



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HH

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From the Minister

PRIME MINISTER

GLOBAL CLIMATE

(at flap)

I refer to David Young's letter to you of 1 February about possible funding for the proposed ERS-2 satellite.

MAFF's interest in space hitherto has been in the use of the LANDSAT and SPOT earth observation satellites for land use purposes. The ERS-1 and ERS-2 will offer no benefit here because, although their radar sensors will allow all-weather observation, they will be relatively coarse in definition. I understand that they will be intended primarily for observation of the oceans and polar regions for climatological purposes.

MAFF has, of course, an interest in possible changes in the global climate. However, our concern is not with climatic modelling and predicting change, but with:-

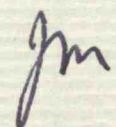
- (a) the contribution that agriculture makes to the "greenhouse gases" in the environment; and
- (b) the likely impact of climate change on UK agriculture. Our thinking on these matters is at a fairly early stage, but they would seem to be susceptible to study at ground level. The likelihood of any direct benefit from ERS-2 would appear to be extremely tenuous.

Moreover, aside from the merits of the ERS-2 proposal, ~~MAFF has no UNCOMMITTED~~ committed resources which could be diverted to this proposal. As you know it was decided in PES 1988 that R&D expenditure by the Agriculture Departments should be cut by £24m by 1991/92 (equivalent to £30m on a full economic cost basis). MAFF's share of this is £20m. Without prejudging the consultations with the agriculture and food industries, on which I am to report back to E(ST) in July, it seems improbable that all of this reduction in public funding will be made good by industry within the timescale of the PES cuts. The results will inevitably be major cutbacks in research establishments and staff both in MAFF and in the AFRC, with all the costs that that entails. These problems would be exacerbated by any further reduction in our provision at the present time to finance other R&D programmes.

I regret that I cannot therefore offer any contribution to this proposed expenditure.

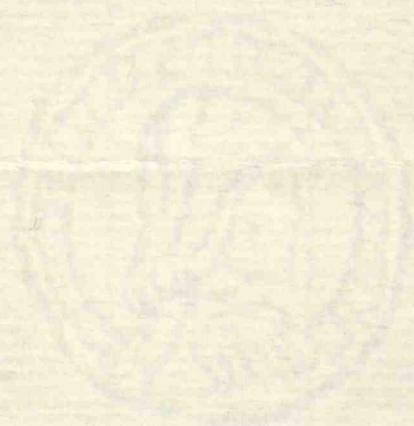
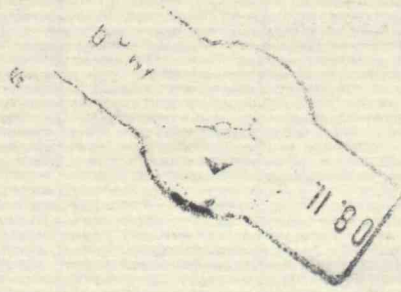
I am copying this minute to David Young, Nicholas Ridley, Douglas Hurd, George Younger, Kenneth Baker, Paul Channon, Cecil Parkinson, John Major, Peter Brooke, John Gummer and to Sir Robin Butler and John Fairclough.

Ministry of Agriculture
Fisheries and Food


JOHN MacGREGOR

8 February 1989

File on Environmental affairs PT 7. Add Lauri



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