# UK urged to prepare inclusive food supplies amid rising threat of supply chain disruptions



Experts are urging the UK Government to proactively prepare for potential disruptions to the food supply chain, including catastrophic cyberattacks and military aggression, particularly from Russia. This warning has sparked concerns about how to cater to diverse dietary needs in the event of a crisis. As it stands, there appears to be a lack of strategic planning for ensuring adequate food supplies for groups such as vegans and Muslims, who might face significant challenges during emergencies.

Tim Lang, a professor of food policy at City, University of London, highlighted the importance of familiarity in ration packs. Speaking at the Hay Festival, he remarked that during times of psychological distress—such as following explosions or energy outages—people would need comforting, recognisable food options. For example, he noted that individuals accustomed to halal diets should not be forced to eat non-halal food, nor should vegetarians and vegans be expected to consume meat. This requirement for culturally appropriate food is a critical consideration that he argues has been largely overlooked in contingency planning.

Lang pointed to successful strategies adopted by countries like Germany and Sweden, which have invested time and resources into addressing the dietary needs of various ethnic groups. He stressed the importance of the Government's scientific advisory committee on nutrition to begin a thorough analysis of British diets. This preparation is essential to ensure that if a food supply shock were to occur, no demographic would be left without adequate nourishment.

Adding to the urgency of Lang’s recommendations, recent events such as cyberattacks on major grocery chains—including the Co-op and Marks & Spencer—have illuminated the vulnerabilities inherent in the UK's food supply system. Lang cautioned that if a more critical player like Tesco, which commands nearly one-third of the country's grocery market, had been targeted, the repercussions would likely have been severe. He described the current food distribution model as being based on a "just in time" approach, which places the entire system at risk. As he put it, a shift to a "just in case" model is crucial for resilience against potential threats.

Sir David Omand, former director of GCHQ, echoed Lang’s concerns, arguing that the UK's interconnected and complex food supply systems pose substantial risks. In his view, the complacency surrounding food security leaves the nation vulnerable to sudden crises. He expressed his belief that many people would only fully grasp the fragility of the situation when a significant disruption occurs, such as a widespread power outage due to a cyberattack.

As calls for more comprehensive strategies gain momentum, a spokesman from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) affirmed the Government's commitment to overhauling the food system. According to this representative, the cross-Government food strategy aims to ensure that the system can effectively nourish the nation while simultaneously addressing economic growth and environmental sustainability. However, the path to achieving this objective may require a deeper engagement with stakeholders across the food sector to bring about meaningful change.

In a landscape fraught with uncertainties, the consensus among experts is clear: without serious consideration for food diversity and security, the UK risks significant hardships in the face of potential crises. As illicit pressures mount on supply chains, preparing an inclusive and resilient framework for the future may well become a matter of national importance.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14753591/Start-planning-ration-packs-chickpeas-Russian-attack-UKs-food-supply-chain-experts-warn.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14753591/Start-planning-ration-packs-chickpeas-Russian-attack-UKs-food-supply-chain-experts-warn.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14753591/Start-planning-ration-packs-chickpeas-Russian-attack-UKs-food-supply-chain-experts-warn.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490),
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* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14753591/Start-planning-ration-packs-chickpeas-Russian-attack-UKs-food-supply-chain-experts-warn.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490),

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14753591/Start-planning-ration-packs-chickpeas-Russian-attack-UKs-food-supply-chain-experts-warn.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data