

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 1223 Email: indcom@parliament.uk Website: www.parliament.uk/indcom X (formerly Twitter): [@CommonsIDC](https://twitter.com/CommonsIDC)

From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP
Minister for Development and Africa
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
By email

The role of consultants in food security programming

26 March 2024

Dear Minister Mitchell,

Thank you for your written evidence to the International Development Committee's Inquiry into the Government's work towards achieving SDG2: Zero Hunger.

In 2020, the then Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, set out in a House of Commons statement the FCDO's plans to "strengthen accountability and value for money, reducing reliance on expensive consultants for project management, and strengthening our in-house capability to give us more direct oversight and control".¹ In this context, can you please set out how your department uses consultants on its food security and nutrition work? Can you please provide the Committee with the total ODA expenditure over the past five years on external consultancy costs for nutrition and food security programmes (a) by the Department and (b) by implementing partners? Can you also tell us how the outputs of the consultants' work are used to inform and review decision-making at policy and programme level.

In your written evidence, you set out that the FCDO also has a network of 45 food and agriculture technical specialists and was undertaking an external recruitment exercise to build technical expertise. Please could you provide the Committee with an overview of the expertise of your existing technical specialists, and update us on the recruitment exercise, setting out which specific skillsets the Department is looking to recruit.

Your evidence also stated that there is a process underway to prepare new generalist joiners to undergo professional accreditation assessments to become food and agriculture advisers. Please could you provide us with an update on this process and explain what the accreditation will cover.

Please could you provide us with a response by 26 April. We intend to place this letter and your response in the public domain.

¹ [Official Development Assistance: Foreign Secretary's statement, November 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statements/2020/11/official-development-assistance-foreign-secretarys-statement-november-2020)

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Champion', written on a light blue background.

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee