



Food security and the Ukraine crisis

Summary

- Farmers face significant pressures due to the rising costs of fertilisers and other inputs.
- The removal of Ecological Focus Areas would do nothing to tackle the pressures on food producers and would come at an environmental cost.
- Tackling the climate and nature emergency is the only way to ensure long-term food security.
- The current crisis should encourage agricultural policy to support sustainable and regenerative agriculture, including a move away from nitrogen-based fertilisers.

Ecological Focus Areas

The NFUS has called for the temporary suspension of greening rules, specifically around Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs), so that more land can be made available for crop production.

The Scottish Government has stated that it remains committed to requiring recipients of Greening payments to maintain 5% of their arable land in EFAs. LINK opposes any call to remove EFAs, which would be both ineffective as a policy response and would damage the future resilience of our food supply.

Current pressures on food production are not driven by a lack of land but by the costs of inputs. Fertiliser prices have more than trebled compared to their cost a year ago, a cost pressure exacerbated by increases in fuel, feed and labour costs. The removal of environmental standards would do nothing to ease these pressures. In some cases **farmers are in fact reducing production due to rising costs.** (*The Independent*, 25/4/22)

Almost 80% of our cereal harvest in Scotland is used for alcohol production or animal feed. Around two-thirds of the EU cereal harvest is used for animal feed or biofuel.

Food security and agricultural policy

Tackling the climate and nature emergency is the only way to ensure long-term food security. The poor harvest in North America last year was caused by drought, while this was counterbalanced by good harvests in India and Australia. As the climate becomes more chaotic, the risk of multiple harvest failures in different parts of the world increases.

Farming and nature are not a zero-sum game. Scotland is committed to becoming a world leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture.

We must shift towards environmentally friendly farming practices, such as agroecology, organic farming, and agroforestry, which provide the only path to ensuring long-term food security, food sovereignty, and the overall sustainability of food systems.

The current crisis should highlight the use and costs of nitrogen-based fertilisers. Agricultural policy should focus on the ways in which we can fix nitrogen naturally, and how we can use grass and food waste rather than wheat for animal feed.



This briefing represents the collective view of LINK's Food & Farming Group. Members may also respond individually in order to raise more detailed issues that are important to their particular organisation.

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 40 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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