



Emergency UK food strategy needed

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In the face of climate change, conflict and unparalleled pressures on farming land, we, the Community Planning Alliance, have issued an urgent call for an emergency UK food strategy.

Such a strategy must include:-

1. **A ban on use of our best farmland for non-food purposes**, and recognition of the importance of food production in the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. **A new Minister of Food Security and Land Use**, to implement the strategy and co-ordinate the Government bodies involved¹.
3. **Immediate implementation of National Food Strategy² recommendation 9** (a rural land use framework based on a three-compartment model).
4. **An urgent meeting of DEFRA's food security³ panel**, to assess threats to our imports and determine how much UK food producing land is lost to production each year.
5. **An extension of the deadlines for the run-down of the current Single Payment System**, in order to maintain maximum stability in arable farming productivity.

Last year, DEFRA's food security panel warned of the risks to British farming from climate change, and last week the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued stark warnings about climate change and the impact on food production⁴. In January the inflation rate for fresh food reached 3.3%, the fastest rate in a decade, with poor harvests in the UK and overseas given as the reason⁵. UK and world farming now faces progressive challenges.

¹ Including DEFRA, BEIS and DHLUC, the National Food Strategy and the Geospatial Commission

² [National-Food-Strategy-Chapter-16.pdf](#)

³ [United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ [www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/](#) 'Climate change will increasingly put pressure on food production'

⁵ [Shop prices rise at fastest rate in a decade, says BRC - BBC News](#)



Good quality farmland in the UK is being lost to:-

- **Development:** DEFRA estimates that 6,300 hectares a year are lost to housing development and 12 times that (75,000 hectares per annum) would be needed for biodiversity offsetting. Infrastructure, such as road building and other development, is destroying thousands of hectares more. Yet already there are one million more homes than households⁶ and one million planning permissions unbuilt⁷.
- **Renewables:** Solar farms are growing exponentially, but no national figures are available. In the East of England alone, their extent doubled in just a few months⁸.
- **Tree-planting:** Global corporations are buying up farmland for commercial forestry and putting farmers out of business⁹.
- **Environmental Land Management Systems:** New farming incentive schemes rightly encourage sustainable practices, but land taken out of production must be measured.
- **Biofuels:** In 2021 the Independent Committee on Climate Change said it hoped the 100 square kilometres of UK energy crops in 2020 would rise to 7,200 square kilometres by 2050¹⁰.

The UK imports around a third of its food. Recent political and climate changes are threatening those supply lines, as demonstrated by the Brexit-induced delays, the Suez Canal blockage and the current conflict in Ukraine, aka "Europe's bread basket". Many Britons are already facing a cost-of-living crisis. They will not be able to absorb further sharp rises.

In these circumstances, it is imperative that we increase the UK's food security by urgently implementing an emergency food strategy and protecting land used for domestic food production.

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⁶ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/researchoutputsubnationaldwellingstockbytenureestimatesengland2012to2015/2020

⁷ [Over 1.1 mil homes with planning permission waiting to be built - new LGA analysis | Local Government Association](#)

⁸ [Farmers swap crops for energy as east of England solar farm proposals double | Energy industry | The Guardian](#)

⁹ [Farm unions' fears over major new Wales tree-planting scheme | Daily Mail Online](#)

¹⁰ [£4m fund to scale up biomass production in UK - Farmers Weekly \(fwi.co.uk\)](#)