

# Farming Profitability

## Volume 777: debated on Thursday 18 December 2025

Dec 18 2025

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[Sam Rushworth](#)

[\(Bishop Auckland\) \(Lab\)](#)

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1. What steps she is taking to help increase the profitability of farming. (907011)

[Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi](#)

[\(Slough\) \(Lab\)](#)

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13. What steps she is taking to help increase the profitability of farming. (907027)

[The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#)

[\(Emma Reynolds\)](#)

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As this House knows, Baroness Batters is a long-standing champion of British farming. Today, the Government have published her independent farming profitability review 2025, which we commissioned earlier this year. We will set out a more detailed response in the new year, but I can confirm today that, following her recommendations, we are establishing a farming and food partnership board to give farmers a stronger voice in Government. We will take forward sector plans to build profitability in sectors with great potential, and we will seek to boost private finance into farming.

[Sam Rushworth](#)

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Merry Christmas, Mr Speaker.

As we are all sleeping in or children are opening their stockings on this Christmas morning, farmers in Teesdale and Weardale will be up tending to their sheep and cows, and we thank them for that. As the Minister knows, at the moment only 25% of subsidies go to just 4% of farms. Smaller upland farms in areas like those I represent have done particularly badly under the transition. There are so many issues I could raise, but to avoid Mr Speaker's cough may I just ask this? I am bringing a delegation of farmers from my constituency to Parliament in the new year. Will the Secretary of State meet them to hear their wisdom?

[Emma Reynolds](#)

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I echo my hon. Friend's thanks to farmers working hard over the festive season. Upland communities face unique challenges. I or the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs will be delighted to meet his delegation. We are reforming the sustainable farming incentive to make it simpler and easier for farmers to apply to. We want more farmers to benefit from these schemes, and under this Government we already have a record number of farmers in these schemes.

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[Mr Dhesi](#)

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No farmers, no food. That is why, as the son of former farmers, I believe it is imperative that we support our farmers. After the last Conservative Government sold out British farmers with their substandard trade deals with New Zealand and Australia, our farming and food sector has been held back from its full potential abroad. What exactly are this Government doing to ensure that our farmers can get their products on to international shelves and grow their businesses abroad?

[Emma Reynolds](#)

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I am proud that this Government, unlike the previous Government, are protecting and promoting British farming in our trade deals, including with India and the USA. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may chunter from a sedentary position, but they sold them out on their trade deals with Australia and New Zealand. We are also making progress with the EU on a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement, which will make agrifood trade with our biggest market cheaper and easier, and our global network of agrifood attachés has already brought down 46 trade barriers this year, worth £127 million.

[Mr Speaker](#)

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I call the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

[Mr Alistair Carmichael](#)

[\(Orkney and Shetland\) \(LD\)](#)

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Obviously, one of the biggest challenges to farming profitability is the market fact that farmers are price takers. The farming campaigner Olly Harrison was this week highlighting that Lidl and Aldi are selling carrots at 8p per kilo, well below the cost of production. What is the Secretary of State doing to ensure that when supermarkets sell under the cost of production, that cost is borne by the supermarkets, not the farmers?

[Emma Reynolds](#)

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As the right hon. Gentleman will know, we have already introduced fair dealing regulations for pig and dairy farmers, but I agree with him that we need to look to go further.

[Sir Desmond Swayne](#)

[\(New Forest West\) \(Con\)](#)

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Sustained profitability requires sustained investment, and investment has collapsed as a consequence of the family farm tax, hasn't it?

[Emma Reynolds](#)

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I am very determined that we leverage in more private finance into farming. I visited a landscape recovery project in north Buckinghamshire a couple of weeks ago. It is really fantastic to see the innovative practices in these schemes that are leveraging in private finance in part of the compliance market, and part of the thriving and nascent nature credits market.

[Mr Speaker](#)

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I call the shadow Minister.

[Robbie Moore](#)

[\(Keighley and Ilkley\) \(Con\)](#)

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Here we are, at the 11th hour, on the very last day before Parliament rises for Christmas, and the Secretary of State has left it until now to publish Baroness Batters' profitability review —48 days since it was handed to her. She has tactically left it buried in her Department until well after the Budget and purposely until after the crucial Finance Bill vote earlier this week, in which 333 Labour MPs backed the implementation of the family farm tax—all in the knowledge that whatever the recommendations in

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the profitability review, the Government's financial assault on our farmers was locked in. What message does that say to our hard-working farmers?

[Emma Reynolds](#)

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I am proud that this Government commissioned Baroness Batters to do the review into farm profitability, which is a lot more than the Conservatives managed to do in 14 long years. We will be taking forward a number of her recommendations, but, as I said, we will reply in full in the new year. We commissioned her because she has great experience and expertise. There are many ways in which we are unlocking profitability, not least the planning reforms that myself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government are introducing to make it easier for farmers to build on-farm reservoirs, polytunnels and various other things that will diversify their farms. We are bringing down the barriers, which is something that they long called for, but they saw none of that action under the previous Government.

[Mr Speaker](#)

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I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

[Tim Farron](#)

[\(Westmorland and Lonsdale\) \(LD\)](#)

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If farm profitability is so important to the Government, I find it utterly peculiar that the review was released only today as a written statement at the last minute. It is an insult to this House and indeed the excellent Baroness Batters herself.

England is now the only country in the United Kingdom, and indeed in Europe, that does not provide financial support to its farmers. England's farmers, therefore, have been uniquely abandoned by this Government, by their Conservative predecessor and by those whose madcap ideology took us out of Europe without any kind of a plan. Will the Secretary of State tell us whether food security will be counted as a public good, as the Liberal Democrats propose, and funded through environmental land management schemes? When will the SFI be reopened, and how much money will be in it? Will she ensure that this time the money does not mostly go to the wealthiest, as the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Sam Rushworth) just referred to, and when will she stop making English farmers the worst supported in the whole of Europe?

[Emma Reynolds](#)

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The hon. Member asked a number of good questions. I have said that the new iteration of the SFI will be out in the first half of next year. My hon. Friend the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs and I are looking very carefully at how we get this right, and I can reassure the hon. Member that we are looking at the distributional analysis on who is getting these schemes at the moment. We do want to make it easier for smaller farms to gain access to the schemes—I can reassure him on that.

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