

Food security

OUR ASKS



- **Establish a new food security index and target, including a statutory duty to monitor and report on domestic food production levels each year.**
- **Produce an enhanced policy-focused government food security report annually that assesses the short, medium and long-term viability of the food sector.**
- **Hold an annual food summit at No10 to ensure food security remains high on the political agenda.**

Why they're needed

In 2023, UK food inflation rose to 19.2%, and ongoing global instability caused by the war in Ukraine and incidents of extreme weather have further highlighted the vulnerability of the UK's food system.

While British farmers and growers continue to do all they can to maintain food security, they are facing a plethora of challenges and need support.

Increasing inflation rates across the globe have meant uncertainty in energy prices and labour costs for farming and growing businesses, culminating in a 32% rise in agricultural inputs since 2019¹.

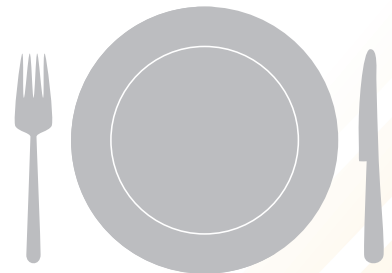
Seasonal labour shortages have led to many UK farm businesses reducing their production by as much as 20-30% since 2020 and resulted in up to £60 million of food rotting in fields in 2022.

UK egg production has fallen to its lowest level in nine years as rising feed, fuel and packaging costs throughout the supply chain hinder the commercial viability of the sector.

All these factors have contributed to a contraction in the sector which meant there were 7,000 fewer agricultural businesses in the UK in 2022 than there were in 2019.

The NFU supported the inclusion of duties within the Agriculture Act 2020 to require the Secretary of State to present a report on food security to Parliament at least once every three years.

However, it is clear from the events of the last three years that an annual report is essential in order to draw on current industry insight and plan for different scenarios.



1. Defra (October 2023). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agricultural-price-indices>

2. Farming for Britain's Future, October 2023, More in Common – 2,135 adults in England and Wales responded to an online survey for the NFU between 14 and 16 October 2023.



Defra statistics for 2022 showed the UK is 60% self-sufficient in all foods. While we will always be a trading nation when it comes to food, we cannot remain over-reliant on imports when other countries are also facing significant challenges economically and climatically.

Increasing the UK's food security is something the public agrees with, with 82% saying it would be a good idea for the government to set targets to increase British food production².

Food security is a crucial part of our national infrastructure, and

any future government must implement policies that reflect this. The current government has statutory targets for the environment and any new government needs to give the same status to our food production.

What they would deliver

The establishment of a new food security index and target would, first and foremost, allow more simple tracing and tracking of self-sufficiency levels. This would make it easier to understand how the farming and growing sector is impacted by certain events and government policies.

Annual reporting will also allow the government to plan

against known risks, rather than retrospectively analysing historic information, allowing the whole supply chain to more accurately prepare for potential crises.

The Farm to Fork Summit on food security held at Number 10 in May 2023 marked a significant step in the recognition of the strategic importance of British food and farming.

It needs to become an annual event, to promote a close partnership and shared ambition between the industry and government, hold organisations to account and give farmers and growers the confidence that government is taking UK food security seriously and is willing and able to intervene when required.

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