The Future of Food

British farming

With high calorie consumption and an increasing population, British farms are trying to increase yields. This is challenging as food insecurity is a growing issue.

Food price volatility contributes to this problem. Recent volatility has been caused by higher freight costs, rising commodity prices, export restrictions initiated during COVID-19, and the war in Ukraine increasing the cost of fertiliser1.

Profit margins on British farms are projected to be much tighter than they have been for some time, endangering the livelihoods of small-scale British farmers.

Food price inflation is partly due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. The two countries account for nearly 30% of global wheat exports and 88% of sunflower oil exports.

A 500g bag of own-brand pasta that cost ~55p in 2020 is now typically ~70p - a rise of more than a quarter.

Solutions

Supermarkets need to clearly label products to allow consumers to make informed choices.

Food waste must be reduced. The estimated annual combined surplus and waste in primary production is 3.6 million tonnes (Mt), which is between 6 and 7% of total output. Wastage in households and post production businesses also reduces the effective supply of UK food.

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Composting is an excellent way to prevent food waste whilst also enriching soils. It less is thrown away, less needs to be grown.

British farms can increase yields by improving efficiency. For example, by reducing inputs, such as fertiliser, whilst maximising light energy and available water.

The green revolution requires continued investment. The use of fertilisers, pesticides, high-yield crops, and irrigation techniques will need to support a growing British population.