

As you will be aware from the Westminster Hall Debate: Impact of land use change on food security on 18 Nov 2025, "*We are, quite simply, in a food and farming emergency*". ([Video](#) and [Hansard Transcript](#)). However, the NPPF proposals do not explicitly state "food security" as a standalone policy theme.

We welcome reforms to strengthen the protection of farmland and food-producing capacity by:

- tightening controls on development in the countryside
- requiring stronger evidence on land constraints
- reinforcing settlement boundaries with settlement-focussed growth and brownfield-first/urban intensification principles
- elevating natural capital and soil protection
- explicitly stating that food is a Critical National Infrastructure sector, critical to national resilience (prioritising food production over solar energy on fields).

S1 - Positive plan-making, is the *strategic* policy that ensures food-producing land is not sacrificed simply to meet housing numbers. The NPPF wording should make it clear that S1 protects food production and food security by:

- allowing development needs to be restricted to protect important land/ assets
- ensuring farmland can be designated and safeguarded under S2
- reinforcing S5's restrictions on countryside development
- requiring sustainable patterns of growth that preserve natural resources
- preventing the loss of high-quality soils and productive land
- make clear that local plans must explicitly identify land where development would undermine food production or rural land uses. Including current farmed land, up-to-date Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (Grades 1–3a) and Natural capital and soil resources (expanded in Chapter 19)

S2 – Spatial strategy requiring councils to map and safeguard land, including land "protected or proposed to be enhanced for specific purposes". S2 is one of the *core plan-making policies* that can protect farmland, food production and food security, because it determines where development can and cannot go. The NPPF should clearly state that high-quality farmed land, as a natural capital area and part of the multifunctional countryside, should be mapped and safeguarded for the whole plan period, directing growth into settlements, not the wider countryside. That this farmed land should then be treated as a constraint under PM8. The NPPF should explicitly embed food production and food-security considerations into the spatial strategy, with consideration to long-term food-producing capacity, soil quality, natural capital and the climate-resilience functions of farmland. This structural aspect of the NPPF, and related local authority Local Plans, will then create greater food security by:

- Protecting and keeping farmland available for essential food production (ensuring that food-producing land is protected by default, not by exception);
- preventing fragmentation of agricultural land;
- ensuring up to date high-quality soils are mapped and protected by the local authority
- requiring evidence-based justification for any loss of farmland.
- ensuring that agricultural land is not lost simply because it is "easy to build on".

S5 Principle of development outside settlements. As almost all farmland is outside settlements, development outside of settlements should be exceptional, not routine. Agriculture should be confirmed as the first, primary and preferred land use in rural areas. The NPPF, and related Local Plans, should emphasise that this is a structural protection/safeguard for food-producing land, and that it is of national infrastructure importance, especially in relation to future food production and food

security. Policy should clearly confirm that agriculture is a supported and appropriate land use in rural areas.

Strengthening the importance of food production and security under this policy will also prevent fragmentation of agricultural land and better support rural economies. Also ensure rural businesses only where a countryside location is necessary, protecting farm-based economic activity. Speculative non-land based development on farmland should be limited, including limiting the creation and use of caravan parks as all year round accommodation. Nearly 50% of farmers are tenant farmers, limits should be put on barn conversions (e.g. for housing, offices, etc.) that force farmers off the land due to a lack of much needed animal shelter and machinery storage. S5 should protect food production and food security via structural mechanisms:

- keep farmland available for food production
- prevent fragmentation of agricultural land
- align with S1 and S2 protections
- explicitly prioritise food production land-based uses
- make agriculture the primary and preferred land use in the countryside.
- Support rural economies by allowing rural businesses only where a countryside location is necessary
- Direct development into settlements, not the countryside, preserving land for food production; and to help safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; prevent urban sprawl and ribbon developments
- Ensure long-term land availability for food production

Stronger environmental and natural-capital protections. Policies should explicitly strengthen the case for protecting food-production land, explicitly recognising and stating that:

- high-quality soils are a natural capital asset
- farmland contributes to biodiversity, carbon storage and flood management
- food-producing land is recognised as part of environmental resilience
- recognition of food-producing land as part of landscape character
- that farmers can protect and conserve and enhance the natural environment
- that food production should be part of Local Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Strategies
- agricultural soils should be protected as natural capital assets essential to climate resilience and long-term food production.

Improvements to cross-boundary planning that protect agricultural landscapes - PM10: Maintaining cooperation between plan-making authorities and PM11: Demonstrating cooperation between plan-making authorities. Make clear that stronger cooperation between authorities, and joint evidence on cross-boundary matters, ensures alignment of policies where agricultural food production landscapes span multiple districts. This should prevent piecemeal erosion of farmland across borders.

PM8: Evidence for plan-making. Should explicitly require farmland quality to be treated as a constraint.

- Plans should be explicitly informed by a baseline understanding of food production needs, opportunities and constraints using relevant, reliable, up-to-date evidence.
- Up-to-date Agricultural Land Classification, soil quality and the value of food-production must be treated as constraints (updated surveys should be commissioned where necessary), If food-producing land is to be developed, alternative land to replace it should be considered.
- Requires updated evidence and joint working on cross-boundary issues, helping to prevent cumulative loss of farmland.

- transparent site-selection processes with priority to food production needs (PM9)
- realistic assessments of deliverability (PM15)
- Consequences of losing productive land must be considered, especially its effect on food production

Other opportunities to Strengthen the Final NPPF

- Embed food production and food-security considerations into plan-making.
- embed food-production capacity within natural-capital assessments
- explicitly require quantified assessment of local/regional food-producing capacity as part of the evidence base.
- Explicit recognition of farming, food production and food security as a planning objective, linked to:
 - S1 (positive plan-making and restriction of needs),
 - S2 (protected land),
 - PM8 (constraints and evidence),
 - and the natural environment chapter (soils and natural capital).
- A requirement that plans:
 - map and protect Best and Most Versatile land, and current farmed food-producing land as a matter of course;
 - assess cumulative loss of agricultural land and its impact on food production and food security;
 - treat food production capacity as a key component of natural capital
- Prioritise agricultural and land-based uses in rural areas.
- Direct that solar farms should be directed to roofs, car parks and brownfield before any greenfield consideration