# UK faces growing security threat from climate crisis and ecosystem collapse, warns leaked report



The UK’s national security faces escalating threats from the climate crisis and impending ecosystem collapse, with food shortages and economic instability looming within the near future, according to a forthcoming report by the UK’s intelligence chiefs. The joint intelligence committee’s findings reveal that the destabilising impacts of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss are among the gravest risks confronting Britain today. Despite being prepared over many months, the report’s publication has reportedly been delayed, with concerns expressed that it may have been blocked by government officials unwilling to confront the stark warnings it contains.

One of the most immediate risks highlighted is to the UK’s food supply. The country’s heavy reliance on imports, some sourced from regions already vulnerable to climate disasters and ecosystem degradation, puts it at heightened risk of shortages and price volatility. This vulnerability is exacerbated by already tightening supply chains, as seen in sectors such as clothing and fashion, which depend heavily on natural fibres coming from environmentally at-risk areas. Migration pressures are also expected to rise due to climate and biodiversity crises in other countries, potentially driving social and political instability abroad that could have repercussions on UK security.

The intelligence community’s concerns are echoed by recent data and studies highlighting the fragility of the UK’s food system. For instance, a report by the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit notes that an historically wet winter has severely reduced the UK's food self-sufficiency, which is projected to fall nearly 10% this year due to waterlogged farmland affecting crop planting and yields. Key staples like wheat and oilseed rape show particularly sharp declines in expected domestic production, meaning the country will increasingly rely on imports, which could slow progress in reducing food inflation.

Furthermore, government assessments confirm that long-term declines in natural capital—such as soil health, clean water, and pollinators—pose significant risks to domestic food production. These losses are compounded by rising temperatures that increase the likelihood of extreme weather events, despite some potential benefits like longer growing seasons for certain crops. The UK's food security is, therefore, not only a function of global supply chain stability but also deeply intertwined with the health of its own ecosystems.

The unfolding global environmental crises also carry broader implications. Research from the Royal United Services Institute warns of the possible collapse of critical ocean currents like the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, which could severely reduce crop yields in Europe and disrupt monsoon patterns in Asia, exacerbating food insecurity worldwide. Such global shocks risk triggering civil unrest and political instability that would inevitably affect UK security interests.

Critics of government policy argue that current efforts are insufficient given the scale of the threat. Cuts to overseas aid—previously a key tool for stabilising countries most vulnerable to climate impacts and mitigating migration drivers—are seen as counterproductive. Former Conservative minister Zac Goldsmith has called for nature conservation to be given equal priority as climate change within defence strategies, lamenting a perceived narrowing of government focus solely to carbon emissions. He highlighted the UK’s past leadership in global environmental initiatives, warning that key programmes are now at risk of being dismantled amid budget cuts.

In response, a government spokesperson stressed ongoing actions aimed at enhancing food security and tackling nature’s decline, including a pledge of £11.6 billion in international climate finance to be delivered by the end of 2025/26. Yet doubts remain, particularly as political calculations reportedly influence decisions such as Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s anticipated absence from the upcoming UN climate summit in Brazil, despite the UK’s internationally praised emission reduction targets.

The cumulative evidence underscores a grim reality: the threats posed by climate and ecosystem breakdown are no longer distant futures but present challenges. Addressing them will require urgent, integrated approaches across domestic policy, international aid, and climate diplomacy to safeguard the UK’s national security and the resilience of its food systems.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/08/national-security-threatened-climate-crisis-uk-defence-chiefs-warn), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/keir-starmer-defra-budget-government-house-of-commons-b1199352.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/08/national-security-threatened-climate-crisis-uk-defence-chiefs-warn), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/ipcc-biodiversity-food-shortages-extinctions-b2025086.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/historically-wet-winter-damage-uks-food-self-sufficiency-says-think-tank-2024-05-12/), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/dec/11/food-insecurity-rising-uk-climate-breakdown-inflation-brexit-defra-report), [[6]](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmenvaud/312/summary.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/keir-starmer-defra-budget-government-house-of-commons-b1199352.html), [[6]](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmenvaud/312/summary.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/climate-change-avoiding-future-intelligence-failure)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/08/national-security-threatened-climate-crisis-uk-defence-chiefs-warn), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/ipcc-biodiversity-food-shortages-extinctions-b2025086.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/08/national-security-threatened-climate-crisis-uk-defence-chiefs-warn), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/dec/11/food-insecurity-rising-uk-climate-breakdown-inflation-brexit-defra-report)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/08/national-security-threatened-climate-crisis-uk-defence-chiefs-warn> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/historically-wet-winter-damage-uks-food-self-sufficiency-says-think-tank-2024-05-12/> - A report by the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) indicates that the UK's food self-sufficiency is projected to decline by nearly 10% due to an exceptionally wet winter. Excessive rainfall has left large areas of farmland waterlogged, preventing crop planting and damaging existing crops. Consequently, UK self-sufficiency in food is expected to drop from an average of 86% between 2018 and 2022 to 78% this year. Wheat self-sufficiency could fall to 68% from 92%, and oilseed rape to 40% from 75%. Poor harvests are also anticipated for potatoes and onions. Increased reliance on imports may slow down the reduction in food inflation, which dropped from a 45-year high of 19.2% in March 2023 to 4% a year later. The National Farmers' Union has cautioned that consumers may be affected, though Sainsbury's CEO Simon Roberts expressed confidence in maintaining product availability. The analysis precedes a 'Farm to Fork Summit' hosted by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, focusing on the food supply chain and highlighting climate change as an immediate threat to food security.
3. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/climate-change-avoiding-future-intelligence-failure> - The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) discusses the potential collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), a significant ocean current that regulates the Earth’s climate. A recent study finds that the AMOC could collapse as soon as 2025 due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions and rising temperatures. This collapse would have severe cascading consequences, including potentially causing a 30% reduction in crop yields in the EU and weakening the Indian summer monsoon, leading to more frequent droughts with negative impacts for regional food production. The implications of such an event would almost certainly compound global food insecurity, increasing the potential for civil unrest and exacerbating conflict and instability risks.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/keir-starmer-defra-budget-government-house-of-commons-b1199352.html> - A government report highlights that long-term declines in the natural environment and worsening climate change pose serious risks to UK food security. The latest three-yearly report on food security found that the UK was 75% self-sufficient in the food that can be grown domestically last year, producing the equivalent of 62% of overall food consumed. However, the report warns that long-term declines in 'natural capital'—resources such as clean water, healthy soils, and wildlife like pollinators—are a pressing risk to UK food production. Rising temperatures are set to increase the likelihood of extreme weather events, representing significant overall risks to UK food security, despite some potential for new crops and a longer growing season.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/dec/11/food-insecurity-rising-uk-climate-breakdown-inflation-brexit-defra-report> - A Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) report reveals that food insecurity is rising in the UK due to climate breakdown, inflation, and Brexit. The report indicates a notable decrease in food-secure households, defined as those with access to enough food for an active, healthy life, coinciding with increased financial pressures from high general inflation and food inflation. The decrease in food security hits more vulnerable demographics the most, with low-income and disabled groups at disproportionately high risk. The report also highlights that extreme weather continues to have a significant effect on domestic production, particularly arable crops, fruit, and vegetables. Rising temperatures are set to increase the likelihood of extreme weather events, representing significant overall risks to UK food security, despite some potential for new crops and a longer growing season.
6. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmenvaud/312/summary.html> - A House of Commons Committee report discusses how climate change and biodiversity loss affect the quantity and quality of food produced both in the UK and globally. The report notes that British people have already started to see the effects of this on their dinner plates: the 2022 summer heatwave diminished the yields of certain British crops, while extreme weather in Spain and Morocco earlier this year caused empty shelves for some fruits and vegetables. The impacts of environmental change also coincide with those of other crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, placing further stress on the global food system.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/ipcc-biodiversity-food-shortages-extinctions-b2025086.html> - The United Nations’ International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that the climate crisis poses a global risk to biodiversity, causing mass mortality events and threatening food shortages. The IPCC states that climate change has altered marine, terrestrial, and freshwater ecosystems worldwide, leading to local species losses, increases in disease, and mass mortality events of plants and animals. This has resulted in the first climate-driven extinctions, ecosystem restructuring, increases in areas burned by wildfire, and declines in key ecosystem services. The report emphasizes that safeguarding and strengthening nature is key to securing a liveable future and that healthy ecosystems are more resilient to climate change, providing life-critical services such as food and clean water.