Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Research and analysis

Farming evidence - key statistics (accessible version)

Updated 23 October 2025

Contents

What is productivity and how has UK agricultural productivity changed over time?

Of the food we can produce in the UK, how much do we produce and what do we produce the most of?

How much does the agri-food sector contribute to the economy?

How does farming contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and water quality?

This publication is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-evidence-pack-a-high-level-overview-of-the-uk-agricultural-industry/farming-evidence-key-statistics-accessible-version

How is the UK agricultural industry structured and how is agricultural land used?

The UK agriculture industry is made up of 209,000 farm holdings, using 17 million hectares of land (69% of the UK land total in 2024).

The average UK farm size is 80 hectares. However, almost half of all farms are less than 20 hectares in size.

The Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) includes arable and horticultural crops, uncropped arable land, land for outdoor pigs, temporary grassland, permanent grassland and common rough grazing. Total UAA has remained between 17 and 18 million hectares since 2000.

Total croppable area consists of cereals, oilseed, potatoes, other arable crops, horticultural crops, uncropped arable land and temporary grassland. In 2024, the total croppable area was 6.2 million hectares, around 1/3 of the UAA.

In England in 2024, 100,000 ha of agricultural land were used to grow miscanthus, short rotation coppice and maize for renewable energy generation/anaerobic digestion. 7,000 ha of agricultural land were covered with solar panels, with 50% of this land still being used for agricultural production or grazing.

Table 1: Agricultural land use in 2024

Land use	Area (thousand hectares)	Proportion of UAA
Permanent grassland	9,380	56%
Temporary grassland	1,275	8%
Common rough grazing	1,197	7%
Woodland	939	6%
Cereals	2,966	18%
Other arable crops	732	4%
Oilseeds	317	2%
Uncropped arable land	616	4%
Horticulture	142	1%

Land use	Area (thousand hectares)	Proportion of UAA
Potatoes	118	1%

Notes:

1. Permanent grassland is grassland that has not been sown in the last 5 years.

Table 2: Livestock numbers in 2024

Livestock	Number (millions)
Cattle	9.4
Sheep	31
Poultry	176
Pigs	4.7
Dairy herd	1.8

How many of each farm type are there in England and how much land do they use?

In England in 2024, grazing livestock in lowland areas had the greatest number of farms (30% of total), and cereal farms used the largest amount of farmed area (33% of total).

There were 102,300 farm holdings in 2024. The total farmed area was 8.9 million hectares. Of the total area farmed, 3% is organic and 97% is farmed conventionally.

Table 3: Number of farms per type in England in 2024

Farm type	Number of farms	Proportion of farms
Cereals	16,600	16%
General cropping	21,500	21%

Farm type	Number of farms	Proportion of farms
Horticulture	3,400	3%
Specialist pigs	1,900	2%
Specialist poultry	2,400	2%
Dairy	5,000	5%
Grazing livestock (Less Favoured Area)	12,000	12%
Grazing livestock (lowland)	30,800	30%
Mixed	7,200	7%
Other/unclassified	1,500	2%

Note:

1. Number of farms rounded to nearest 100.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4: Area of land used by farm type in England in 2024

Farm type	Area of land (thousand hectares)	Proportion of agricultural area
Cereals	2,952	33%
General cropping	1,541	17%
Horticulture	168	2%
Specialist pigs	84	1%
Specialist poultry	87	1%
Dairy	735	8%
Grazing livestock (Less Favoured Area)	1,156	13%
Grazing livestock (lowland)	1,318	15%

Farm type	Area of land (thousand hectares)	Proportion of agricultural area
Mixed	825	9%
Other/unclassified	10	<1%

Note:

1. ‘Proportion of agricultural area’ uses the total area on agricultural holdings. This is different to UAA which includes only utilised area.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

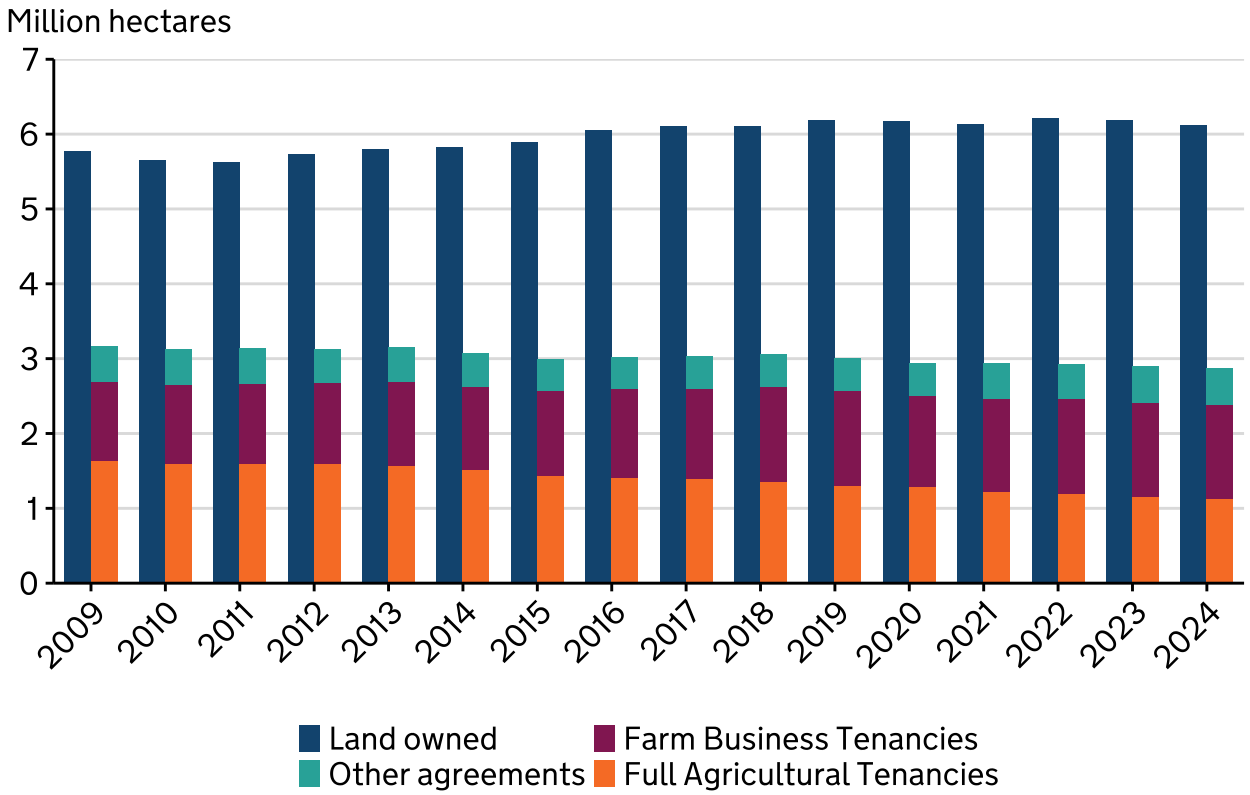
In England, how many farms are owner occupied and how many are tenanted?

In England in 2024, the majority of farms (54%) are owner occupied, followed by 31% mixed tenure and 14% wholly tenanted. For the remaining 1%, tenancy was undeclared.

Wholly tenanted farms have a younger age profile: 18% had a farmer aged under 45 in 2016, compared to 6% of farms that were solely owned.

Farms of mixed tenure tend to be larger than farms that are wholly owned or wholly tenanted.

Figure 1: Owner and rented agriculutral land in England, 2024 (thousand hectares)



Text description of figure 1: Figure 1 is a bar chart showing owner and rented agricultural land in England, between 2009 and 2024. Rented land is broken down into three categories Farm Business Tenancies, Full Agricultural Tenancies, and other agreements.

The amount of owned agricultural land has shown a gradual increase over time, from 64% in 2009 to 69% in 2024. Meanwhile, the amount of land rented for 1 year or more has decreased from 35% to 32%.

The type of tenancies have also changed over this time, with Full Agricultural Tenancies making up 52% of land rented in 2009, reducing to 39% in 2024. Farm Business Tenancies have increased from 33% to 44% over the same time-period.

Types of Tenancies in England

Full Agricultural Tenancies (FAT): Tenancies agreed before Sept 1995, generally have lifetime security of tenure, and some have succession rights for close relatives. Can only be terminated in very specific circumstances which are set out in legislation.

Farm Business Tenancies (FBT): Tenancies agreed after Sept 1995, more flexible than FATs as they can be of any length of term, from rolling annual tenancies or a fixed term. Rolling annual FBTs can be terminated by either party issuing a (no-fault) 12 month notice to quit.

FATs and FBTs: Can be bare land agreements or partial or fully equipped holdings (include buildings/a farmhouse and other assets).

Which products contribute most to the value of UK agricultural output?

63% of the value of the UK's agricultural production comes from livestock (£20.1 billion in 2024), of which Dairy and Beef are the largest sectors.

Dairy (£6.3 billion) and Beef (£4.1 billion) are the largest livestock outputs.

Vegetables/Flowers (£3.7 billion) and Cereals (£3.5 billion) are the two largest crop outputs. Together, these account for over half of the total value of crops.

Table 5: Value of UK crop and livestock products in 2024

Product	Value (£ billion)	Proportion of total output value
Dairy	£6.3	20%
Beef	£4.1	13%
Poultry	£3.4	11%
Pigs	£1.8	6%
Sheep	£1.8	6%
Eggs	£1.4	4%
Other livestock	£1.3	4%
Vegetables/flowers	£3.7	12%
Cereals	£3.5	11%
Potatoes	£1.5	5%
Fruit	£1.1	3%
Industrial crops	£0.9	3%
Other crops	£0.9	3%

Notes:

1. ‘Other livestock’ includes the value of animals going into the breeding herd/flock.
2. ‘Other crops’ includes forage plants and other crop products, including seeds.
3. Table 5 shows only the main contributors to crops and livestock product value.

How much does agriculture contribute to the UK economy?

In 2024, agriculture contributed £14.5bn (0.56%) to the UK economy. Agriculture employed 452,900 people in 2024, making up 1.3% of the UK workforce.

The total UK GVA figure was £2.57 trillion in 2024, of which agriculture contributed 0.56% (£14.5bn). The amount that agriculture contributes to the UK economy has varied little over time.

Of the £14.5bn agriculture contributed to the UK economy in 2024:

- England contributed 73%
- Scotland contributed 15%
- Wales contributed 8%
- Northern Ireland contributed 4%

GVA breakdowns are preliminary and may be revised.

A total of 33.6 million people were employed in the UK in 2024, of which agriculture employed 1.3% (452,900).

Of the total agricultural workforce in the UK in 2024:

- 63% were employed in England
- 15% were employed in Scotland
- 11% were employed in Northern Ireland
- 11% were employed in Wales

Percentages for GVA and employment stated above may not add to 100 due to rounding.

How many people are employed within agriculture in the UK?

In the UK in 2024, agriculture employed almost half a million people. 65% of the agricultural workforce were mainly involved in business ownership or management.

452,900 people were employed in the agricultural sector in the UK in 2024:

- 284,800 people were employed in England (63% of agricultural workforce)
- 67,400 people were employed in Scotland (15% of agricultural workforce)
- 51,200 people were employed in Northern Ireland (11% of agricultural workforce)
- 49,500 people were employed in Wales (11% of agricultural workforce)

The UK agricultural labour force has stayed stable over the past decade, but with greater annual variation among regular employees, managers, and casual workers.

In 2024, 65% of those employed in the agricultural sector in the UK were either farmers, business partners, directors or the spouse. This was a total of 292,900 people.

There were 160,000 people employed who were regular employees, salaried managers or casual workers.

Agriculture typically has an ageing workforce. In 2024, over a third of all farm holders in England were over the age of 65 years. Just 5% of holders were aged less than 35 years.

84% of farm holders in England in 2024 were male and 16% female.

Figure 2: Age of the agricultural workforce in England in 2024

Age	Percentage
under 35	5%
35 to 44	10%
45 to 54	16%
55 to 64	30%

Age	Percentage
65 and over	38%

How is the economic output distributed across the number of farms in England?

In England in 2024, a small number of economically ‘very high output farms’ produced over half (62%) the agricultural output using just 33% of the total farmed land area.

There were a total of 94,700 farm businesses in 2024. The total estimated output was €16,250 million. The total farmed area was 8.9 million hectares.

Economic sizes of farms by standard output value:

- Very low - under €25k
- Low – €25k to €125k
- Medium - €125k – €250k
- High - €250k – €500k
- Very high - Over €500k

Table 6: Distribution of output across economic farm size in England in 2024

Farm size	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
% total farm businesses	48%	26%	10%	8%	8%
Number of farm businesses	45,400	25,100	9,200	7,400	7,600
% of total output	2%	9%	10%	16%	62%
% total farmed area	9%	21%	17%	19%	33%

Note:

1. Excludes businesses classified as ‘specialist horse’.
2. Number of farm businesses have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Standard Output measures the total value of output of any one enterprise - per head for livestock and per hectare for crops. For crops this will be the main product (e.g. wheat, barley, peas) plus any by-product that is sold, for example straw. For livestock it will be the value of the main product (milk, eggs, lamb, pork) plus the value of any secondary product (calf, wool) minus the cost of replacement. Standard Outputs are measured in Euros. For consistency, this approach has been continued even though the UK has left the EU.

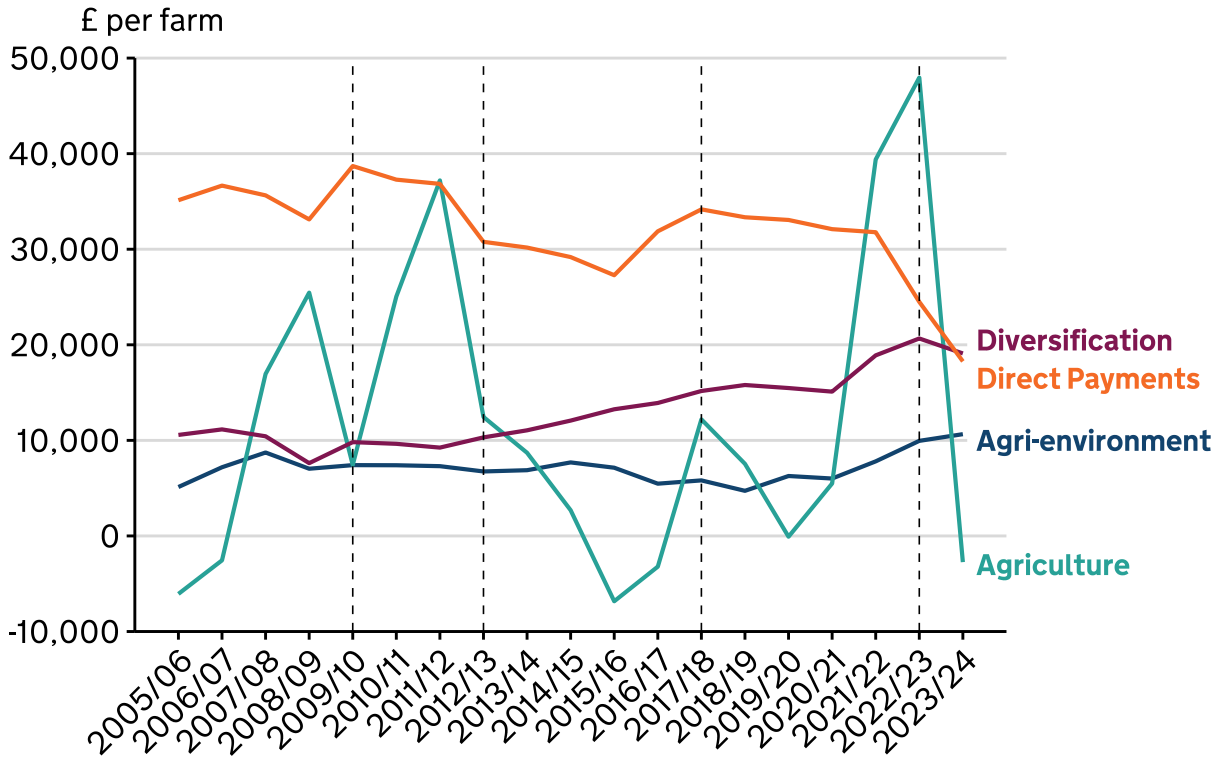
What are the different sources of farm income (profit) and how do these vary over time?

Income from agriculture can be volatile, as farm businesses are price-takers and the determinants of the prices they receive can be out of their control. Income from Direct Payments, agri-environment schemes and diversification tends to be more stable.

Farm Business Income is the equivalent of net profit and is the difference between Farm Business Outputs and Farm Business Inputs. It can be broken down into four cost centres: agriculture, agri-environment, Direct Payments and diversification.

Compared to other income streams, **income from agriculture is volatile** from year to year. This volatility is seen across all farm types. Farmers have little control over the prices they receive. By the time crops or livestock reach market, prices may have dropped, and perishable goods cannot be stored on farm until prices rise. Weather patterns can also impact both domestic and global supply. These factors mean that in some years farmers make profits and in others, losses. In years where agricultural income is small or negative (loss making), income from Direct Payments can offset some of these losses.

Figure 3: Average income (£) from agriculture, diversification, agri-environment and Direct Payments for all farms in England from 2005/06 to 2023/24 (real prices)



Text description of figure 3: Figure 3 is a line chart showing average income for farms in England, between 2005/06 and 2023/24. There are four different income categories: Agriculture, Agri-environment, Diversification, and Direct payments.

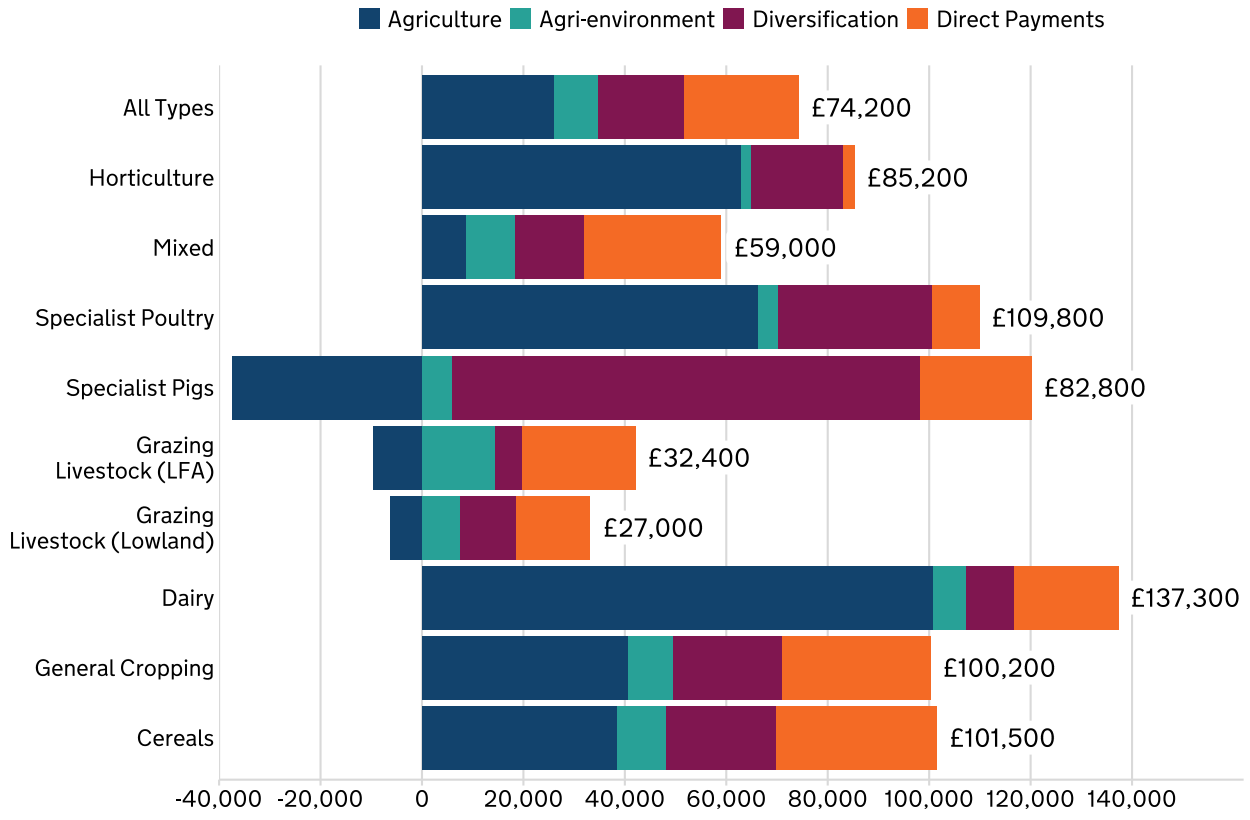
Note:

1. The dashed lines illustrate a break in the time series due to changes in farm type classification. Direct payments began to be phased out in 2021.
2. Data correct as at October 2025. Please see the website Farm Business Income (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-business-income) for the latest figures.

How does profit (Farm Business Income) vary across the different farm types in England?

Profit (Farm Business Income) varies across the different farm types. Over the period 2021/22 to 2023/24, Dairy farms were the most profitable, and Lowland Grazing Livestock farms the least profitable.

Figure 4: Average farm business income in England in 2021/22 to 2023/24 (£)



Text description of figure 4: Figure 4 is a bar chart showing average income for different farm types in England. There are four different income categories: Agriculture, Agri-environment, Diversification, and Direct payments.

Note:

1. Data correct as at October 2025. Please see the website Farm Business Income (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-business-income) for the latest figures.

Table 7: Average farm business income and the proportion which direct payments accounted for in England in 2021/22 to 2023/24 (£)

Farm type	Farm Business	% Direct Payments
All Types	£74,200	30%
Horticulture	£85,200	3%
Mixed	£59,000	46%
Specialist Poultry	£109,800	9%
Specialist Pigs	£82,800	26%

Farm type	Farm Business	% Direct Payments
Grazing Livestock (Less Favoured Area)	£32,400	69%
Grazing Livestock (Lowland)	£27,000	54%
Dairy	£137,300	15%
General Cropping	£100,200	29%
Cereals	£101,500	31%

Note:

1. Data correct as at October 2025. Please see the website Farm Business Income (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-business-income) for the latest figures.

Lowland Grazing Livestock, Less Favoured Area (LFA) Grazing Livestock and Pig farms made a loss from the agriculture side of the business, as their costs of production outweighed the value of their output.

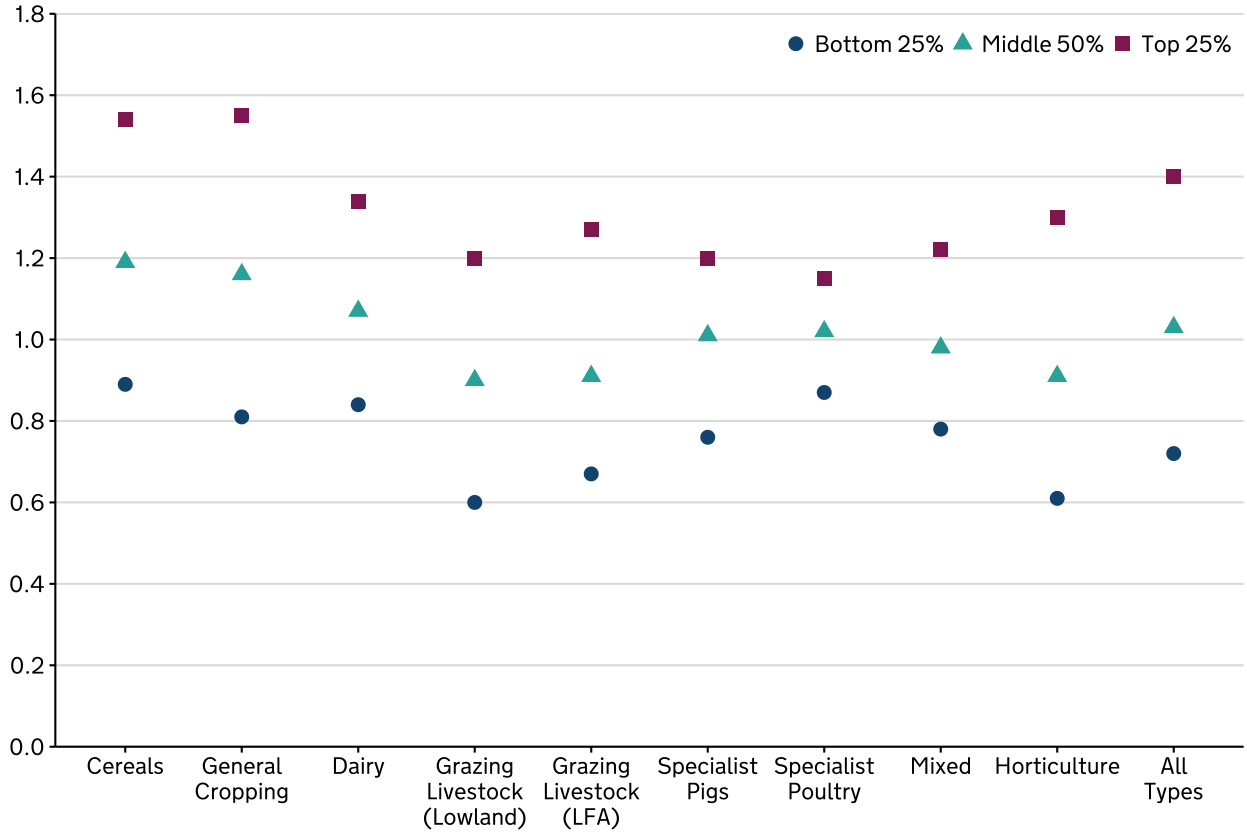
For both Horticulture and Dairy farms, around three quarters (74%) of their Farm Business Income came from the agricultural side of the business.

For LFA Grazing Livestock farms, around two thirds (69%) of their Farm Business Income came from direct payments.

How does economic performance vary between the highest and lowest performing farms in England?

Between the years 2021/22 to 2023/24, across all farm types in England, the average performance of the top 25% of farms was 2 times better than the bottom 25%. The largest range was on Horticulture farms, and the smallest was on Poultry farms.

Figure 5: Ratio of the average output costs and average input costs for whole farm business for the top 25% of farms, middle 50% (25%-75%) and bottom 25% of farms in England in 2021/22 to 2023/24



Text description of figure 5: Figure 5 is a chart showing the performance ratios of different farm types. Data points are shown for performances of the top 25%, middle 50% and bottom 25% of farms.

Note:

1. A ratio of 1 means the outputs are equal to the inputs.
2. Data correct as at October 2025. Please see the website Farm Business Income (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-business-income) for the latest figures.

For the top 25% of farms across each sector, general cropping farms had the best average performance, with outputs 55% higher than their inputs.

For the bottom 25% of farms across each sector, lowland grazing livestock farms had the lowest average performance, with outputs 40% lower than their inputs.

Farm Business Income (FBI) is calculated as the difference between Farm Business Outputs and Farm Business Inputs. It does not deduct the cost of unpaid labour. When calculating farm economic performance, unpaid labour is included as a cost. This allows a fairer comparison between farms with employees and those that use unpaid (often family) labour.

Table 8: Ratio of economic performance between the top and bottom 25% of farms

Farm type	Top 25% vs bottom 25%
Cereals	1.7
General Cropping	1.9
Dairy	1.6
Grazing Livestock (Lowland)	2.0
Grazing Livestock (LFA)	1.9
Specialist Pigs	1.6
Specialist Poultry	1.3
Mixed	1.6
Horticulture	2.1
All Types	2.0

Note:

1. Data correct as at October 2025. Please see the website Farm Business Income (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-business-income) for the latest figures.

What is productivity and how has UK agricultural productivity changed over time?

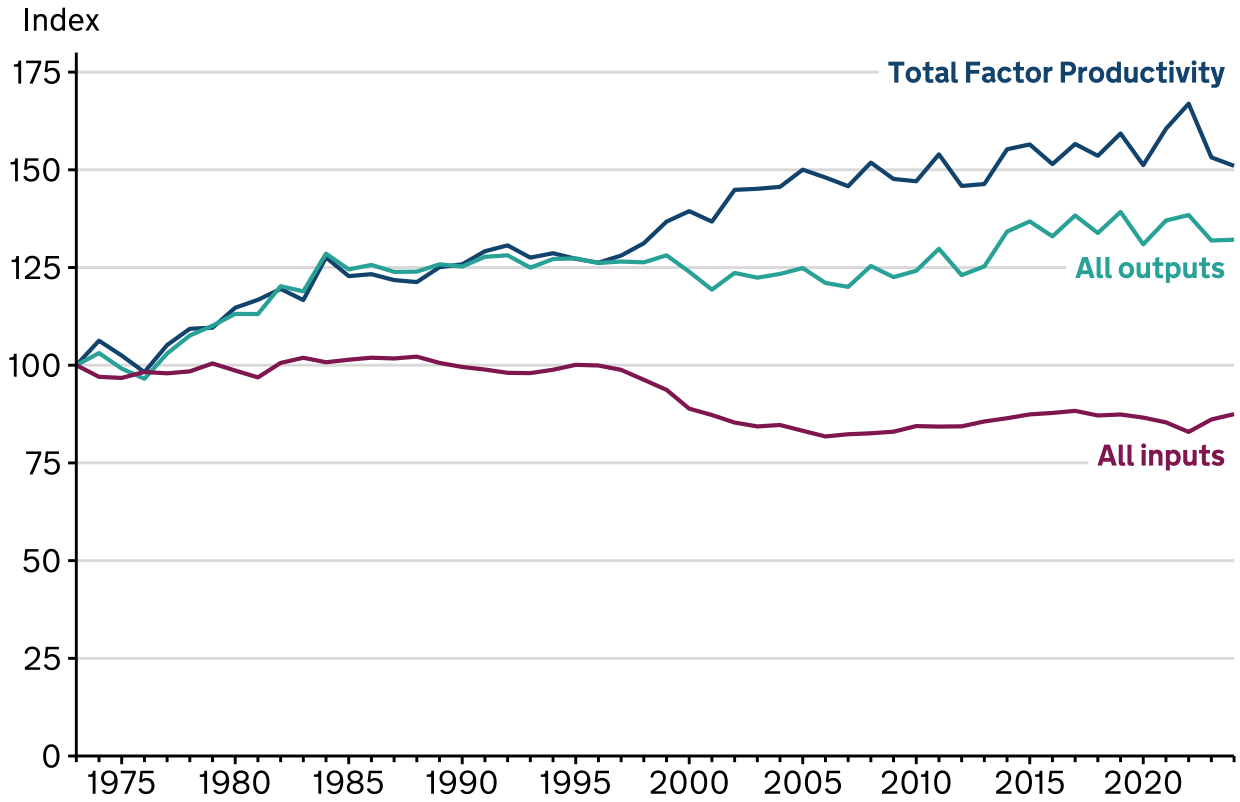
Productivity is a measure of the efficiency with which businesses turn inputs into outputs, indicating the economic competitiveness of a sector. Total factor productivity (TFP) in agriculture has increased by 51% since 1973, due to a 32% increase in outputs and a 13% decrease in inputs.

Productivity improves if the same use of inputs produces a larger volume of output, or if the same volume of output is achieved from a smaller volume of inputs.

Total Factor Productivity (TFP) is a measure of how well agriculture turns inputs into outputs.

TFP is calculated as the total volume of outputs/total volume of inputs.

Figure 6: Agricultural total factor productivity since 1973 (Index 1973=100)



Text description of figure 6: Figure 6 is a line chart showing total factor productivity since 1973. The categories include total factor productivity, all outputs, and all inputs and entrepreneurial labour.

From 1973 to 1985, growth in TFP was driven by increases in the volume of output (25% increase). Total input use increased by only 1%. Between the mid-80s and mid-90s there was little change in either the volume of inputs or outputs. From the mid-90s to mid-2000s, TFP growth was driven by reductions in input use rather than increases in outputs.

Despite annual variability, the long-term trend is still one of slow but overall improvement in TFP

How do farmers view productivity?

From an economic perspective, improving productivity in the agricultural sector increases the productive capacity of the economy, leading to economic growth and improved international competitiveness.

Farmers taking part in discussion groups understood ‘productivity’ to relate to profitability rather than its economic definition, and view productivity as part of their objectives for business growth and sustainability. The importance assigned to productivity depends on whether farmers’ motivations are closer to profit and business growth, or lifestyle and environmental stewardship.

Of the food we can produce in the UK, how much do we produce and what do we produce the most of?

The UK’s food production to supply ratio, an indicator of the ability of UK agriculture to meet domestic consumer demands, stood at 65% of all food and 77% for indigenous foods in 2024.

Food production to supply ratio is calculated as total production (including for export)/(total produced + imports - exports).

In 2024, milk had the highest food production to supply ratio, at 105%. Fresh fruit had the lowest food production to supply ratio, highlighting the need for imports to meet domestic demand.

Food security is enhanced by strong and consistent domestic production of food, combined with a diversity of supply sources. This avoids overreliance on any one source. Historically, the UK has been a large net importer of food.

Figure 7: Food production to supply ration by commodity, 2024

Type	2024
Milk	105%
Mutton and lamb	99%
Eggs	89%
Beef and veal	85%
Poultry meat	83%
Cereals	79%
Potatoes	68%

Type	2024
Sugar beet	65%
Pig meat	65%
Oilseed rape	53%
Fresh vegetables	53%
Fresh fruit	15%

The chart shows some of our most important products, where bar order indicates the production to supply ratios from highest to lowest. Ratios greater than 100% show a surplus of production, which can be due to a significant amount of domestic production and/or imports of this particular good. Ratios below 100% could be a result of lower domestic production, but also could be due to a significant export market for that product.

How much does the agri-food sector contribute to the economy?

In 2023, the agri-food sector (excluding fishing) contributed £153.2bn to the economy, 6.2% of the national gross value added (GVA).

Gross value added (GVA) is the difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of raw materials and other inputs which are used in production. It is a way of measuring how much an individual sector contributes to the overall economy.

In 2023, agriculture contributed £13.7bn to the economy. This accounted for 8.9% of the total contribution of the agri-food sector. Between 2022 and 2023, the GVA from agriculture decreased by 4.5%, however all other sectors saw an increase.

Figure 8: Gross Value Added of the agri-food sector, 2023 (£ billion)

Sector	£ billion
Food and drink non-residential catering	45.2
Food and drink retailing	40.2
Food and drink manufacturing	37.1

Sector	£ billion
Food and drink wholesaling	16.9
Agriculture (excluding fishing)	13.7

How does farming contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and water quality?

Agriculture accounts for 12% of the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (47 Mt CO2e) and can negatively impact water quality through soil erosion and the run-off of fertilisers, pesticides and slurry.

How have emissions from agriculture changed since 1990?

Agriculture has reduced GHG emissions by 14% since 1990, but it now accounts for a larger proportion of the UK total as other sectors have decarbonised faster. Nitrous oxide emissions from agriculture have fallen an estimated 24%, ammonia has fallen 18%, methane has fallen 17%, and carbon dioxide levels have stayed similar.

Figure 9: Proportion of UK emissions from agriculture, 2023 (%)

Emission	Agriculture	Other sectors or sources	Total
Nitrous oxide	69	31	100
Methane	48	52	100
Carbon dioxide	3	97	100
Ammonia	87	13	100

Sources of emissions
Ammonia emissions affect human health, reduce air quality, and can cause soil acidification. Emissions are mostly from agricultural soils and livestock,

in particular cattle.

Nitrous oxide is the most potent greenhouse gas that agriculture emits. Most agricultural emissions come from soils, particularly nitrogen fertiliser application, manure (both applied and excreted on pasture) and leaching/run-off.

Methane is more potent than CO2, particularly over short timescales. Most agricultural methane emissions come from ruminating animals, with manure management practices accounting for the remainder.

Carbon dioxide is a major greenhouse gas, but agricultural emissions are low, with emissions mainly from energy and fuel use.

How does farming impact water quality?

Water quality can be adversely affected when fertilisers, pesticides, slurry and soil are washed off farmland. Nitrogen & phosphorus from manure & fertilisers cause harmful blooms that deoxygenate watercourses. Soil and sediment lead to nutrient enrichment and siltation, causing ecological damage. Pesticides and ammonia can be toxic, killing fish and invertebrates.

Improvements in nutrient management practices and slurry storage can help to reduce water pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus.

Between 1990 and 2024 there has been a **72%** reduction in manufactured phosphate fertiliser used in the UK.

Between 1990 and 2024 there has been a **45%** reduction in manufactured nitrogen fertiliser used in the UK.