# UK farming coalition urges government boost amid record dry spells and climate threats



As dry weather persists across the United Kingdom, environmental and farming groups are united in their call to the government for increased support. Reports indicate that some farms have received as little as 20ml of rainfall over the crucial months of March and April. This significant reduction in precipitation not only strains crop growth but also hampers grass development for livestock. The coalition, which includes prominent organisations such as the National Farmers' Union (NFU), the RSPB, the National Trust, and the Woodland Trust, is warning that continued dry conditions threaten both British food production and the broader natural environment.

Tom Bradshaw, the president of the NFU, emphasized the critical role that water plays in food production, stating, “The impacts of climate change are already being felt by farmers and growers, many of whom were underwater only a few months ago and now find their soil dried out.” This perspective reflects a broader climate reality where the frequency of extreme weather events is increasing, underscoring the urgent need for a resilient agricultural framework to safeguard future food security.

Despite ongoing discussions about the Environmental Land Management schemes, which are designed to enhance drought resilience and mitigate the impacts of flooding, uncertainty surrounds their funding. The NFU and affiliated groups are advocating for the government to protect the farming budget in the upcoming spending review, highlighting that sustained investment in environmental protections is vital for creating a more resilient agricultural sector.

The conversation surrounding farming resilience is not new, as Minette Batters, in her recent column for Country Life, reiterated the pressing need to address profitability in the sector amidst challenges exacerbated by climate variability. She noted that the government’s transition from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy to the current framework has been fraught with issues, including inadequate funding and inconsistent support across regions.

In light of the significant weather disruptions over the past 18 months, which have included some of the wettest conditions on record leading to flooded agricultural lands, UK farmers like Luke Abblitt in Cambridgeshire are confronting an unpredictable future. Reports indicate that while the government has offered grants to support farmers, many are ineligible, leading to reduced crop planting and heightened concerns about future shortages. The complexities of post-Brexit trade further complicate the situation, as supermarkets seek alternative sources amidst potential supply disruptions.

Furthermore, a report from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) has deemed current government preparations for climate-induced flooding and extreme weather as insufficient. It has called for a coherent strategy that includes long-term adaptation goals and the investment in critical infrastructure. The CCC warns that without significant progress in adapting to these shifts, the impacts could lead to grave consequences for public health and the economy.

Amid these pressing concerns, environmental organisations, including the Wildlife Trusts, are advocating for a stronger commitment to farming subsidies that support sustainable practices. They propose that the annual farming budget in England should increase to at least £3.1 billion and that 3,000 Countryside Stewardship Agreements should be delivered each year by 2028. This emphasis on environmental stewardship highlights the interconnectedness of farming and nature, advocating for a system where both can thrive.

Moving forward, the coalition of agricultural and environmental groups insists that robust government support is crucial to ensure a sustainable future for farming. They argue that investment in soil health and practices such as tree planting and cover cropping is essential to combat the immediate effects of dry weather while also building long-term resilience against the uncertain climate landscape. The path forward is uncertain, but the need for a collective effort to bolster food security and enhance environmental protection has never been more clear.

## Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 1, 3
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/environmental-and-farming-groups-call-for-support-as-dry-weather-takes-hold/704575.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/environmental-and-farming-groups-call-for-support-as-dry-weather-takes-hold/704575.article> - Environmental and farming groups, including the NFU, RSPB, National Trust, Green Alliance, Nature Friendly Farming Network, and Woodland Trust, have called on the UK government to provide more support as dry weather continues. Some farms have received as little as 20ml of rain over March and April, affecting crop growth and livestock feed. The groups emphasize the need for investment in a resilient, sustainable farming sector to ensure food security and environmental protection.
3. <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/comment-opinion/minette-batters-it-would-be-wrong-to-turn-my-back-on-the-farming-sector-in-its-hour-of-need> - Minette Batters, in her final column for Country Life, announces her decision to lead a six-month review on farming profitability for Defra Secretary Steve Reed. Acknowledging the government's limited support for farming and the challenges ahead, Batters emphasizes her commitment to agriculture, especially amidst the sector’s current crisis. She critiques the handling of the UK’s transition from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy to the Environmental Land Management schemes, highlighting issues such as lack of funding caps, insufficient forward planning, and inconsistent support across UK regions.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/74aa573a-0e3b-4d30-b676-47400abbc62e> - UK farmers, such as Luke Abblitt in Cambridgeshire, are facing significant challenges due to unprecedented rainfall which has led to difficulties in harvesting and planting crops. England has experienced its wettest 18 months since 1836, resulting in flooded agricultural lands. The National Farmers' Union has called for increased government support as food security and profitability are endangered. The unpredictable weather has affected not only local but also European farmers, exacerbating trade complexities post-Brexit. Supermarkets are seeking alternative sources, but there's a push to secure domestic supply in the face of potential shortages. The government has offered grants, but many farmers are not eligible, resulting in reduced spring crop planting and potential future shortages. Rising production costs and the need for sustainable practices are pressing concerns. Farmers are also shifting towards environmental schemes due to economic pressures. The overall situation demands a strategic approach to ensure long-term food security and sustainable farming practices.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/9af67d0a-129b-4e2c-8675-656538a33925> - The UK government's preparations for climate change-induced flooding and extreme weather are deemed 'inadequate' by the Climate Change Committee (CCC). In its recent report, the CCC, under CEO Emma Pinchbeck, criticized progress on climate adaptation across several sectors, including infrastructure, health, agriculture, and energy. Despite a 2023 adaptation plan and Labour’s commitment to improved resilience, there has been little significant progress, with some areas such as water management and marine monitoring reportedly deteriorating. The report urges the government to set clear, long-term adaptation goals and recommends that the National Energy System Operator assess climate risks to the energy grid. It also emphasizes the urgent need for disaster preparedness, citing the deadly 2024 floods in Valencia as a cautionary example. Currently, 6.3 million properties and a large portion of critical infrastructure are at flood risk. The CCC warns climate inaction could result in 10,000 heat-related deaths yearly and a 7% GDP loss by mid-century. Although the government maintains it is investing £2.65 billion in flood defenses, experts stress that sustaining climate adaptation efforts is essential and should not face funding cuts in future reviews.
6. <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/no-nature-no-farmers-no-food> - The Wildlife Trusts have called for a stronger vision and increased funds to support farmers, food security, and nature. They advocate for delivering at least 3,000 Countryside Stewardship Agreements per year by 2028, increasing the annual farming budget to £3.1 billion in England, and focusing on implementing Landscape Recovery projects. The organization emphasizes the need for a clear future for nature-friendly farm schemes to support farmers in transitioning to sustainable practices.
7. <https://www.sustainweb.org/news/dec24-environmental-groups-farming-letter/> - Over 40 leading food, farming, and conservation organizations have signed an open letter urging Environment Secretary Steve Reed to address the deep-seated challenges undermining England’s agriculture sector. The letter highlights issues such as underfunded Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes, unfair supply chains, and the need for increased government support to ensure a prosperous future for farmers and nature. The organizations call for a green and thriving farming economy that can help reverse nature's decline and provide security and stability for farming communities.