

Food impact assessment



OUR ASK

Ensure all new policies and regulations that impact agricultural and horticultural businesses undergo a food security impact assessment.

Why it's needed

The current government has set out ambitious and legally binding targets for environmental delivery, including biodiversity, carbon, water, energy and tree planting.

The next government should have equal and balancing ambitions to produce food, fibre, plants and renewable energy.

Many of these environmental targets have been set without any clear consideration of trade-offs or compromises to domestic food production and the productive capacity of farmland, which once made will be irreversible.

Despite this, no evaluation has been made by the government of the individual and cumulative impacts these statutory targets will have on the country's ability to produce food.

Many of these policy drivers are particularly challenging for the tenanted sector to respond to because, as land managers but not landowners, they do not have the necessary land tenure to deliver the required policy outcomes. Over 60% of England's farmed area is farmed by tenants who make a crucial contribution to agricultural output. Any impacts on their ability to operate have to be fully considered.

Current guidance from the Cabinet Office requires Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) to be carried out when new regulations are being proposed. But RIAs do not require new regulations to be assessed for their impact on our food production or food resilience.

They also do not assess the cumulative impact of regulation on confidence in the supply chain, our domestic productive capacity, food inflation, agricultural input cost inflation, or the risk of exporting our food production needs or their negative impacts to other countries.



What it would deliver

The introduction of food impact assessments would demonstrate the next government's commitment to food production across all departments.

The introduction of food production targets, in addition to existing environmental targets, would help in making a balanced and cohesive land use policy

framework that values food production to the same level as the environment.

This commitment would also give farmers and growers the confidence they need to invest, empowering them to deliver for nature and the climate while producing safe, nutritious, high quality food.

Food impact assessments would also ensure consumers have a reliable supply of domestically produced food, which is less exposed to vulnerable global supply impacts that are set to be exacerbated by climate change.

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