

# Flooding



## OUR ASK

**Plan for, and reward farmers fairly for their role in, mitigating flood risk and protecting adjacent towns and cities, and commit to the proactive management of our watercourses.**

## Why it's needed

Some of our most productive and valuable farmland is in areas vulnerable to flooding, with 58% of grade one agricultural land – our most productive and versatile land – situated in the floodplain and 9% at high risk of coastal flooding.

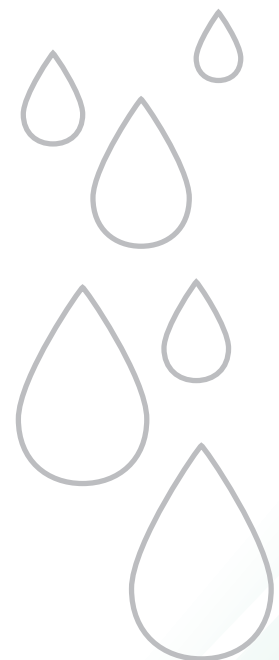
As well as being vital for food production, this land is also delivering a range of environmental benefits and protecting towns, villages and critical infrastructure from flooding. When agricultural land is flooded, it is not just food production that is lost. These environmental benefits also disappear.

Where agricultural land is providing a solution to managing flood risk as part of total catchment management, either through natural flood management or floodwater storage, we believe this must be planned, agreed, and paid for.

The Environment Agency must prioritise essential maintenance of flood defences and watercourses. Farmers and growers regularly highlight a lack of maintenance of watercourses and coastal channels, especially in more rural areas, and reduced maintenance of flood defences, potentially exacerbating flooding elsewhere. They also highlight unrepaired damage to embankments, especially in areas where the risk is low in terms of numbers of houses protected. More often than not, it's farmers who pick up this vital work.

While the NFU acknowledges the increase in capital funding for flood defence, the importance of maintaining existing defences must stay at the forefront of the next government's flood risk management strategy. The artificial distinction between investment in capital schemes

and funding for maintenance works presents a real risk that new defences are being built at the expense of allowing existing ones to deteriorate.



The next government must also conduct a review of the Flood Defence Grant in Aid cost-benefit analysis so that it sufficiently values agricultural land. The cost-benefit approach, where significant weight is assigned to the protection of people and property, means many rural

areas will never score highly enough to receive funding and the value of agriculture and the wider rural community is not properly considered.

Flood storage – where land in rural areas is sacrificed to reduce the frequency and severity of flooding in urban

areas – is often provided at great cost to farmers.

The next government needs to commit to a proactive management plan for Environment Agency-controlled watercourses and flood defences as a priority.

## What it would deliver

**Farming can play a key role in increasing the country's resilience to flooding, through land management practices and the storage of floodwater, reducing the incidence of detrimental flooding both on farms and within wider communities.**

**Farmers and growers across the country are ready and willing to help alleviate the flood risk to their local communities, and to think innovatively and sustainably to ensure their farming businesses are resilient to current and future water-related risks and their impacts.**

**But they will need government support and a government willing to see through a long-term strategy to deliver this in the interest of our domestic food security and safeguarding our environment.**

National Farmers' Union, Agriculture House,  
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2TZ



Tel: 024 7685 8500



[www.nfuonline.com](http://www.nfuonline.com)

Produced by:  
NFU, AGRICULTURE HOUSE  
STONELEIGH PARK, STONELEIGH, WARWICKSHIRE CV8 2TZ  
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