

Agricultural and Business Property Relief: Food Prices

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[Nick Timothy](#)

[\(West Suffolk\) \(Con\)](#)

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9. What assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of agricultural property relief and business property relief on food prices. (907021)

[Katie Lam](#)

[\(Weald of Kent\) \(Con\)](#)

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11. What assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of agricultural property relief and business property relief on food prices. (907024)

[The Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs](#)

[\(Dame Angela Eagle\)](#)

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Modelling has shown that food prices are driven by the interaction of domestic and international considerations, including farm gate prices, import prices and exchange rates. Modelling from industry and Government expects food price inflation to fall gradually over the next two years.

[Nick Timothy](#)

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Happy Christmas to you, Mr Speaker, and to all Members and staff of the House.

At the Liaison Committee this week, the Prime Minister admitted that some farmers will take their own lives because of the family farms tax, but he repeated the claim that three quarters of farms will not be affected. According to the National Farmers Union, the opposite is true: three quarters of commercial family farms will have to pay it. The big idea now is to drive up profitability, but as my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) said, the family farms tax is killing investment. Does the Minister think that Baroness Batters was wrong when she said in her report, on page 4, that the closure of the sustainable farming initiative and the family farms tax have left farmers

“particularly in the arable sector... questioning viability, let alone profitability”?

[Dame Angela Eagle](#)

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I do not think that the hon. Member's characterisation of the Prime Minister's remarks to the Liaison Committee is entirely accurate, but I am working on introducing and making available in the first half of next year a sustainable farming incentive scheme that will hopefully be more available to smaller farmers, easier to engage with, and much simpler than the mess delivered by the Government of which he was a part. Let us face it: 25% of the money in the SFI scheme goes to the top 4% of farmers. I want to see a different distribution.

[Katie Lam](#)

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Merry Christmas, Mr Speaker.

The cost of food in this country increased by 4.2% year on year last month, yet farming profitability is on the floor and has been hit repeatedly by this Government, whether that is in national insurance contribution increases, the family farm tax or energy taxes. Will the Government consider easing their terrible tax burden on farmers to solve both the cost of living crisis for food and the farming profitability crisis at the same time?

[Dame Angela Eagle](#)

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I am puzzled by the hon. Lady's view that the issues she talks about are somehow having a bad effect on food prices, since yesterday's figures

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demonstrate that there has been a 0.7% decline in food price inflation, and estimates assume that inflation will gradually come down over the next two years.

[Dr Rupa Huq](#)

[\(Ealing Central and Acton\) \(Lab\)](#)

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Merry Christmas to you and your crew, Mr Speaker.

Food prices from farm to fork are particularly tough on coeliac sufferers. Their shops are 35% dearer, and a loaf of bread costs six times the standard price. Will my Front-Bench colleagues look into Italy's allowance system, in order to replace our outmoded subscription model, which is bad value for the taxpayer?

[Dame Angela Eagle](#)

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I am more than happy to look at how Italy does things, but that can be a bit of a double-edged sword. I sympathise and empathise with coeliacs, who have to deal with much higher prices. Some of that is to do with production and the need to ensure that there is no cross-contamination of foods. It may well be that it is more expensive to produce food that is safe for coeliacs. I absolutely accept my hon. Friend's point, and I am happy to talk to her about it.

[Mr Speaker](#)

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I call the shadow Secretary of State.

[Victoria Atkins](#)

[\(Louth and Horncastle\) \(Con\)](#)

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On Monday, the Prime Minister admitted that farmers are considering taking their own lives for fear of the family farm tax—a tax that he described as a “sensible reform”. The next day, I was given a letter for the Prime Minister from 90-year-old farmer and grandmother Mrs Denton. It contains one chilling question that I expect the farming Minister to be able to answer. Mrs Denton asks:

“My husband and I now need to know as soon as possible the date we need to die by to avoid the totally unfair inheritance tax that will be forcibly put on our offspring to have to sell or split up a food-producing farm—and do what?”

[Dame Angela Eagle](#)

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This is a highly sensitive issue. The reasons for someone contemplating taking their own life are often very complex. My heart goes out to every family who is devastated by such events. I understand the pressures that farmers are under, but I have to say that the right hon. Lady’s way of making her point is very distasteful indeed.

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