



Prime Minister  
Do you agree to these  
arrangements?

MO 5/21

PRIME MINISTER

Yes - but surely  
some of the vegetables  
can be grown in  
the islands?  
not

WFSM  
19/8

FOOD SUPPLIES FOR THE FALKLANDS

P7 33  
Following the controversy about the proportion of imported food being issued to our forces in the Falkland Islands, I wrote to you on 3rd March (MO 5/21) detailing the general pattern of our food supply arrangements, from which I concluded that the balance between UK and imported supplies was not out of line with the economy as a whole. I also mentioned that our purchases were normally the subject of competition amongst UK firms.

2. By using two ration ships, each rotating with the other as a transport vessel and a local storage vessel, we have been able to supply the garrison with a very good diet including a high proportion of fresh vegetables, meat and fruit. There is no doubt, however, that we could improve the quality and provide more variety if it were not necessary to ship all the food for 8000 miles. We have therefore been looking at possibilities of obtaining food from sources closer to the Islands. At the same time, the FCO has been pressing us to arrange supply contracts with firms in South America as part of their efforts to improve our relations with that continent and to set up commercial links between South America and the Falklands. The South Atlantic Island Development Corporation (SAID), a South African company which already arranges supplies for St Helena and Tristan da Cunha, has also been pressing us to contract with them for supplies.



3. Taking all these considerations together, coupled with the undertakings we have given to UK firms following the Parliamentary pressure that they will be given the opportunity to compete, we have concluded that the best way forward is to insert notices in the appropriate UK trade journals and the EEC Journal asking interested firms to send us details of their capability to deliver supplies for the Falklands. The FCO will arrange for the embassies in South America to bring this to the notice of likely suppliers. The foodstuffs involved are listed at Annex A.

4. We do not, of course, know what replies we shall get nor whether any firm arrangements will ensue. Nevertheless it is possible that attractive responses may come from South America (though not of course from Argentina where our embargo continues) or possibly South Africa and the appearance of the notices could re-ignite the controversy about imported food. Given the acknowledged need to improve supplies, the geographical position of the Falklands and the relatively modest purchases involved, I believe we can rebut any criticisms but you will wish to be aware of what is proposed.

5. I am copying this minute to Geoffrey Howe and Michael Jopling.

*WJH*

Ministry of Defence  
16th August 1983



ANNEX A

Potatoes

Onions

Cabbage

Cauliflower

Carrots

Turnip/Swede

Lettuce

Cucumber

Tomato

Apples

Oranges

Grapefruit

Eggs

Milk UHT long life





Argentina

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 August, 1983

Food Supplies for the Falklands

BF/

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 16 August. She is content with the arrangements that he proposes. She has, however, asked whether some of the vegetables needed by UK forces can be grown in the islands. I should be grateful for your advice on this.

I am copying this to John Holmes (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Robert Lawson (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food).

W. F. S. RICKETT

N. H. R. Evans, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence

CONFIDENTIAL

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB  
Telephone ~~01-9307022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/21

14th September 1983

Dear Tim,

Prime Minister

A.J.C. 16.  
9

FOOD SUPPLIES FOR THE FALKLANDS

In his letter of 26th August Willie Rickett said that the Prime Minister had asked whether some of the vegetables needed by UK forces could be grown in the Falkland Islands.

We do, in fact, try to make the maximum use of local resources on the Islands and the possibility of growing vegetables has been investigated, in conjunction with the FCO and MAFF. Unfortunately, as the Prime Minister will be aware, the growing season on the Falklands is short, high winds are prevalent and there is a lack of fresh water. Our investigations have shown that, for these reasons, it is not possible to produce either the quantity or quality of fresh produce required to feed the garrison without considerable expenditure on greenhouses, windbreaks and irrigation systems. We have also looked at the possibility of Hydroponics (growing in an artificial water environment) as an alternative method of production but, although we could produce what is required in this way, the capital cost is extremely high and the system is manpower intensive. Taking all these points together we have concluded with regret that there is no economic alternative to supply from outside the Islands.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (FCO) and to Robert Lowson (MAFF).

Yours ever

Neil Evans

(N H R EVANS)  
Private Secretary

Argentina  
Relations PK-34

1 - SEP 1983

