

Justice and Peace Network Conference
Elizabeth Dowler
‘Just Food: the UK experience’

Chair John Battle:

My name is John Battle and I live in Leeds, West Leeds. Some years ago I was travelling with work and I met an elderly learned professor of philosophy in a bar, so I thought here's my chance, a professor of philosophy, so I asked him the meaning of life. So he replied that for all his teaching and lecturing and international travelling that his whole life the most important thing that he had learned was to rediscover his own home address. That is a message that I'm trying to learn, but could I say thank you to Sally for sharing her home address. Her very moving, personal and rooted story. I think reminding us all that perhaps our focus in justice and peace should never shift from tackling poverty internationally and locally as well and to Ann Marie I think a brilliant practical example of how to bring food issues into our homes and into our city environments as well, so to both of them thank you very much indeed.

Turns us back to our own circumstances to here in the UK and to help us with that analysis we had shown you this morning giving us a global perspective, we've now got Liz, Liz Dowler. She's a professor of food and social policy in the Department of Sociology at the University Of Warwick. She's also the director on the Food Ethics Council, the independent food and advocacy group that works to make the food system here in Britain fairer and healthier. She is a member of DEFRA's council of food policy advisors and of the food standards agency expert panel. She's worked in many parts of the world. I think her expertise is in public health as a nutritionist originally. What we also should perhaps note in our context is that Liz is a member of the Iona community, which we all know is the Ecumenical Christian community of men and women working for peace and justice in Scotland in Iona. Can we welcome Liz to give us her presentation?

Liz:

Thank you very much John and thank you very much to those who've invited me to share some insights with you this morning. It's customary to start when you're an academic at a conference by thanking the people who've invited you for making you welcome and of course I do that but I actually do it really from the bottom of my heart. This is an extraordinary privilege to be here at this conference. I don't think I've ever been at anything quite like it and one of the reasons I sought to join the Iona community, which works throughout the world of course not just in Scotland, is because I wanted to try and marry up the bits of my life as a long term practicing Christian and also somebody who worked on food and poverty and justice but as an academic. I say but, I hate the word academic being used in a pejorative sense as an academic, no longer as an activist as I used to do that, and so for me, being in the community is one way of working that out and if I could just add one more thing to what John said at the beginning. I am one of a number of directors at the food ethics council. I'm not the director. There are several of us who are trustees. It's very ably led by Tom McMillan who is the person who has all the clever ideas and emails us and says oh sorry I should have asked you about this. Is it ok if we do X? And you can guess what we say. I'll say a little bit more about that as we go on. Just in case you don't make it to the end of my talk, there's a lot of stuff about the Food Ethics Council on the stall in the hall with all the remaining stuff and its on the stall that's got all the stuff about transition towns and the Soil Association amongst some other things, and I've also put some materials on the Iona Community stall because I thought people might look for it there. And since its been sort customary to say a little bit about yourself let me just take 30 seconds to say that when I left university I had been inspired by somebody who taught us about nutrition, particularly in the Global South although it wasn't referred to like that then and I wasn't as organised as Alister referred to last night by going overseas with an organisation like VSO or something and I just went to work with a friend of a friend of a friend the way you could in those days and I ended up in South Africa working in one of the black homeland areas to which you had to have a permit as a white person to work for two years on nutrition and that's what inspired me to go back and study nutrition further at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine where I was very much taken to task by some of my fellow students for having worked in South Africa, which I think is one of the reasons that I've never been back, which I quite regret, but anyway I'm not too old to do that and subsequently worked in Rwanda before then taking a job at the London School and mostly worked in the Global South for about 15 years always using food, nutrition as ways, as a sort of lens if you like to look at society and to find ways of measuring and understanding poverty and I think all of the talks and the amazing witness statements we've had so far today and yesterday demonstrate the way in which food is not just that which becomes part of us clearly, we take it in. It becomes us, but it is the lens for which we can look at society and look at God's abundance and generosity to all of us, so I think it's just extraordinary and fantastic that this whole conference is devoted to thinking about food.

Now Ellen asked me to speak about the UK experience and actually to give you lots of facts, so I've got graphs and things like that, so if they make your eyes glaze over well then just close them for a minute because we all

need to do that from time to time and she said you don't need to give lots of illustrations and stories because there are witnesses who will do that and my goodness the stories from the witnesses that we've heard, I honestly don't need to say anything, but I've never been famous for doing that, so I'm going to go on.

So what am I going to try to cover? Quite clearly as we heard last night and this morning and will continue to hear and I'm sure many, if all of you, know this only too well, the world comes to us in the UK on a plate. We eat the world here. We know that food and diet are of course essential to our wellbeing and health. I'll say just a few bits about that. I'm just going to flick over what does the UK food system look like? Again we've heard some of this already, a little about winners and losers within that, but also as we've been hearing, we need to change the way we eat and what we eat. Why? Because of all kinds of instabilities within our foods, within the world and those knock on to the food system: climate change, the rising cost of oil and the inability to source enough oil and water to feed everybody the way we eat, and I say this to myself too. I eat well. I know I do, but I don't eat justly and well as well as I could and should. We know there've been rising food prices in the last couple of years and the recession, I don't need to spell this out, which of course as we've already heard have huge impacts. So what can we do then to eat justly and well? So as I said we know that food and diet is pretty essential for our health, energy, the need for calories. Although, bizarrely, we have this kind of weird relationship with calories in contemporary, rich societies. What Sally was talking about seemed very familiar to me. I teach undergraduates and post-graduates at the University of Warwick, young men and women in their 20s and quite a lot in their 30s and 40s too, and what she was saying was extremely familiar, the fascination that people have with body size and ways of controlling it and the challenges that that poses. But what we also know of course is that we have to worry about saturated fats in our diet, sugar and salt, vitamins and minerals and so on, but of course we don't eat nutrients. Even I as a public health nutritionist, I don't go looking for nutrients when I'm shopping. I don't even go thinking Oh I must get some more fruit and vegetables. I go looking for meals. I go for what is familiar, so we actually eat in a different way than this rather reductionist science way of looking at it, and government and health professionals try to help us in that. In the top right there you see the food standards agency current version of what they call the Eat Well Plate, and there are different versions of this for different ethnic groups, and it's a sort of pie chart if you like representation of a plate if you think about it a lot of money was spent on getting this right I tell you with the knife and fork and all the rest of it. I say no more. You can see that the large green bits and the large yellow bits are the bits we're supposed to eat lots of and the pink and the blue and the purple are what we're supposed to eat less of. It's supposed to represent the kind of proportions of what is in our diet because as I've already said we don't actually think about nutrients much as we're eating. What we think about is meals and probably everybody here knows we're supposed to eat 5 portions of fruit and veg a day, which very few people can afford to do. Very few people can carry home from the shops without a car if they're doing it for a family. It's quite heavy, and that's one of the challenges we face. I don't know whether there are going to be talks on obesity, but it's not just what we eat. It's what we do, what we expend, the energy, and for most of us, this disordered relationship with food we have which produces obesity has a great deal to do with what people are referring to as obesogenic environments: that you have to drive to get to the shops, that the food that is marketed to you all the time, you don't have to worry about shopping and cooking just buy this thing, put it in a microwave, put it in the oven. It's delicious. It'll give your family what they need, what they want. You'll be a super mum, super dad, super person. You'll be fit and health and all the ways in which food is marketed to us, but hidden in that are lots of calories and lots of sugars and lots of salt probably too. It's very hard to resist that, and of course it matters throughout life. I don't want to be too miserable about this but the experience of the fetus in the womb; the experience of children in the first couple of years of their life probably shapes quite a lot of their body functioning over the whole life course. You can trace that right the way through. It's not unchangeable. You can do things about it but the first 5 years, the first 10 years are absolutely critical, which is why school meals are so important and they turned around that pernicious culture of high fat, sugar and salt. Don't think about food. It's just fuel. It's just fun. You just grab it and go. That is not what food is about. Food is about well-being. It's about our social well-being, our economic well-being of course we've heard a lot about that, and our emotional well-being. You show how you love someone by giving them food. When a friend arrives, sit down, have a drink, have a cup of tea, have a piece of cake, have a biscuit. Even when I was working in Rwanda with the poorest of people, and I was incredibly rich, although by British standards I didn't have much, by Rwandan standards where I was, I was the richest person they knew, but if I went to someone's house, they would always give me a drink and if they had food, they would share it, and that's what I learned there: how important food is for showing respect, for showing love, for welcome and hospitality. I was very moved by what Diana said earlier about not being given hospitality because she couldn't eat properly when she came to this country. Food is who we are. It shows what we value, and I think there are signs of change in British society, internationally, but my goodness they're tiny green shoots, and I really fear for whether they'll just be trampled on. I'm sure they're all kinds of biblical images you can think of to address that.

I just want to share with you, not as a nutritionist, but as a human being, as well as a nutritionist, the works of Manfred Max-Neef, the Chilean eco-ecologist. He says actually the fundamental human needs are not food, shelter, clothing, and things like that, which is what we talk about as basic needs. It is for subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creation, recreation, identity, freedom. Things like food and shelter and clothing satisfy those needs, and in fact we have even more fundamental core needs, which are being, having, doing and interacting, and all the sort of elements of food I've just been talking about are important, but they've got to be met in ways which fulfil those needs, and all the witness statements we've heard today and Father Shay before coffee were talking both about violation of those needs and about creativity and ways of achieving those needs. They were just wonderful examples of how things can be turned around to meet these fundamental human requirements. This is how God created us. This is part of our recreation with God. These are not just luxuries. This is who we are as humans. However, we have an astonishing food system. We've heard a lot about it already. It's an incredible success economically. Globalized, very concentrated ownership, but that's very efficient, and ownership is production, processing, retailing, marketing, lots of IT. It means power is in very few hands that has potential for incredible good. We've already heard a little bit about the Co-Op and how important that is and some of the bigger corporations in the Co-Op have corporate social responsibility where the things that we've been talking about here are said to matter, but one should not forget that corporate institutions, transnational corporations are not philanthropic institutions. They are there to create money for shareholders. They are not there to protect public health. They are not there to protect food and well-being. That's our job and all the things I've been talking about then are particularly part of that system and many argue that the role of the state has been hallowed out merely to regulation. I question that a bit. Inequality is built into the system. We have very cheap food in Britain. We've already heard how difficult it is to afford it. Our food is cheap because other people pay the price, and the environment pays the price elsewhere.

Ok, I'll go through this very fast. This is just an illustration from a report that was produced amazingly very good report from the strategy unit from the Prime Minister's office 2 years ago in July 2008. You can still download. There are two bits to this report: a final one called Food Matters, which said what should happen, and an earlier bit, which actually came out in January which set out the status of the food system and you can still download. I've lifted these graphs from it, if you want those data and that story. It's very well written, and the blue lines here show you the concentration of 4 firms in the grocery market in the UK from 1990-2010 and you can see how much 4 big firms, ASDA/Wal-Mart, Tesco, Sainsbury's, and Morrison's dominate the food sector, and they dominate it right through not just in shops but in production, processing, and marketing, and you can see the UK, the blue line is comparing us across Europe. We're one of the most concentrated. Now food in the UK, a lot of it is produced in the UK, you might be surprised to know that. The brown bit of this pie chart on the left is what's produced in Britain, and all the others show you where everything else comes from, which you won't be able to read from where you are. Much of it is from elsewhere in Europe. Not a lot of food comes from outside Europe, but what does is largely fruits and vegetables, and that does come from many parts of the world. That's what that graph on the right is showing.

Is what we eat healthy? Well I was talking about the Eat Well Plate. There it is again. Bottom right, you can see a comparison of UK average. Average. Nobody's average. There are a few people who eat better. There's people who eat worse than this, of purchases in Britain a couple of years ago now, compared with the Eat Well Plate, and you can see the purple is much bigger than it should be and that's the food and drinks which are high in fat and sugar and that's because of the food system. It is partly because people are busy. They buy what's familiar. They buy what they know their children will eat. They buy what's to hand, but it's largely because of the environment within which food is retailed and marketed to us.

So, more people fed all over the world. It's a bigger world population than it's ever been and more people within it are fed better all year round. I'm old enough to remember when tomatoes came into season. Unthinkable now. My students have no idea what I'm talking about. Even strawberries they can't imagine not getting all year round. Food is cheap. Not just in the global north, but also in many parts of the south, and it's safe. It doesn't poison us the way it used to potentially. Very widely available. Possibly healthy. It's questionable, but and here's the but and this is what this conference is about. In terms of trade for suppliers, particularly are very harsh particularly in the global south. Much production is lost, wasted because of the in-built management failures if you like, and I don't know if you count this as waste, a great deal of production is reared for and now goes to animal feed, which is fine if we eat meat and dairy, which we do, but we eat far too much of it. Labour law is missing or ignored and the poor White House is going to be doing a workshop about this shortly, and those who are vulnerable within the food system are very often female workers. There's a great deal of casualisation and a great deal of insecurity. We heard a bit about that before hand, and as we have already heard and many of you will know, we still have a billion people in the world who are hungry. We also have a billion people who are obese and some of those bizarrely are the same because obesity is part of disordered eating, but malnutrition, gross thinness is probably more common

amongst those who are hungry, but there are more people obese now in the world than there are malnourished, and a lot of Type 2 diabetes and so on and so forth.

What we also know is that the general environment is being very damaged by the food system. There's a huge loss of bio-diversity and as we've been hearing a loss of skins, and I'm just going to say something very quickly cause I know that time is already gone. We're slipping I know, and I don't want to skip lunch, the importance of what I've been saying. I'll say something very quickly both about the environment, about inequalities and about rising prices. If you want to know more about impact of food on the environment and you have access to the internet, have a look at the University of Surrey Food Climate Research Network. It's run by one amazing woman, Tyra Barnet, who says she now has an assistant, which is incredible, but she maintains this site, which has all kinds of funding and its an incredible source of data and information. Food Climate Research Network. The report I was talking about, Food Matters, here gives a bit of data about the degree of greenhouse gas emission from the UK food system. Nearly 18 to 20 percent of greenhouse gas emission for the UK is from the food system. Quite a lot of that is from production and quite a lot of that is also of course because we use a great deal of oil based products, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, in production, so its not just transport, which is what people tend to think about. It is transport. Transport is on the right there, but the transport costs are not just air freight, which we know about. Some people argue that's quite a trivial amount within it. It's rising, but it's less than 1 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. A lot of it is trucks. I currently, unwelcomly, tank up and down the M40 cause I live in Oxford and work in Warwick. I don't go every day, but when I do, the lorries I'm passing are largely carrying food, and they're carrying it to and from the big warehouses, and food is transported all over the place in what many argue are pretty ridiculous ways, but very efficiently transported. The big lorries are clean. They're backfilled because it costs money and that's done very well. We as consumers contribute to greenhouse gases when we drive to the shops, and more and more people drive more and more miles: 9 billion miles the year before last to the shops and it may well be everyone in the room cycles. Maybe everybody in the room can't cycle. Some how food has to get to the home, and the system is geared increasingly to driving. We throw more food away. You'll know there's a big campaign about that. I'm not going to say more because of time. There's a workshop about it as well but not everybody's the same. As we've already heard there are inequalities in food use, in understanding and in outcomes, both in terms of nutrition and health, and also what food experience is like. Those who are poorer in Britain as in elsewhere have worse dietary patterns. They have lower vitamin and mineral intakes. They have higher body mass index, which is the measure for obesity, and they have very poor quality food environments. Not always, but often, the shops are pretty poor and that's not the shopkeepers fault. Its because the large supermarkets, those four I was referring to, on the whole don't invest in the council estates and distant places where poorer people live. That's not entirely true but very often is, and what is also the case is that poorer people are blamed for the lives they're forced to lead. I hear it time and time again from people who should know better: academics, my neighbours, people on government committees. Its because people don't know how to cook. Its because they don't know how to budget. People said that in 1900. They're still saying it in 2010. It's still not true. There are some who don't know how to cook and you have to ask why. Because they've been systematically de-skilled by a food system, which says, you don't have to cook. We'll do it for you. Just buy this. I'm not prejudiced.

Ok, a lot of facts perhaps. One of the ways we measure poverty in Britain, very dry. It's not like the stories you've been hearing. Of people who have income, and this is across Europe too, we measure 60 percent below the national median income. This is a relative measure, and its about 13 million people in Britain, who are in that category. It shifts around a bit. We also have a method of measuring minimum income standards. There was a report out last Wednesday. I went to the launch. It's a regular update. Its not a new thing, but its just been updated. I've got a hundred copies. I did have a hundred copies, I know some are gone already, of this report. This is the summary. It's published by the Jersey Foundation. The work is done by the Universities of Loughborough and York, and this is a very interesting system. Its not experts like me coming along and saying this is what people should eat. This is how people should live. What it is, it gets a group of people together, very systematically done and says what do you think people need to live decently but simply in Britain now? What's a minimum that people need not to be poor to live decently in Britain now? This work is done fairly regularly. So people spend a lot of time arguing about do people need a television? Do children need a television in their bedroom? Do they need to be able to drink alcohol? How often should people buy a winter coat? All of these really quite tricky questions, and they come up with a list of goods and services, which are then checked over by experts so that the heating is at the appropriate level and the nutrition is right, but it always goes back to the groups of people to say yes that looks like a way of living we could do and they test out the diets and they test out the ways of living, so its not a kind of nonsense that people are being talked about and then it's costed and that's what this is. There are a hundred copies out there. They're in the Iona Community store. They're quite heavy. I really don't want to carry them home again. Please take them. Please take two. Give one to your neighbours and use them

But what we do know is that people who are below the minimum income standards, the people I've been listing up here and talking about, welfare support is there. You won't need me to tell you its being cut and is been quite stringent for some time. Despite tax credits, which have made a huge difference, and that's documented in this report very well, so I just encourage you to have a look at that.

But its not just about money, as I've said. For a lot of people who don't have much money, they spend the least amount on food but the highest proportion of their income, and that's important because benefits, pensions, the minimum wage, things like that are rated in line with either the retail price index or the consumer price index, whether or not you take housing into account, and that's an average basket of goods. If you're having to spend a higher proportion of your budget on food, and food prices have gone up more than other things in the last 2 years and gas prices and electricity. That plays a much bigger part in your budget, which means that the benefits, the minimum wage, the pensions, etc., I don't need to tell you this do I? Have not kept pace with the real costs of living for people at the lower end of the scale, and people, as I say, are pretty good at managing their lives and I and others have shown that if you look for a 'healthy' basket of goods, I could show you lots of graphs and figures and so on about this but I decided there wouldn't be time, it often costs more where poor people live than where richer people live. The same things, and unfortunately often people's work places, the day care centres, the schools, the food they get there, if it's in a poorer area, its not universally true because I know lots of people who work to prevent this, but the natural thing you can imagine is not to invest where poor people live if you're a business because you're not going to get a return. That's why the big shops don't go there. That's why the food's often worse. Ok, that's what I've been saying already,

So a lot of people have to rely on free food. Thank goodness, thank God for free food, which you may contribute to, but if you think back to what I said about Max Neef's principles about participating, feeling you belong. We've already heard from two people who have actually lived like this today, this is not a dignified way of obtaining your food. This is Britain. This is the United Kingdom actually, and whatever our government says, we are one of the richest countries in the world in 2010, and we have a system which relies, it is built in that people have to get free food not to be hungry, not to starve. If that isn't injustice, I don't know what is. A lot of people who don't have much money, don't have much time. I often hear it said, why don't they go and grow food. Well, some do, but not everybody has time to do it. We've already heard that too. A lot of people who are poor, inevitably are very indebted, and they're not indebted to the banks, although they might be. They're largely indebted to private money lender who charge, inevitably, much higher interest rates because these are bad debtors. It's a sort of cycle. We heard about that in the Philippines and its true here too, and what we know of course is that if you don't pay your rent, if you don't pay your gas bill or electricity bill, and if you send your children to school without shoes on, the state steps in or the utilities step in and they get the funding. Utilities, gas, electric, telephone, they can take money off your benefits before you even get it. Because, they say, its not fair on the other people who are paying, and your children might be taken away from you if you don't cloth and feed them properly, so what do you do? If you're a parent, you cut back on your own food because nobody's going to come along and say my goodness me you're not eating properly. I think we're going to fine you. We'll put you in prison. Thank goodness they don't say that. Curiously, nobody comes along and says my goodness you can't afford to eat properly. Let's put your benefits up. Let's give you some more money. Let's raise the minimum wage. I don't know why they don't say that, but they don't. Well I do know why they don't say that, but I'm not trying to be funny about it. We're so used to this that we're not shocked by it, but we should be. People can't afford to make mistakes. That's why they don't experiment with cooking. That's why they don't try out new things unless someone else has provided the food. We heard that this morning too. You have to do the same things week after week after week that you know how it will be cooked. You know that everybody will eat it. You know that nobody will say I don't want this, and if you're not a very good cook, you're not a very adventurous cook, what happens if it goes wrong and you burn it or it's rubbish and you can't eat it? You've got to have something. So, another thing, I'm sorry I'm conscious of time, and I want to get on to some positives not just the really tough. Although I think tough is what we do need to be. People often have very little equipment for storing food. They don't have working fridges and freezers and cookers, and they often have very little baking equipment or cooking equipment. They often don't even have a chopping board or sharp knife and as we discovered when we were talking earlier this year, many people don't have a table where you can prepare food and eat it.

We know food prices have gone up. This is showing you the percent increases. This is the third main point I want to make. Food prices have gone up in the last two years for a number of reasons. The middle brown line is the rise in food prices over the last decade, which has been 57 percent much more than others things and also for catering, and on the right, I have set out the minimum income standards report findings, the key ones that I just mentioned to you now. To afford a basic but acceptable standard of living in 2010, a single person who never figures in any government statements, a single person has to earn 14, 000 pounds before tax. That's how much

you have to earn to live decently but minimally and simply in Britain according to your fellow citizens, and interestingly, one of the points they make in here, this report, is that it hasn't changed, what people think is essential hasn't changed despite the recession, which is interesting, and a couple with two children need 29,200, and as I've said, the costs are higher for poorer people. Now I don't need to spell out to you how tough those figures are. Big level panics about food and prices have gone up as I've said because oil prices went up, probably because of bio-fuel production targets, a lot of arguments about whether that's made a difference. Lots of people say it's the rising middle classes in India and China, the rising demand for meat, and that's also played through. There's a lot of reports about all of this and failing stocks and exports and problems in parts of the world like Australia where there's been a drought for many years. It's partly, I think, everybody's taken food for granted for 20 or 30 years. The last world food summit, apart from the last two years, was in 1974 and since then, to parody, British policy on food and probably global policy on food, but British policy on food was leave it to Tesco's. They'll sort it out, and the global policy on food, FAO, Food and Agriculture Organisation notwithstanding has been the private sector does it and does it very efficiently and very well and suddenly two years ago they didn't, so big panics. There's been some interesting work done on the fact that this coincided with the mortgage crisis and the sub-prime collapse and all of that and there's been some very good work done by Action Aid and others about the role of speculators and hedge funds in the food price rises. John mentioned the Food Ethics Council, we produce a seasonal magazine. There are a few copies next door. Nothing like enough for everybody I'm sorry. It's not even going to be loaves and fishes. They won't multiply except if you have access to a computer, you can download it off the web, which is not quite the same, but anyway if you can't afford to subscribe or don't belong to a group that subscribes, but the current one is about food policy. The next one will be about food for children, but the one that came out in the spring was about food and finance. It was about this whole business of speculation and the role that's played.

Ok, we've heard a lot. I'm nearing towards the end. I'm going to try to be positive for a bit. We've heard a lot about food security, and unsurprisingly, if I had asked you to define what you thought food security meant, it means food safety to many people, but it also means knowing there's enough food and knowing that it will continue. This is the Food and Agricultural Organisation's definition, all people all time....Terrific, nonsense. We don't have it, and there's no mechanism in there for obtaining it, and that's the trouble with that definition. It's a utopian pie in the sky, and it has nothing about people feeling secure. Simon Maxwell used to add that in.

There's an alternative view. Patrick will talk more about this this evening and others maybe too, which is the food sovereignty movement, which does not come from the United Nations organisation definition. It's come from the ground via Campesino and other groups like that. Groups of producers: farmers, fisher folk, livestock herders, processors, and so on, and through that has come the International Non-Governmental organisation and civil society organisation Planning Committee about food sovereignty, which is about rights: the rights of people's communities and countries to define their own labour, agriculture, fishing, food, and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate to their circumstances. This is what James was talking about before coffee and tea: The true right to food and to food producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies. It's actually what Sally was talking about as well when she said everybody needs a space.

So what can we do to eat well? We can do what we're doing. We can engage. We can find out. We can be informed. We can tell our neighbours. We can tell our friends. We can tell all our networks and work energetically to do that and we can do some things differently ourselves. We can be involved in growing and enjoying and trying out and enabling others too. I was so inspired by your story of the allotments that were shared with people who wouldn't necessarily have entitlement to allotments because you need an address to get an allotment. I thought that was just amazing and very powerful. The book that you see there is a book produced out of some work I did with colleagues, friends at the University of Coventry, looking at this buzzword in academic circles about reconnection, reconnecting people to food. All the things that we've been talking about at the conference that I've been talking about.

So, what could we do differently? Maybe we can go for buying food that has what's called shorter supply chains. That might be local, might not be but has known provenance. We know where the food comes from. We know how it's been grown. We know that the animals are treated well. It might mean we have to eat less meat, less dairy, but we eat. We pay more for it. We make it go further, and we eat more??? These are big challenges in British society. Believe me. The British government so far, the previous one and the present one, hasn't had the courage to say to people 'Eat less meat'. The German government has interestingly and so have lots of Scandinavian governments and they've written it into their documents, so if you're involved in local food plans, eat less meat. Not none, I'm not advocating vegetarianism, though I know there are workshops about that so maybe this is a controversial thing, but eat less. And a lot of people now seek to put values for money as well as

value for money, and some of the work that I've been involved in has been with people who don't have very much money at all, so this is not a middle class niche. It might be tough, but I think one of the worst things you can do for people who don't have much money or who don't have a country to call their own is to say, you're too poor to take part in this. We all have to do it. We're all humans. We all go back to Max Neef about a set of values, and it might mean, as we've already been hearing, supporting local, smaller, less economically efficient systems. On the left here, the pictures on the right came from the work we did when we produced the book, which is about farmers markets and buck schemes and farm shops and so on. The picture on the left is from my colleague and friend, Laura Davis, who with Veronica has set up a community horticulture project in Sandwell, which is a pretty tough urban area in Black Country if that means anything to you. It's between Birmingham and Wolverhampton. I don't know where it is, and its reclaimed brown field land. Did I say that right? Anyway, rotten soil actually, old allotments, but the soil was so heavily contaminated with heavy metals, they had to bring in fresh soil. I haven't got a photograph here of the whole site, but if you just put Sallop Drive into Google, it will come up. It's a fantastic 10 year project of community horticulture, which involves lots of local people in growing many of whom have disabilities. It's run by the local people many of whom have disabilities of various kinds, and children go there. School children come in. Three thousand a week come through, and they produce a bag of vegetables for about 70 to 100 local households every week, which they sell for 4 pounds, so that's where that photo comes from, and you can see that this is for people with disabilities because the beds are all high enough for someone who can't bend down to do the gardening. So we can do those things.

There is a role for government here, and we are consumers of government. We vote locally, nationally, at Europe level, and we can be involved that way. I don't need to say this to you people. I think there are lots of things government does. Its not just regulation and I want to just highlight three. As John mentioned, I've been on this council of food policy advisors who've actually been discussing many of the things we're talking about and they're a lot of people from the food industry on that council as well. It's not clear to me whether we'll continue on under the new government. We won't see our appointments til the end of this year, but we'll see.

Ok, government job money. Money isn't everything. I know that. Where you live, how you shop, cook, and eat, what your family likes and some of the many other things too, but as I've said, without enough money, a food budget almost inevitably gets cut or is never big enough in the first place, and I think we need to encourage government at national and local levels to use minimum income standards as a basis for living wage agreements. They are now used throughout Canary Wharf in the City. They are now used, Boris Johnson, the mayor of London, has signed up to the Living Wage Agreement, which is based on the minimum income standards and is encouraging firms throughout London to use minimum income standards as a basis for a living wage. Now there's a movement. That's why you need to take them home with you, so that you can have the figures and be armed locally to campaign for a living wage not a minimum wage.

It's also the case, if Paul Nicholson were here from the Zachias Trust in the Mackenzie Friends who go with people to court when they're being fined, having their money taken away. The bailiff laws have changed. Bailiffs can now come and break into your house and take away your goods if you're defaulting. I mentioned indebtedness. In Britain, as far as I know, there is still now lower limit that the court can use if they're fining you for defaulting. Whereas in some of the Scandinavian countries, they use things like budget standards, which is what the minimum income standard is, to set a lower limit. Because if people have more or less nothing, there is, I believe, a biblical phrase about this. If people have more or less nothing, then get fined and have to keep repaying, they're never going to get out of that, and there might be all sorts of reasons why they have defaulted. I recognize that, but this isn't about blame. This is about decency and survival and justice in a rich country.

I've just been doing some work again with colleagues in Coventry. They're good mates. I've been doing some work for DEFRA, the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, who are very concerned about low income and about food security, interestingly, and about how people have coped with rising food prices, and what's been interesting in that is how many people firstly think the government sets the price of food, and when you say well actually the price of food is set by supermarkets and shops, then they say well yes but they set the tax rates. They set the VAT rates. Well actually there is no VAT on food. At least not on a lot of food, so it's a complicated story, but people are very clear that the government should ensure that food prices do not rise beyond what people can afford. That's a new idea. I'm old enough to remember, just, I was a teenager when there were still subsidies on basic food stuffs. Actually those basic food stuffs don't need to be subsidized in one way because they are very cheap because they're loss leaders in the supermarkets. The supermarkets sell you bread and milk below what it costs to produce them to entice you into the shop, so it's a complicated story, but nevertheless, I think there is an issue there about who sets the price of food and as I've already said, they ought to be using minimum income standards. What we do know government does is they regulate. They regulate on food safety and healthiness. They don't regulate much on where shops are and who can get to them. They certainly

don't regulate, as I've said, about food costs. Although people are doing work at the moment on whether food has high fat should be taxed. Just think about who eats...well let's pick that up in questions. I'm not sure what I think about fat taxes, but anyway.

Government of course can regulate, could regulate about how much people have to earn or receive in benefits to be able to afford food, so there's my point I've been making. Government perhaps could do a lot more about food cultures about what we've been hearing, positives we've been hearing, about sustaining, school meals, and so on, and one big issue, which I don't know is going to be addressed here it might be later this evening, is about who manages and owns science and technology, who controls what goes on. Ok, this is the regulation that is already there. The food standards agency has been pushing for traffic light labelling, so people can identify high or low fat foods. To make a political statement, the current minister for health has just said that he thinks this is non-sense. At local levels, here's a partnership with local retailers shifting, again this is in Sandwell, shops that were closing, these are just ordinary shops this isn't Sunday, to shops that are open, and as I've mentioned, there's a council of food policy advisers for DEFRA. You may not know that in January, for the first time for 20, 30 years, we had a food policy statement by government. Here it is: Food 2030. Again it's DEFRA, Department for Environment, Food, and Rural affairs, still exists, and in January they published this report. The consumers were informed and can choose and afford healthy, sustainable food, etc. Food security is ensured through strong UK agriculture food sectors and international trade. The UK has a low carbon food system, so government job.

Finally, and I know that I'm running out of time, about ethical toolkits. I've mentioned the Food Ethics Council. We've produced a little booklet and you can download this too if you have access to the web: a little toolkit that enables businesses in food, big and small and a number of them are using this now to look at how to make difficult decisions. It doesn't give you answers; it gives you tools for thinking, tools for debating. You can use this in groups. You can use it in your church, your school, your local community as well, and it enables different stakeholders to look at different principles of wellness, freedom, and justice over a particular issue like eating meat or GM or local sourcing or whatever it happens to be, and there are a number of things on that website, as I've said, including the journal, which you can see down at the bottom here. Here's my final slide. What we need then is a sustainable and just food and nutrition system where people's rights to produce or consume food are respected, and this isn't just in Britain. This is globally. That we have sustainable ways of obtaining healthy food through purchase, production and eating. That we have sustainable means of researching, that's quite important. Producing, distributing food grounded in justice. Food for health should be obtained in ways which uphold dignity, and that solutions to problems are linked together properly, and on my last sentence, this is my last plug. Next Thursday, the Food Ethics Council is launching the results of an 18 month inquiry into fairness and justice in the food system. It's called the Food and Fairness Inquiry. There are quite a lot of these outside. These are just the fliers that were produced at the beginning. It will be on the Food and Ethics Council website next Thursday. If anybody would like to come to the launch in Westminster, come see me and I'll tell you where it is cause I can't remember off the top of my head, but Paul Whitehouse and I already mentioned, who I think might be here now, certainly will be here after lunch, Harriet Lamb from the Fairtrade Foundation, Melanie Leech from the Food and Drink Industry, and somebody from the National Farmers Union and from Chatham House were also on that inquiry. It was an attempt really to try and get to grips with what justice in the food system would look like and it's being launched next Thursday. Thank you for your patience.

John:

Can I just thank Liz for an absolute power pack of reference information? We've now got a dilemma because we can carry on or miss lunch. Can I make a suggestion? Unless anybody's got a burning question that they want to put to Liz now, she's given us plenty to work on; can we draw this session a little bit to a close?

I would just say, I wrote down this from what you were saying three things because I thought as well as that information, the reference, and the analysis pulling things together, I wrote down three sentences: Do I eat justly and well? You show how you love someone by giving them food, and food and nutrition is a lens, a way of looking at our society, and I thought what you did for us was as well as the analysis, you actually took us into the theological context actually, and I in thinking of coming to this conference, I looked up in the catechism of the Catholic church in the index, look up food, and surprisingly perhaps for a faith based on the Eucharist, centred on the Eucharist, there's no reference to food in the index. There is under Eucharist a little bit. If you look more encouragingly under the compendium of the social doctrine of the church, there are references to the lack of adequate food supply, scientists, bio-technology and the food supply, and the common good in food supply, but there's this paragraph that I thought you really drew us towards that I found as inspiring. It says in our compendium on the social doctrine of the church, scientists and technicians involved in the field of bio-technology are called to work intelligently and with perseverance in seeking the best solutions to the serious and urgent problems of food supply and healthcare. They must not forget that their activity concerns material, both living and inanimate, that belongs to the patrimony of humanity and destined also to future generations, and it goes on to remind us, for believers, it's a question of a gift received from the creator and entrusted to human intelligence and freedom, which are themselves also gifts from heaven. Liz I thought you drew us very near to trying to impact that statement in our context. Can we thank her very much indeed?