

2018.09.11

12 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding the availability of statistics in Jersey with regard to healthy diets: [OQ.117/2018]

Given the finding of the food foundation in its report *Affordability of the U.K.'s Eatwell Guide*, that 3.7 million children in the U.K. are living in households for whom a healthy diet is increasingly unaffordable. Will the Chief Minister advise what statistics, if any, he has in respect of Jersey on this subject? If none, will he undertake to investigate the matter?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

Yes, the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, I am informed, shows that a large proportion of Islanders do report difficulty in finding affordable healthy food in Jersey. The effects of poor nutrition is also higher among lower socioeconomic groups. It does not surprise me, but obviously it does obviously sadden me. As the Assistant Minister may be aware, matters such as health and inequality are high on the agenda for the development of the Common Strategic Policy and there will be more matters around that area when that is released. Thank you.

4.12.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question was: what statistics do we have on the area of food poverty and, if none, will the Minister undertake to investigate this area, in particular?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Yes. I believe I referred to the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyles Survey, which are the sort of statistics that we have. It is not as good as the statistics available in the U.K. If the Deputy feels that we should have more, please, definitely we can have a conversation. I am sure the Statistics Department will be willing to build it into their programme. Thank you.

4.12.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Chief Minister accept that while it is not always necessary to spend a lot to eat well, that highly processed food which contain lots of sugar, salt and bad fats, is often the cheapest? As we as a States impose a below inflation pay increase yet again on States employees, more people and more families will be pushed into making difficult decisions about cutting the quality of food that they give to their children when this is already an issue. Is this not an area by which the States should lead by example and make sure that our employees can afford to maintain their standard of living and that children are not disadvantaged in this respect?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Just trying to think that through. It is probably far more complicated a scenario than the Deputy alludes to in his question. There are always a number of factors around how you encourage and get people to eat healthily. Part of that is education. Part of that is around inequalities. Also, yes, the Deputy has a point, issues around low income and their accessibility to healthy food. It is a complicated picture.

4.12.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given that the Food Foundation in the U.K. has found that to get a healthy diet for 50 per cent of the poorest in their community takes a third of their disposable income, as opposed to 12 per cent for the wealthiest proportion, can the Minister commit to either telling me what the proportions are in Jersey or, if he does not know, can he commit to finding out that information specific to Jersey? Thank you.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I am sure if there is more data, we can definitely arrange for further information to be provided. I am informed that around two-thirds of adults eat less than the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables. The majority of Jersey residents have agreed that eating healthily is important. However, about 44 per cent think it is difficult to find affordable fruit and veg in Jersey.

4.12.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes. I am singularly unimpressed by the level of detail in the response of the Chief Minister, but nevertheless let us do an easy question, which surely should have been found by his officers. By how much are food prices in Jersey higher than food prices in the U.K.? Do we have any idea of how much an Eatwell diet in Jersey would cost?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Oddly enough, it is always a little bit difficult to judge where supplementary questions are going to go, so I do not have those statistics to hand. I do recall one of the reports from the Statistics Department from a few years ago - I have not updated it - which did seek to do a comparison between Jersey, Guernsey and the U.K. on different food costs. If that has not been updated, I think it should be. As I said, one of the issues within in the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), as it has been referred to, is how we improve standards of living. That is a priority for the Council of Ministers.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Chief Minister for his reply.