraction of Lord Hunt's £958m could be aimed at Seale-Hayne, the UK could be seen to be at least making a start in the process of trying to hold back these imminent world problems. Seale-Hayne once had an enviable reputation for influencing world agriculture in the days when the problems were insignificant compared to today's. It would be a coup for the UK to be specialising in Land-use and Sustainability research and education on a global level.

The "Seale-Hayne Future Group" have been bleating about this for several years now. People are undoubtedly tired of our constant badgering. But today there appears to be only a few weeks left for common sense to prevail. A few influential people seem to be hearing us at last, but there's not much time left and we're afraid that if there is any common sense, it needs to prevail from the top

down!

Many thanks for getting this far if you have! I'm not sure how or even if you can help in any way, but it's important that you and others in Government are at least aware of the situation.

Yours

Ian Goodwin

Chairman - Seale-Hayne Future Group