



UK GOVERNMENT BRIEFING

**The UK Government's role
in supporting food retailers
to halve their environmental
impact by 2030**

DECEMBER 2025

OVERVIEW

On 2 December 2025, WWF published the [2025 What's in Store for the Planet report](#), which assesses how far UK food retailers have progressed on their commitment made in 2021 to halve the environmental impact of UK shopping baskets by 2030.

While the report outlines actions the retail sector should take to meet 2030 commitments, the UK Government has a crucial role in helping shift the food system by enabling and incentivising

retailers and supply chain actors to collectively reach this goal.

This briefing outlines the 2025 report's findings and sets out WWF's recommendations for how the UK Government can deliver a 'good food cycle' and provide healthier and more environmentally sustainable food for everyone. These are:

1 **Apply a 'triple challenge' principle to all food system policies** to ensure nutrition security while simultaneously meeting climate and nature targets.

2 **Introduce a government-wide holistic approach to reducing nitrogen pollution**, including reducing pollution from agriculture into freshwater, air, and soils.

3 **Implement due diligence legislation for forest risk commodities** to ensure products contributing to illegal deforestation aren't landing on supermarket shelves.



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4 **Introduce Core Environmental Standards in law**, to ensure all food, domestic or imported, meets minimum environmental criteria and creates a level playing field for British farmers.

5 **Introduce mandatory reporting for large food companies on climate impact as well as human health**, to set full transparency.

BACKGROUND TO WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE PLANET REPORT

Each year, food retailers representing 90% of the UK grocery market submit unique data to WWF across a set of key sustainability outcomes and measures spanning climate, nature, and people. It takes a systems-level perspective, going beyond individual company strategies and progress and assesses the data of 10 retailers: Aldi, Asda, Co-op, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco, and Waitrose.

Given most of the food we buy in the UK comes from supermarkets, this report provides an insightful overview of what's going on in UK supply chains.

After four years, it is clear that collective progress is incredibly challenging without government support. Retailers need the UK Government to set a long-term vision and create a policy environment which enables and incentivises food companies to improve the resilience of their supply chains.



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WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

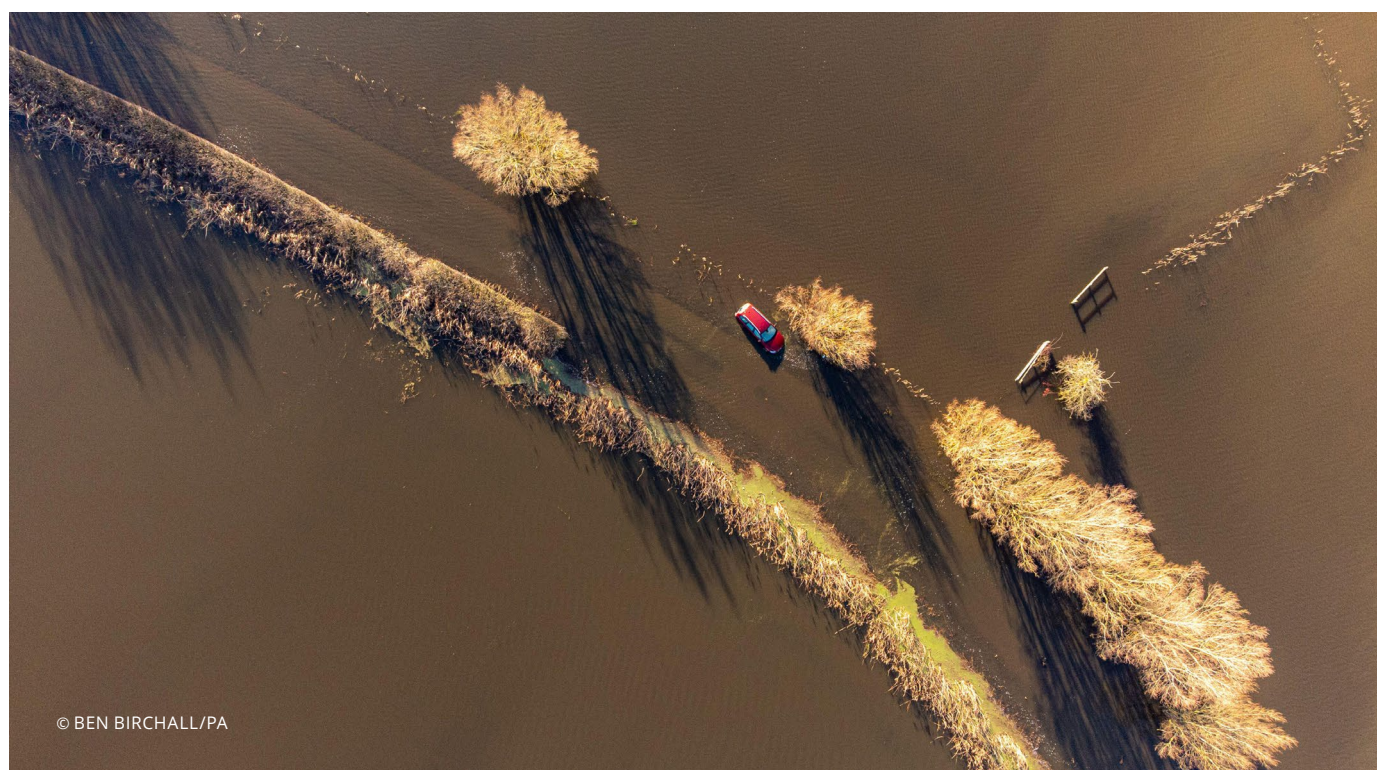
WHY DO WE NEED A FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION?

The impacts of our food system on the planet are enormous. Globally, the production and distribution of food is responsible for 70% of nature loss and around a third of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – yet a third of the food we produce goes to waste.¹ These are all symptoms of a broken food system, which is driving the destruction of precious habitats, deepening the climate crisis, and putting our nutritional security at risk.

Continued cost-of-living pressures are dominating public concern at a time when we are already seeing the impacts of climate change driving up the price of food. This year has seen the driest and hottest spring and summer in more than 100 years in the UK, which has had a drastic impact on yields of key commodities like wheat.² The marine heatwave this summer

in the south of the UK also significantly impacted the seafood production in the region.³ Internationally, global supply chain disruptions due to drought and flooding have driven up prices for regular shopping basket items like coffee and cocoa. These climactic impacts are creating huge volatility in food commodity pricing, with latest ONS figures reporting the annual food price inflation rate has risen to 5.1%.⁴ However, the impacts of climate change and nature loss are often buried in reporting around food price inflation.

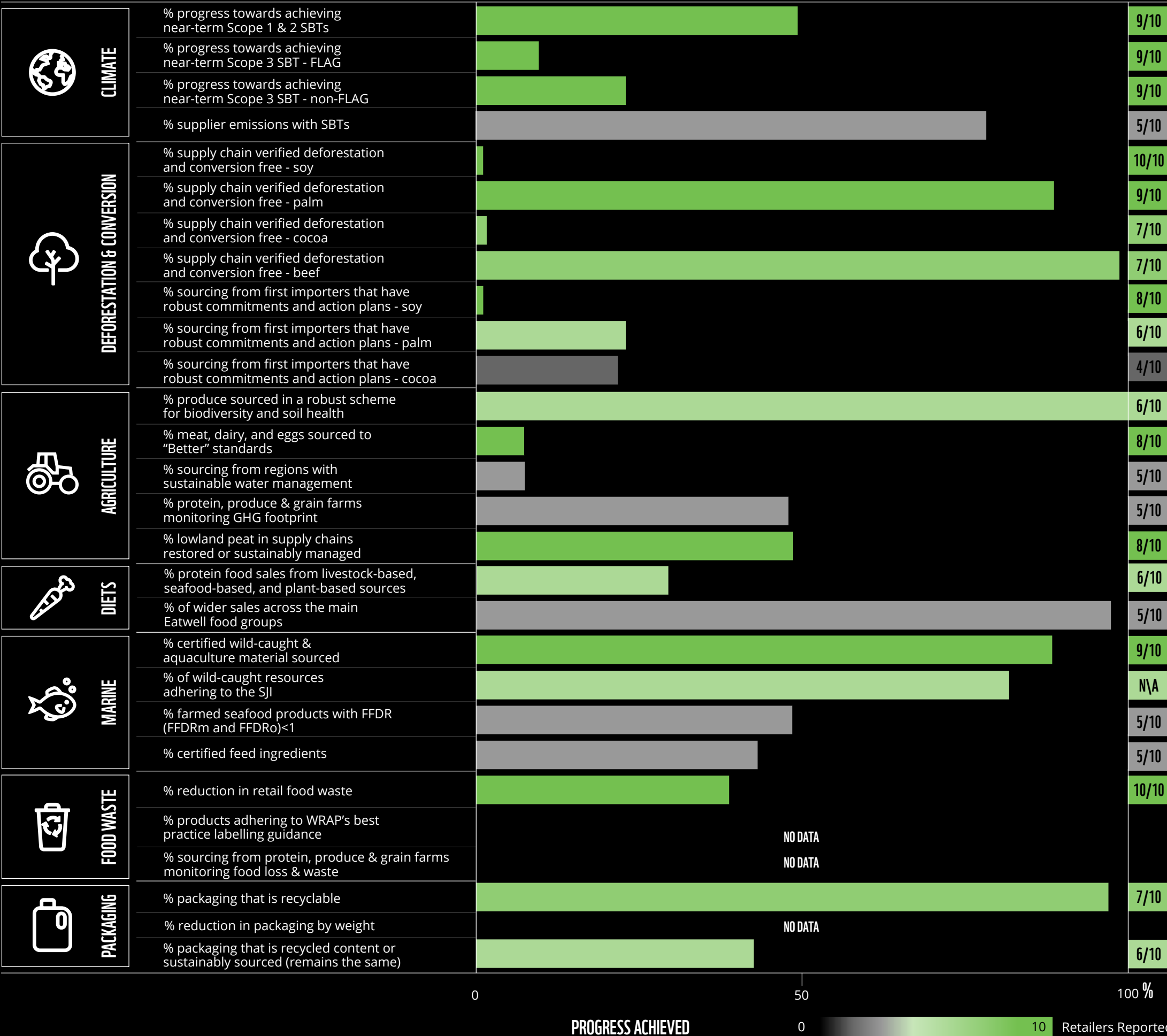
As the frequency of extreme weather events increase, our soils will continue to degrade, water will become ever scarcer, and the pressures on supply chains and consumer pockets will only continue to grow.



HOW THE RETAIL SECTOR IS PERFORMING: REPORT FINDINGS

While the food sector has made voluntary strides in the last decade to tackle its impact on the planet, we are not yet seeing an effort on a scale that will deliver healthy and sustainable food for the nation.

This figure gives a snapshot of the progress made towards each outcome within the WWF Basket. It shows the aggregate figures across each measure, showing the level of progress (and distance to go) for the retailers who have provided data. It also shows where we have not received data from a subsection of the retailers.



DEFORESTATION AND CONVERSION FREE SUPPLY CHAINS

Retailers have been working together to end deforestation and habitat conversion within commodity supply chains for several years. However, they are unable to achieve this goal due to uncertainty and delays from the UK Government as well as a lack of supportive legislation. Retailers are currently set to miss the 2025 target of Deforestation and Conversion Free (DCF) supply chains, with 2024 sourcing data revealing that on average only 1.8% of soy and 3.1% of cocoa sourced from high-risk regions can be physically verified as DCF.⁵ Missing these targets will severely hinder the sector's ability to deliver on their Scope 3 climate targets, therefore putting the UK's own climate commitments at risk.

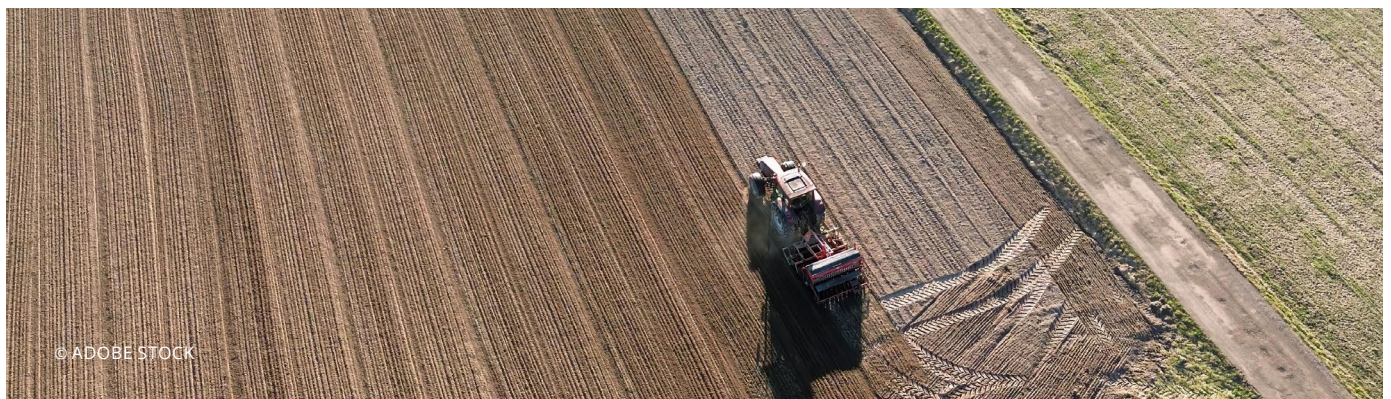
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

We are also seeing retailers piloting sustainable agricultural practices with select farming groups, but government action is needed to enable a fair transition to nature-positive practices in the agricultural sector. Clear policies and implementation of the Food Strategy, Land Use Framework, and Farming Roadmap are essential to level the playing field for companies, ensuring farmers are supported and transition costs are distributed fairly across the supply chain.

CIRCULARITY AND SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

We have also seen how effective regulation can be a powerful driver for change by creating a level playing field for businesses leading on supply chain sustainability, while simultaneously incentivising those lagging behind to improve. For example, packaging recyclability is now at high levels across all retailers, demonstrating the positive shift the recent Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging regulation has incentivised. The Government's Circular Economy Taskforce provides another unique opportunity to unlock further innovation in packaging and resource circularity.

It is not too late to act. The next five years are what really counts to build the foundation for a resilient UK food system. **Now is the moment to come together to ensure a healthy and sustainable future, prevent and manage shocks, and secure stable prices for consumers.**



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While the WWF Basket report outlines actions the retail sector should take to meet 2030 commitments, the UK Government has a crucial role in creating a policy environment which enables and incentivises retailers and supply chain actors to collectively reach this target.

The table below outlines the key asks to the UK Government and how these would contribute to halving the environmental impact of UK shopping baskets by 2030:

KEY ACTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT		CONTRIBUTION TO HALVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF UK SHOPPING BASKETS BY 2030	
1	Apply a ‘triple challenge’ principle to all food system policies (including the Food Strategy, Environmental Improvement Plan, Land Use Framework, and 25-year Farming Roadmap). ⁶ This requires considering nutrition security needs, climate targets, and reversing biodiversity as equal outcomes in policy decisions.	+	Provide actors across the food system (including farmers, food businesses, and investors) with regulatory certainty and the confidence to invest in nature-positive production.
			Provide farmers and land managers with financial incentives to transition to nature-positive practices and increase the domestic supply of sustainable and nature-positive food for retailers to source.
			Provide clarity to retailers and other supply chain actors about their expected funding roles alongside Government funding.
2	Introduce a government-wide, holistic approach to addressing nitrogen pollution. This includes reducing nitrogen pollution from agriculture and measuring national nitrogen flows through a ‘Nitrogen Balance Sheet’.	+	Improve supply chain transparency and enable retailers to identify which products and suppliers contribute most to nitrogen pollution (particularly in freshwater, air, and soil).
			Allow retailers to prioritise sourcing from farms or producers with better nitrogen management practices.

KEY ACTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT	CONTRIBUTION TO HALVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF UK SHOPPING BASKETS BY 2030
<div data-bbox="124 757 162 846">3</div> <p data-bbox="236 689 667 922">Implement due diligence legislation for forest risk commodities so businesses no longer import products contributing to illegal deforestation.</p>	<ul data-bbox="798 465 1423 1146" style="list-style-type: none"> + Enhance transparency and create a level playing field for retailers and other food businesses to invest in deforestation and conversion free supply chains. + Encourage food businesses to invest in more sustainable agriculture globally as a viable alternative to agriculture that incentivises and demands further deforestation and landscape conversion. + Enable businesses to implement Scope 3 emission reduction targets and support climate mitigation to reduce heat and water stress in sourcing landscapes.
<div data-bbox="124 1572 162 1662">4</div> <p data-bbox="236 1482 689 1751">Introduce Core Environmental Standards in law that would set minimum environmental criteria that apply to all the food produced in the UK and food imported from abroad.</p>	<ul data-bbox="798 1227 1407 2011" style="list-style-type: none"> + Create a level playing field between domestic and overseas producers, incentivising the transition to sustainable food production without offshoring impacts to other sourcing regions. + Prevent British farmers being undermined by those producing to lower environmental standards. + Incentivise retailers to source from sustainable producers that reflect British environmental standards and values. + Reduce the burden on food businesses and retailers to navigate global landscape of private certification schemes to find equivalents to British standards.

KEY ACTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT		CONTRIBUTION TO HALVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF UK SHOPPING BASKETS BY 2030
5	Introduce mandatory reporting for large food companies on climate impact (Scope 1, 2, 3 emissions), as well as human health (food sales volumes for fruit, vegetables, animal and plant proteins, and foods high in fat, salt and sugar).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Ensure an industry-wide approach to reporting that enables a true level playing field.+ Ensure standardisation of metrics and the reporting process.+ Catalyse private investment from the supply chain and financial institutions in agri-food systems solutions due to greater transparency.

For questions or further information please contact:

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1 SRCCL (2019) *Food Security, Climate Change and Land*
2 ECIU (2025) *UK on course for fifth worst harvest after drought hits staple crops – new data*
3 Met Office (2025) *Waters surrounding UK experiencing significant marine heatwave*
4 Office for National Statistics (2025) *Consumer price inflation, UK: August 2025*
5 WWF-UK (2024) *What's in Store for the Planet: the impact of shopping baskets on climate and nature*
6 WWF-UK (2020) *The Triple Challenge: synergies, trade-offs and integrated responses to meet our climate, food, and biodiversity goals*



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