

RESTORING THE RESILIENCE OF UK FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

A thriving UK horticulture sector would address some of the biggest challenges facing society today, including poor public health, supply chain resilience, climate change and biodiversity loss. Yet as it stands, the sector is struggling. As highlighted by Riverford's #GetFairAboutFarming campaign, almost half our growers fear they could go out of business within 12 months. As organisations* representing farmers and growers, we urge the new UK government to work with us, and to support this country's food producers so that together we can unleash the full potential of UK horticulture.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

We call on you to go further than the previous government's Blueprint for fruit and vegetable production and deliver a **bold cross-departmental horticulture strategy**, to ensure a resilient fruit and veg supply. This should join the dots between:

- **Economic revitalisation**

£7.1billion is currently spent on fruit and vegetable imports. Redirecting one third of that spending to British produce would bring the equivalent of the entire agriculture budget (£2.4billion) back into UK economy, boosting the resilience of our domestic supply and generating skilled and satisfying employment.

- **Public health**

Only 33% of adults and 12% of children currently eat 5-a-day, and dietary related ill-health is costing the NHS billions every year. A publicly funded scheme to improve access to fresh produce will help build a reliable market for our growers, while investing in the country's public health. A starting point should be to prioritise UK produce in public procurement.

- **Environmental resilience**

We cannot continue to rely on imports for our fruit and vegetable supply. Much of our produce comes from climate-vulnerable and water-scarce countries such as Spain and Morocco, but we're already experiencing climate-related shortages. To ensure a secure food supply, we should be investing in sustainable domestic production, rewarding practices which support ecosystem services such as soil health, water management and biodiversity.

We are eager to work with Defra to find solutions to these challenges, and contribute to shaping this vital horticulture strategy. We have a clear vision for how organic and agroecological producers can contribute significantly to a resilient food supply. For further detail about this vision, please see the following publications:

Home-Grown: A roadmap to resilient fruit and vegetable production in England (Soil Association, the Wildlife Trusts and Sustain, June 2024)

Horticulture across Four Nations (Landworkers Alliance, January 2024)

Cultivating Success: Priorities for increasing sustainable production to meet growing demand (Fruit and Vegetable Alliance, March 2023)

These policy requests are the result of collaboration between a broad range of organisations, including:



COMMUNITY
SUPPORTED
AGRICULTURE

sustain

