

CONNECT

Is Food Security Under Threat?

2375 HB

How can we make sure we have enough food to eat? Support small farms!

- 1 The cost of living is at an all-time high and increasing almost every day. Some of these costs are related to luxury goods, but one of the items going up in price is something that every human needs: Food.

As the price tag increases and shortages are forecast, the general public is being made to fear the stability of the most basic need. It is, however, likely that this information is misleading. If the future of Britain's agriculture is as bleak as it's made out to be, what hope is there for us as a nation and will our farmers stop feeding us?



- 2 The price of everything is going up: electricity, gas, fuel – food. Last year [July 2021], 1 tonne of nitrogen fertilizer cost £326. This year, it costs £8411. This in turn has impacted the price of commodities, so for example the price of milling wheat is reaching almost £300/tonne², compared to last year's price of around £220/tonne³. That is standard wheat now trading for a higher price than Organic wheat last year.

However, despite the fact that fertilizer prices have rocketed by 158%, you will notice that the price of grain has only increased by 36%. The pressure is on. Farmers are trying to grow their crops to achieve the best yields possible whilst reducing their chemical fertilizer inputs and despite the UK import of Ukrainian grain being close to nothing [if not none at all], the impact of this war is rippling through the world and its economics like a domino effect.

- 3 Of course, milling wheat is just one example. The other agriculturally-centred news item you might recall making headlines earlier this year was

the crash in the pig industry, where the combination of feed costs together with a lack of haulage, slaughter, and butcher's staff meant thousands of pigs were being killed every day, but not for consumption.

Our exit from the European Union has had a massive impact on our market for cull sows and boar, which previously had an open trade with countries like Germany. Old sows and boar cannot be eaten as pork, but minced up en masse at a low ratio with better quality pork they are perfectly good for Frankfurters, for example. But, like I say, we've lost this market now and when it's time to get rid of your old or non-functional animals, if you take them to the Cirencester auction house each animal will be sold for a price in the region of £2 to £10. Yes, £2, for an entire pig. It's tragic and the future looks bleak, but are we beyond salvation?

- 4 It is hard to say for sure – and certainly things may get worse before they get better, but food will always find its way to the shelves to keep our people fed. The prices may go up, but the supply will always be there so we must ensure we do our best to support our British farmers – no matter the size of the farm. We mustn't turn our interests away from the little family farm outside the village just because it's "only small".
- 5 No, they may only have 50 beef cattle but each one of those finished animals becomes at least 50 steaks, 10 roasting joints and 150 burgers. That's a lot of food making its way either to pubs, local butchers or directly to you. Keep them in business and your tummies will stay full.
- 6 Many people have heard about 'regenerative agriculture' and all its benefits, but does it have its place in our food security? Well yes, I believe it does. A lot of people seem to understand that it means creating a better on-farm ecosystem to encourage the growth of both animal and plant species, but it goes beyond that. It operates on the basis of improving soil conditions.

Traditionally, livestock were always integrated into the farm's rotation [a bit like in Organic production], but with reliance on chemicals the utilisation of livestock to enrich the soil was phased out on arable systems, although this attitude is now rewinding – especially with the cost of fertilizer! Regenerative agriculture is, however, a gradual process and grazing cattle on a herbal ley one year will not give you a record-breaking yield of barley in that same field the next. The fertility takes time to build but in the long run, enriched soils will reward you whereas chemically-pumped soils will destroy your business and the planet.

According to scientists, if globally we don't make an effort to save our soils then collectively we only have 50 harvests left until the ground becomes entirely sterile – but that's another story!

CONNECT'S Maxim and Oath

Connect is only interested in finding and sharing the TRUTH.
In search of that TRUTH, we only pose questions – we have no answers.

By: Sophia Ashe

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- [LINK](#) Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board [AHDB]: GB Fertiliser Prices: Latest market update
[LINK](#) Farmers Weekly: 2022 Grains, Oilseeds and Pulse Prices

FURTHER READING

- [LINK](#) The Guardian: Hundreds of healthy pigs slaughtered amid UK shortage of abattoir workers

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