

Why is food supply becoming unstable?

Adam Tugwell | 15 September 2026



Food is really important. We all need it every day, and it's as essential as the air we breathe and the water we drink - so please don't feel bad for looking for answers about what's happening and what's going wrong.

The strange thing about food - and why questions about food security feel confusing as well as frightening - is that most of us have grown up assuming supermarkets will always have what we need. We're used to walking in and finding everything on the shelves, or ordering whatever we want for delivery, without ever thinking about how it gets there. We take it for granted that today will be the same as yesterday, and tomorrow will be the same as today.

Unfortunately, that's how almost everyone has been treating food - including the people who make decisions about how it's produced, where it comes from, and how it reaches us. Because food is essential, but can also be processed, modified, and sold in forms we don't actually need but have been encouraged to want, the industries that produce and sell food have focused on those profitable parts for a very long time.

This has changed the UK's relationship with food drastically over the past 50 years. Most people don't think about where food comes from or how it gets to us, but the truth is that **a very large amount of the food we eat in the UK comes from outside the UK**. Supermarkets, takeaways, restaurants - much of what they sell relies on long, fragile supply chains that stretch across the world.

And the world isn't a stable place right now. We hear about wars, conflicts, political tensions, and economic shocks - but very little is said about how these events affect the food chain, or the supplies like diesel, fertiliser, and animal feed that farmers rely on. When any part of that chain is disrupted, the effects eventually reach us, even if we don't see them straight away.

It's a complicated subject, and understanding the real story about food in the UK will take time, thought, and questions. I'll add some links below if you'd like to begin exploring it. But the most important question right now is this:

How do we make sure everyone has enough of the food we actually need, rather than just the food we've become used to wanting?

Working with others in our communities to meet our shared needs - and to make our long-term food supplies more resilient - is one of the best steps we can take. It will take time, effort, and patience, especially when some of us are already worried about where the next meal will come from. But it's possible. And it's necessary.

The good news is that there are practical steps you can take to begin providing at least some of your own food reasonably quickly - even if you don't have a garden or outside space. Please take a look at the links below.

[Understand who controls the UK's food supply - and why it matters](#)

[See how fragile the UK food chain really is](#)

[Learn why Britain can't feed itself under the current model](#)

[Find practical steps you can take right now](#)

[Explore what foods we can produce locally in the UK](#)

[Plan for local resilience and community support](#)

[See how communities can build trustworthy food systems](#)

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