

SOURCE 5

Letter from the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to local councils urging them to take control of land and use it to grow food, December 1916
(PRO ref: MAF 48/219)

HOW TO USE THIS SOURCE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE BIG QUESTION :

Look carefully at this source and consider what it tells you about how the Defence of the Realm Act affected people or how they reacted to DORA. You should consider:

ASK YOURSELF:

- What was the main purpose of this letter?
- What powers do local councils now have?
- Do you think the government and councils preferred to work with landowners?
- Look at section 22. What impression do you get of the relationship between the government and the local councils?
- Do private societies have a role to play?
- What does this section tell you about the state of Britain's food supply?
- Do you get the impression the government is forcing people to support the war or working with them?

SOURCE 5

SIR,

1. I AM directed by the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to inform you that a Regulation has been made by Order in Council under the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914, with the object of increasing the food supplies of the country by extending the existing powers of providing land for cultivation.

3. The principal object of the Regulation and the Board's Order is to secure the cultivation of unoccupied land in districts where labour for such cultivation is available by authorising Local Authorities to take possession of such land without the necessity of obtaining any consents, but power is also given to take possession of occupied land by agreement with the owner and occupier and to take possession of common land with the consent of the Board.

22. The President desires me in conclusion to commend the matter to the earnest consideration of your Council and to ask that no time may be lost in putting into operation the powers conferred by the Order. Public notices should be issued at once inviting applications from societies or persons who are willing to undertake the cultivation of land which can be acquired under the Order. The matter is urgent, as, if land is to be in the best condition for putting in Spring crops it is desirable that it should be broken up before the Winter is over. The President realises that Local Authorities are already seriously overburdened with work, but the urgency of increasing the food supply by all possible means is such that he feels sure he can rely on the active co-operation and assistance of your Council. The work which has been done in London by the Vacant Land Cultivation Society, 14, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C., and by similar societies elsewhere has proved that excellent crops of potatoes and other vegetables can be grown on most unpromising sites, and if similar efforts are made in other urban areas a very substantial addition will be made to the food supplies of the nation. The success of the scheme will depend upon cordial co-operation among all those who desire to increase our food production, and the President feels sure that there will be no lack of goodwill on the part either of Local Authorities or of land owners and occupiers, and that men and women of all classes will come forward and give all the time and labour they can spare so as to secure that every available acre should be making its contribution to our home-grown supplies of food.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sydney Oliver". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Secretary.