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The Implications for Agriculture and Priorities for Research

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GLOBAL WARMING:

The Implications for Agriculture and Consequent Priorities for Research

One hundred and fifty years ago the world population reached 1000 million. Malthus had already written "The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence." Today the population is around 5000 million and according to the Brandt Commission (February 1980) the figure may be 6,500 million by 2000 AD and "would reach between 8,000 and 15,000 million next century." This increase in population will result in massive increases in the human activities of food and fuel consumption, in pollution and in the destruction of much if not all of the remaining natural vegetation of the world.

Plans to cope with the demands that will be made on the world's resources can no longer be set against a background of known and stable climate. It is becoming increasingly certain that the global climate is in the early stages of a period of progressive change brought about by man's industrial and other activities.

This document aims to assess: firstly, evidence for the reality of the effect and the possible scale of changes in the climate of the world and of western Europe in particular; then the problems that will be encountered in several facets of agriculture and finally, the opportunities for research that these problems present. The main theme running throughout is the necessity of timeous action if the results of that research are to be available when they are needed.