



# Farming Sustainably Report

March 2025



In association with



As stewards of the countryside, the agricultural sector has shaped our rural environment and communities for generations.

UK farms have long been intrinsic to the nation's food security and today, they are also on the front line of tackling wider issues such as biodiversity, environmental protection and global warming.

However, a series of geo-political crises and uncertainties – inflation, the war in Ukraine, extreme weather and the Pandemic – have created unprecedented challenges for UK farmers.

Heavy rainfall and cool summer temperatures have exacerbated an already precarious situation this year, delivering a low yielding harvest, made worse by economic instability and escalating costs.

On the ground, these conditions have made it challenging to even get tractors and livestock into waterlogged fields.

As a result, we have seen the culmination of a "perfect storm" of crises, which are pushing farm margins to the brink and putting up prices for everyday staples, such as bread.



This document builds on SEUK's farming factsheet, produced with the assistance of Dr Jonathan Scurlock, NFU Chief Adviser on Renewable Energy and Climate Change, which stressed solar farms "do not in any way present a risk to the UK's food security," contrary to false and misleading claims in the media and even those expressed in parliament.

## The peaks and troughs of a challenging year...

**...Half of fruit & veg farmers say they'll likely go out of business in the next 12 months...  
Riverford Organic Farmers**

**ONS suggests it was the wettest September on record for some counties, as farmers face the loss of food crops...**

**"The biggest risk to the UK's domestic production comes from climate change and other environmental pressures like soil degradation, water quality and biodiversity."  
The UK Government's 2021 Food Security Report**

**...Record rainfall this year has led to England's second-worst harvest since modern records began, according to official statistics. This has led to dramatic drops in yields on some crops including English wheat, winter barley and oilseed rape...**

**...Farmers are facing a 50 per cent cut to their subsidies as the government phases out the EU-era payment scheme...**



Farming isn't just a job, it's a way of life, but farmers still need to make ends meet. They still need the confidence and surety in their model to be able to grow to keep farming within the heart of our rural communities and within their families.

The 2024 harvest season has underscored the vulnerability of UK agriculture to both economic and environmental pressures. Although it's been a dreary year for many, there is a silver lining for the UK's farmers.

In response to the situation, the communications agency Meeting Place has conducted a nationwide survey on behalf of Solar Energy UK to understand the difficulties farmers have faced this year.

It showcases the attitudes of the agricultural community and outlines how renewable energy could be a lifeline for struggling farms.

The survey has heard from hundreds of farmers across the UK, asking them about their attitudes toward diversification and solar energy in particular.

## Digging diversification?

The survey results show how a significant number of farmers are turning to diversification as a way to stabilise incomes and increase resilience in the face of uncertain harvests.

The report seeks to develop an understanding of farmers' appetite towards diversification, with a particular focus on renewable energy, exploring how challenging they have found this year and to what extent they have been able to adapt.

It asks farmers what potential they see in renewables to deliver economic and environmental sustainability on their farms, and whether concerns surrounding diversification posing a threat to food security are real or simply fearmongering.

## Did you know?

Just a thousandth of the UK's land is taken up by solar farms. The government's ambitious targets to increase solar to 70GW by 2035, would only take up less than 1% of the UK's farmland.

In return, farmers would get a steady return, keeping their livelihoods profitable, and as a result, we would shore up the country's food security and energy security in an increasingly volatile world, with cheaper, greener electricity.



## Levelling out the peaks and troughs of tough years

The findings suggest many consider diversifying through renewables – be it solar, wind, battery energy storage or anaerobic digestion – as a significant opportunity for a more predictable and sustainable income stream in fallow years.

The survey hears how farmers who have been able to diversify their income streams feel more resilient and have been best placed to balance the ups and downs.

However, it also finds a large number of farmers who haven't diversified their businesses remain uncertain about their long-term viability; unsure whether their farm will stay in their families for future generations.

## Sowing solutions for solar

Solar energy is seen by many farmers surveyed as a promising solution, offering long-term, stable revenue. However, for those who want to diversify, several hurdles remain in the way, leaving them unable to realise the benefits. The survey highlights that obstacles such as grid connectivity, planning and a perception of high upfront costs stand in the way of adoption.

Among the farmers surveyed, misconceptions and uncertainties surrounding the use of solar remains widespread, something tackled later in the report.

## Harvesting opportunity with government

The report emphasises the need for enhanced support for farmers through infrastructure improvements, policy changes and financial incentives to make renewable energy more accessible.

By embracing diversification, particularly solar energy, the document examines how UK farmers can secure their farms' long-term viability and contribute to the nation's food security in a sustainable way.





# Foreword

By Chris Hewett,  
Chief Executive, Solar Energy UK



**Farming isn't just a job, it's a way of life, but farmers still need to make ends meet. If we are to keep farms within the heart of our rural communities, farmers will need greater certainty and confidence in their business model.**

Many of the UK's farmers aren't in that position. You only need to pick up a farming magazine to get a clear view of the challenges.

From Cornwall to Scotland, this report hears from a wide range of farmers about the trials and tribulations they've endured during a particularly turbulent year.

It seeks to better understand the experience of these farmers, landowners and agricultural workers, assess their views toward diversification and explore the potential solar energy can play.

We believe farmers' perspectives have been largely missing from the recent national debate on farm renewables.

The report finds that, for many who have been able to diversify, solar is helping to keep their farms viable. They have more reliable revenue streams keeping their farms profitable whilst securing domestic food supplies. Suffice to say, energy security and food security are not conflicting missions.

To echo the energy secretary, Ed Miliband's recent pledge, we must "proceed not on the basis of myth and false information, but on evidence" when it comes to solar.

The fact of the matter is, it's not only an economic and moral imperative to allow farmers to decide what's best for their business interests, with food and energy security at stake, it's in our economic and national interests to do so, too.



We hope farmers, communities and the renewable sector will be able to use the report's findings to provide a more balanced argument when speaking to their MPs, planning officials and local councillors. I hope it will prove useful in helping the UK's farming community to get its voice heard, allow them to diversify if they want, so they can continue on with the job at hand and secure their role as stewards of the countryside.

## Did you know?

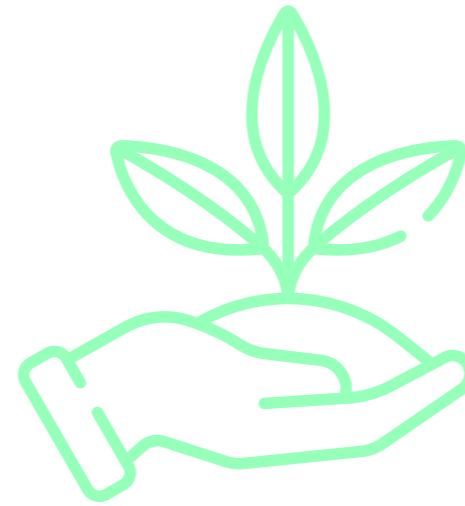
Estimates suggest ground-mounted solar used just 0.1% of land in 2022.

A typical farm growing cereals could expect to produce £100 of profit per acre, according to the NFU.

Solar can provide long-term leases, and guaranteed payments to the landowner for decades, in the region of £1,000 per acre per year.

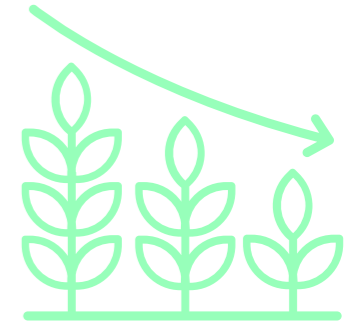
<sup>1</sup> [www.fwi.co.uk/business/business-management/farm-profit-forecasts-point-to-focus-on-fixed-costs](http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/business-management/farm-profit-forecasts-point-to-focus-on-fixed-costs)

# Key findings



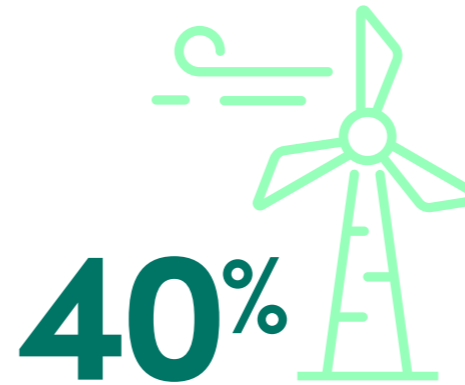
# 23%

reported below-average production in 2024, with 8% reporting very low production



# 34%

experienced lower than average incomes in 2024 compared to the previous year, and 37% of farmers reported an average income



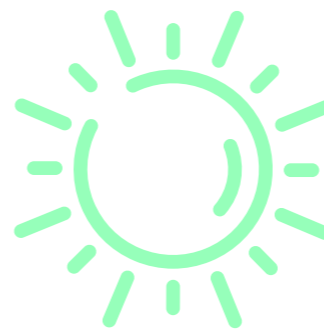
# 40%

of respondents already have some form of renewable energy on their farm



# 60%

do not currently utilise renewables, indicating a significant opportunity for growth in this area

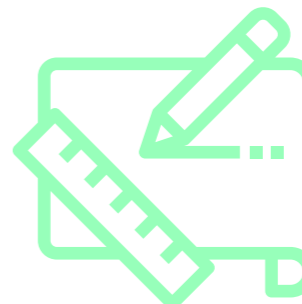
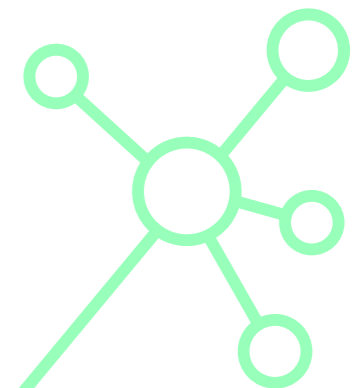


# 37%

of respondents believe that additional revenues from solar energy would help secure their farm for future generations

# 34%

of farmers cited grid connectivity as the biggest barrier to adopting renewable energy solutions, particularly for solar



# 20%

pointed to planning constraints as a major issue



# The impact of a challenging harvest

## A turbulent year

The farmers surveyed experienced average or below-average food production, income and yields in 2024, highlighting the difficulties they faced during this year's season, due to factors like climate extremes and economic pressures.

The wet winter and cool summer resulted in lower-than-expected yields, leaving farmers grappling with financial uncertainty. The respondents highlighted that for many, these conditions, combined with rising costs of production, have pushed their businesses to the brink.

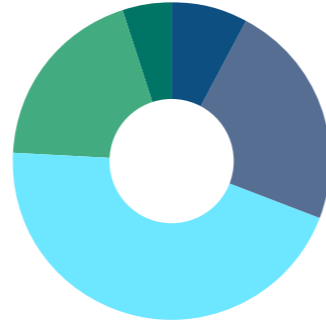
Here are some key statistics and stories from the farmers surveyed, as they reflect on how challenging they have found the 2024 harvest.

### The external impacts

When asked about the external pressures impacting their farm, climate and weather, the economy and Government policy were viewed as having the most detrimental impacts. The perception towards using space for renewable energy and biodiversity/rewilding were more positive.

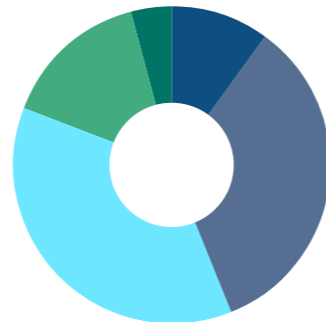
### Food security and production

- 8% very low
- 23% below-average
- 45% average
- 19% above-average
- 5% very high



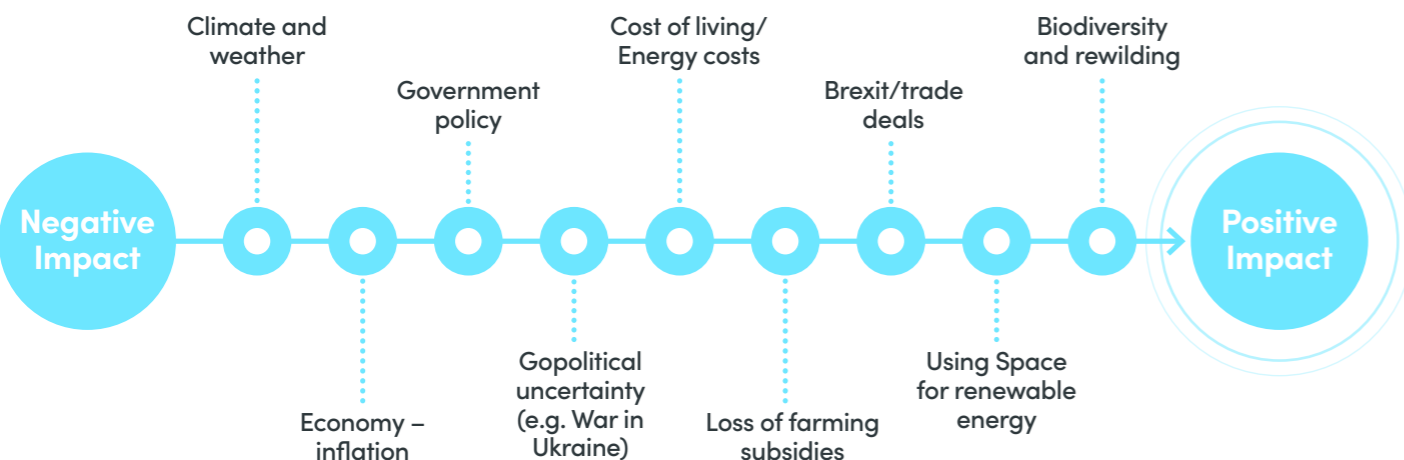
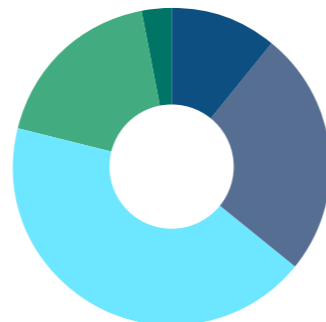
### Income

- 10% very low
- 34% below-average
- 37% average
- 15% above-average
- 4% very high



### Yields

- 11% very low
- 25% below-average
- 43% average
- 18% above-average
- 3% very high



# Farmers' Voice



Experiencing a poor growing year

Dry & wet harvests

The impact of climate change

An arable farmer in the South West shared a personal story surrounding their experience of climate change:

**“I almost lost faith in the farm’s future. A few years ago, we faced a terrible drought that nearly wiped out an entire season’s worth of crops.**

It felt like everything was against us—bad weather, rising costs, and the pressure of keeping the farm afloat. There were moments when I thought about giving up, thinking maybe it wasn’t worth all the stress.

But then, something amazing happened. The local farming community rallied around us. Neighbours pitched in with what they could—whether it was lending equipment, offering advice, or simply checking in to see how we were holding up. That experience reminded me that farming isn’t just about the land or the crops, it’s about the people who support each other through thick and thin.

It was a tough time, but looking back, I realise it strengthened our resolve. It made me more determined than ever to keep the farm going for the next generation, and it also taught me the importance of community in this way of life.”

## The impact of climate change

The vast majority of farmers believe climate change had an impact on their farms this year – 70% said yes, 17% were unsure, and 13% said no.

Farmers shared their views on climate change-related incidents:

- “Soil run off, drowning crops due to water logging.”
- “More challenging conditions to grow spring crops.”
- “Fields damaged by being too wet.”
- “All the rain left things very difficult, from getting the silage in to having the stock out in the field for a very short while and virtually impossible to get any reseeded done. It going to be a very long winter.”
- “My grandfather recorded an average of 700mm of rain per year in the 1970s and 80s. We now are averaging 1200mm with the last 2 years being nearer 1500mm.”

## How was your harvest in 2024?



Many farmers experienced similar extreme weather events this year...

“2024 was about as bad as it could get as we had a very poor growing year with a very wet harvest.”

A 100-acre dairy farmer in the North West explained: “Cattle had to be laid in a month earlier this autumn, because of the weather, at extra cost and work.”

“No harvest for first time in years due to wet autumn and then spring.”

“40% of land was left uncropped in 2024, and it could be the same for 2025.”

“The wet spring made me change my rotation from spring barley to growing a maize crop. I just couldn’t get on the land. This had an impact as I then had to buy in my straw for the cattle enterprise this winter. Another burden on my cash flow.”





# Attitudes towards diversification

The survey explored how farmers are responding to these challenges by diversifying their businesses. A substantial portion of respondents expressed a desire to diversify their farms, exploring options like solar energy, holiday cottages and biomass.

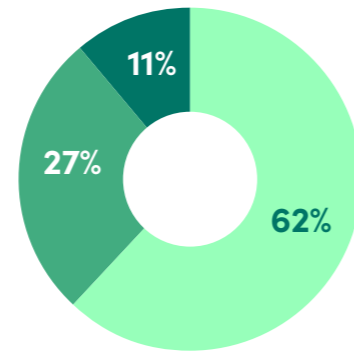
The survey suggests diversification is seen as a pathway to create resilience against the uncertainties of harvest seasons and fluctuating input prices.

Farmers from regions in South West England and East Midlands showed particular interest in diversification, citing the need for more predictable income streams. Across the UK, renewable energy solutions such as solar panels were cited as a compelling opportunity to supplement farming income.

## Adoption of renewables

- 41% of respondents already have some form of renewable energy on their farm.
- When asked about whether diversifying their farm (re-wilding/renewables/solar energy/holiday cottages etc.) would help to ensure its future long-term viability:

- 62% agreed
- 7% disagreed
- 11% unsure



## Did you know?

The biggest threat to our rural communities and the future of farming and food security in the UK is not solar panels, it is the climate crisis.



# Farmers' Voice



Point of view from cereal farmer

Diversifying farming for future generations

A cereal farmer with 500 acres in the South East commented:

**“ Back in 2014, we were really struggling financially and the additional income from the solar was an absolute lifesaver.**

We went from being £400k overdrawn to receiving a £336k uplift. This pretty much saved the future of the farm and allowed me to diversify into letting, property development and a new livestock enterprise housing cattle over the winter.”

Farmers who don't have renewables on their land and were unsure of, or against solar, highlighted several common misconceptions towards the technology.



## Diversified farming for future generations



Those who had diversified felt more confident about their viability and that their farm would stay in the family for future generations.

One farmer in the East Midlands said they are now far more viable thanks to their solar energy installation. **In the South West, a farmer on a 200-acre family farm explained:** “We've diversified to balance the ebbs and flows and we've been planning for the future for some time to prepare the next generation. We have been planning successions for a number of years, spreading the risk and resources across different enterprises.”

**A farmer overseeing 3,500 acres in the East of England said:** “We are looking to diversify wherever possible. We have invested in a Community Food Park to offer local people a better alternative to the supermarket. So far we have a farm shop, cafe, baker, butcher, mushroom farm, chocolatier, flower field, dairy and even a cheese maker. Once proved, we want to help other farmers set them up all over the UK and build UK food security as well as resilient healthy communities.”

**A 500-acre farmer in the South East added:** “I am confident in the future now that I have the added income of the solar farm. I'm a third-generation farmer and my son has now joined the company, I feel the future is bright.”

“Yes, I feel confident that my farm will remain in the family for future generations. This confidence is rooted in both the strong emotional connection my family has to the land and the practical steps we've taken to ensure its continuity. We've made it a point to involve the younger generation in the day-to-day operations of the farm, teaching them not only about farming techniques but also the values of hard work, sustainability, and stewardship of the land.”

“We have 100 acres of solar already. Without it, I wouldn't be confident.”

“We are fortunate enough to have solar already and I feel it has been financially beneficial and more stable than other aspects of my agricultural business, so more would certainly go a fair way to help future generations. It wouldn't solve all the issues faced by the farming community but it would help.”

These responses were in stark contrast to farmers who were unsure or hadn't explored diversification: “There's simply not enough profit in farming for the work put in” and “If I didn't really love the land and farming it certainly wouldn't make financial sense to keep farming.”



# The role of solar energy

Solar energy emerged as a leading option for diversification among survey respondents. Solar farms offer the potential for long-term, stable revenue, allowing farmers to lease parts of their land for renewable energy production without compromising their ability to farm.

Solar Energy UK emphasises that solar farms do not take land permanently, but “borrow” it, providing additional environmental benefits in the short term whilst improving soil health in the long-term.

## Attitudes towards solar energy and other renewables

- 37% of respondents believe that additional revenues from solar energy would help secure their farm for future generations.
- 35% of respondents do not think solar energy would help, while 28% are unsure about its potential benefits.
- Of those who had renewables on their farm, solar, wind, biomass, hydro, heat pumps were all reported.
- The scale of solar installations sited on the farms of respondents ranged from 4 kW up to 48MW.
- Of those who don't have renewables, 30% said having solar panels on their farm would enable them to feel an increased level of financial security and stability.
- However, 36% disagreed and 34% were unsure about the financial impact of solar energy on farms.



# Farmers' Voice



**In support of solar - what are our farmers saying?**

**The misconceptions of renewable energy**

## Supporting solar

Those who were in favour of solar commented:

- “Solar is good because you can graze around the panels with sheep so carry on farming and food production”, “I now have a 40 year lease with a guaranteed revenue stream that will relieve the burden of stress.”
- “We have already diversified into holiday accommodation which as a business is more profitable as a percentage than the farm by a significant margin. We regularly receive solar panel rent contracts far exceeding the income of the farm.”
- “We already have wind turbines which are the saviour of our farm.”
- “Brings in money which is not weather dependent.”



# Tackling misconceptions



## Farmer views

## In reality

### Misconception 1: Solar is a threat to UK food security

**“To farm for food is no longer a viable option because of the focus on renewable energy and other non-agricultural uses of land.”**

**“This focus on solar over farming is unsustainable for food security.”**

**“I don't agree with PV on good quality agricultural land or where local residents will have their view impaired”**

The government's target for 70 GW of solar by 2035 would take up less than 1% of UK farmland. Current solar farms occupy a very small area, and even with five times as many solar farms deployed around the UK, they would still occupy less land than the amount currently occupied by golf courses.

Solar preserves and can improve intensively farmed agricultural land. Farmers can graze livestock among panels. They can also leave the field fallow, allowing wildflowers to flourish, helping pollinators and healing soil degradation from years of ploughing.

Climate change is the biggest threat to the UK's food security.

Solar does not take agricultural land, it ‘borrows’ it. Planning permission for a solar farm is time limited, and installations can be completely dismantled at the end of their operation.

### Misconception 2: Solar is expensive and unreliable

**“Costs are too high.”**

**“I have doubts about the volume of electricity produced, given how cloudy the last 2 years have been and am uncertain about the sustainability of panels and batteries, with controversy around their disposal.”**

**“The cost/income ratio has deteriorated sharply.”**

**“High running costs, minimal support, inability to justify installation.”**

**“Would need to know long-term costs, length of returns, and reliability before considering it viable.”**

**“You're tied into a contract with an organisation vastly more powerful than you who can sell the contract on to somebody else with who you have no working relationship.”**

The cost of solar has fallen by nearly 90% over the past decade.

Solar provides some of the cheapest electricity in history.

Without solar, farm energy prices would be even higher. This is important, because costs are increasing for agricultural businesses, just like everyone else.

Solar can also provide a direct and long-term revenue stream for farmers who choose to host a project on their land. By helping to keep UK farming profitable, solar is also helping to secure the UK's domestic food supply.

It does not have to be sunny for solar panels to generate electricity, as long as there's any level of sunlight, energy is being generated.

It provides a reliable income stream, which helps keep UK farmers in business.

### Misconception 3: Solar will do little in way of tackling climate change

**“Certain aspects of climate change I accept, but solar does little to address the global issue effectively.”**

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs says that climate change could reduce the UK's stock of high-grade agricultural land by nearly three-quarters by 2050.

Because solar farms generate renewable electricity, they help address climate change as well as supporting farmers' incomes.



# Obstacles to renewable energy adoption

Ask any small business owner and they'll tell you being nimble in response to change is one of the key ways they adapt and thrive. It's no different for the UK's farmers. Giving farmers the ability to diversify their assets allows them to drive efficiencies and innovations, stabilising their finances whilst protecting the environment and the UK's food security.

The majority of survey respondents indicated that solar energy could help secure their farm's financial future.

While interest in solar energy is high, the survey identified several obstacles that hinder widespread adoption. Chief among these is grid connectivity, with many farmers indicating that connecting their solar systems to the national grid is complex and costly.

Additionally, there are concerns over the initial investment required to set up renewable energy solutions, though many recognise the long-term financial benefits.

Such challenges underscore the need to make renewable energy solutions more accessible to farmers.

## Key obstacles standing in the way of renewable adoption

- 34% of farmers cited grid connectivity as the biggest barrier to adopting renewable energy solutions.
- 20% pointed to planning constraints as a major issue.
- Other obstacles included confidence in the technology (17.2%), access to finance (10.9%) and knowledge of renewables (3.1%).



# Farmers' Voice



Facing difficulties with planning?

Connectivity can be a real challenge

Throughout the survey, several farmers shared their personal stories of efforts to diversify.

## South West

A farmer from the South West discussed how they had already begun diversifying by leasing land for solar panels, noting that this had provided a steady income during a particularly difficult year.

However, many farmers highlighted a range of challenges which have blocked their efforts. One respondent noted: "Grid connectivity is a major issue for us. We've explored solar, but the infrastructure just isn't there yet for us to fully benefit."

"I've looked into it, but apparently, there is not capacity in the system."

"Until more recently members of the public don't want to see their landscape changed. This takes a lot of preference with planners. There is also no inter-county communication across the UK leading to poor infrastructure planning."

"Planning committee reduced my solar farm to half what it could have been."

"Grid capacity and access very limited due to lack of utility investment in the network locally. Cost of connection restrictive. We would like to do more with renewables on non-productive land."

"Went through the costly process of getting planning permission for a wind turbine but was unable to continue the project due to the cost of connecting to the grid"



**“ Planning committee reduced my solar farm to half what it could have been.”**

## Devon

Steve Poole, an arable farmer in Devon with nearly 500 acres said he was confident when it came to the long-term viability of his farm, made easier thanks to diversification into renewables.

Steve has a 7MW solar and substation, but said grid connectivity was one of the main obstacles. He wanted to explore the possibility of wind turbines, but was restricted when it came to spare capacity.



## East Midlands

Another farmer in the East Midlands explained how they were in the process of exploring solar energy but faced challenges with connecting to the grid.

Despite these issues, the farmer expressed optimism that, once in place, solar energy would provide much-needed financial security.





# Harvesting insight

**Through adversity comes opportunity – we take a close look at a fifth-generation farm in Cornwall who have diversified to stay viable.**

In amongst the rugged cliffs carpeted with gorse and heather, the ruins of engine houses and chimneys scatter Cornwall's Tin Coast – stark relics of a mining industry which once defined the region.

Cornwall's agricultural sector and farming communities now stand as the county's major industries.

Yet, in the face of climate extremes, rising inflation and volatile markets, the tin mines are a looming reminder for Cornish farmers that deep-rooted industries aren't always as permanent as they might seem.

With one of the wettest winters and coolest summers on record, Cornwall's farms are having to adapt rapidly to climate extremes to preserve their land and livelihoods for future generation

One such family are the Williams of Presingoll Farm, who have been working their 200-acre farm within the St Agnes Mining District for five generations.

Mark Williams, his daughter Inez and brother Andrew have been sowing the seeds of regenerative farming on the outskirts of St Agnes for decades, carefully balancing tradition and cutting-edge innovation to improve soil health, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.

As with most farms, they're not shielded from climate extremes and economic turbulence, but in embracing new ventures, renewable energy projects and regenerative practices, they have been able to build-in resilience.

Presingoll was a mixed lowland farm for hundreds of years, however over the last 20 years the family has worked hard to create a more modern, regenerative model. Mark and his brother Andrew were early pioneers of environmental diversification within the traditional farm model they inherited, which saw the pair become early adopters of organic principles and solar panels.

He comments: "You could say our early efforts were a little trial and error."

**"The frames we had for our first solar arrays were made from timber – suffice to say, they didn't last long on the windy, salty Cornish coast."**

"But today, we're Red Tractor-assured, and through The Grower Plant Healthy accredited and UKISG. You could say we've come of age having won a Cornwall Sustainability Award in 2023 for Growing Greener."

"Through our solar panels, we supply electricity to a local industrial site and have launched into new ventures like The Grower tree nursery, a new business established by Inez and her husband Chris. We've even trialled wind fences along our hedgerows and opened a dog exercise field (Paws at Presingoll Farm) during the Covid lockdowns."



**"Without the hard work and foundational knowledge of previous generations, we wouldn't have been able to start the business in 2021."**



Extreme weather, escalating costs and shifting market demands have buffeted families like the Williams', but Mark and Inez believe their efforts over the years has put them in a strong position for the future of sustainable food production and environmental protection.

According to Inez, the family's early efforts into diversification has allowed her to carve out her own entrepreneurial path. "Without the hard work and foundational knowledge of previous generations, we wouldn't have been able to start the business in 2021," she says.

It's certainly paying off. In just a few years, Inez's oversight of The Grower Nursery has seen it now grow over 2 million trees for bareroot production for the forestry and landscape markets.

She continues: "The ventures don't only offer additional income, but they also strengthen our ties with the community, create local jobs and build a sense of shared responsibility in the face of a changing climate."

The Williams family's journey underscores a need for collaboration among farmers, to share ideas and to have a collective voice on vital issues. As pressures builds on British agriculture, the community's input is being called on for farmers to share their views on what has been an especially challenging year.

For the Williams family, renewable energy has been a game-changer. By partnering with West Country Renewables, as well as direct investment they've harnessed solar power on their land. However, it's not been without its challenges. Antiquated infrastructure and limited grid capacity has prevented the family from expanding their solar operations further, leaving untapped potential on the table.

He concludes:

**"More robust support for renewable energy on farms, improved infrastructure and streamlined planning could really help Cornish farmers to mitigate the peaks and troughs of fallow years."**





# Recommendations and conclusion

The findings from this survey point to several key recommendations for the future of UK agriculture.

## Advice to government

### 1. Enhance support for renewable energy

The government and industry stakeholders must address infrastructure issues, particularly around grid connectivity, to ensure farmers can fully benefit from renewable energy.

### 2. Policy development

One farmer commented: "It is not possible to plan or have any certainty because government constantly change the rules". Policymakers should work closely with farmers to ensure that diversification and renewable energy solutions are integrated into future agricultural strategies. Farmers' voices must be included in the national conversation on sustainability and food security.

### 3. Education and resources

Providing farmers with clear information about the long-term benefits of diversification, particularly through solar energy, will empower them to make informed decisions.



## Advice to farmers

### Consider solar energy for long-term financial stability

#### Benefit from stable, predictable revenue:

Solar energy provides a steady income source through leasing land for solar farms or installing rooftop panels. Even if you are unsure of the immediate benefits, consider long-term gains, especially as energy prices remain volatile.

#### Work with reputable solar developers:

Collaborating with experienced solar developers can simplify the process and help address concerns about planning, installation, and technology reliability. Many developers also handle grid connection issues on behalf of farmers.

### Explore available government support and incentives

#### Access financial grants and subsidies:

Investigate national and local government programs that provide financial assistance for renewable energy projects. There may be grants, loans, or tax reliefs that can reduce the initial investment barrier, for example, DEFRA's Improving Farm Productivity grant which offers between £15,000 and £100,000 for solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

#### Stay informed about policy changes:

With energy policy in constant evolution, it's essential to stay updated on new incentives and policies that might make solar and other renewable energy projects more feasible.

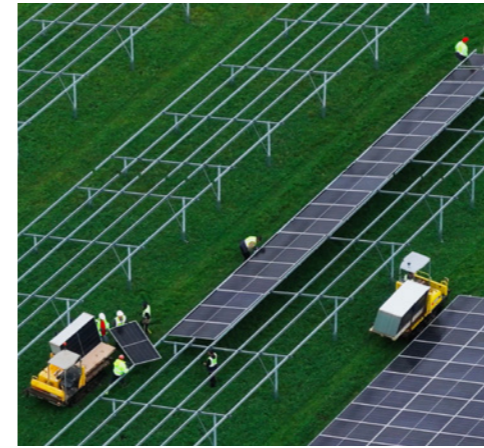
### Collaborate to overcome infrastructure challenges

#### Join collective advocacy efforts for better grid connectivity:

Since grid connectivity is a significant obstacle, work with local farmer associations and renewable energy organisations like Solar Energy UK to advocate for infrastructure improvements. Collective action can help influence policy changes or attract investment into rural areas.

#### Consider joint solar projects:

Partner with neighbouring farmers to pool resources and develop larger, shared solar installations. This may help reduce individual costs and increase negotiating power with developers and grid operators.



Since grid connectivity is a significant obstacle, work with local farmer associations and renewable energy organisations to advocate for infrastructure improvements.

### Diversify further with complementary income streams

#### Combine solar with agricultural use:

Some farmers have successfully integrated solar panels with agricultural activities, such as grazing livestock under solar installations. This "agrovoltatics" approach maximizes land use and provides additional income streams.

#### Explore other diversification options:

In addition to solar, consider other forms of diversification like holiday cottages, biomass production, or rewilding. Diversifying income sources makes your farm more resilient to environmental and economic fluctuations.

### Ask around and build confidence in renewables

#### Increase knowledge about renewable technologies:

Farmers who lack confidence in renewable technologies should seek training or workshops on the practicalities and benefits of solar energy. This could help dispel concerns about technological reliability and long-term returns.

#### Utilise available resources:

Organisations like Solar Energy UK provide best practice guides, case studies, and expert consultations, which can help you make informed decisions.

### Plan for the future and ensure long-term viability

#### Consider the legacy of your farm:

For farmers planning to keep their land in the family, solar energy can offer a way to secure the farm's financial future and provide stability in an uncertain agricultural environment. Ensure that diversification aligns with your long-term goals for the farm.



## Conclusion

By adopting these strategies, farmers can mitigate some of the current challenges they face and position themselves for a more resilient and sustainable future, leveraging solar energy and other diversification opportunities.

In conclusion, the 2024 harvest season has underscored the vulnerability of UK agriculture to both economic and environmental pressures. Diversification, especially through solar energy, offers a promising solution, but significant obstacles must be addressed to unlock its full potential. By tackling these challenges head-on, the UK farming sector can build greater resilience and ensure its long-term viability in an increasingly unpredictable world.





# Methodology

The survey results reflect a diverse group of respondents, primarily consisting of farm owners and landowners from different regions across the UK.

The farms represented range from specialised cereal and dairy operations to mixed farms and specialist livestock producers. This diversity in respondents provides a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities for diversification, particularly regarding solar energy, within the agricultural sector.

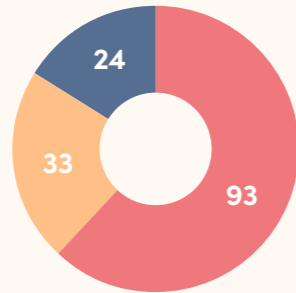
A breakdown of the demographic, geographic and operational diversity of the respondents in the survey can be found below.

## 271 people entered the Farming Sustainably survey

### Farmers and landowners

Of those who agreed to provide information on their demographics:

- Farm owners**  
93 respondents identified as farm owners.
- Tenant farmers**  
Additionally, 33 respondents identified as renting land or being tenants.
- Landowners**  
24 respondents identified as landowners.



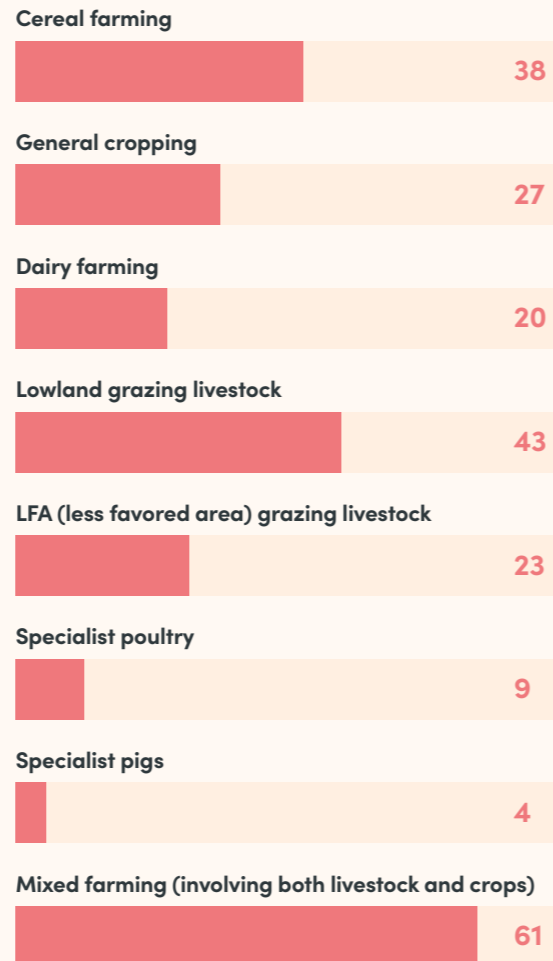
### Geographic distribution

The survey covered several regions of the UK, with the following concentration of responses:

South West England	24
West Midlands	20
South East England	20
East Midlands	18
Scotland	18
Northern Ireland	18
Wales	17
East of England	16
Yorkshire and Humber	11
North West England	8
North East England	6

### Farm types

Number of responses:



By embracing diversification UK farmers can secure their farm's long-term viability and contribute to the nation's food security in a sustainable way

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## About Solar Energy UK

Solar Energy UK is an established trade association working for and representing the entire solar and energy storage value chain. Solar Energy UK represents a thriving member-led community of over 400 businesses and associates, including installers, manufacturers, distributors, large-scale developers, investors and law firms.

Our underlying ethos has remained the same since our foundation in 1978 - to be a powerful voice for our members by catalysing their collective strengths to build a clean energy system for everyone's benefit. Our mission is to empower the UK's solar transformation.

[www.solarenergyuk.org](http://www.solarenergyuk.org)



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The nationwide survey and Farming Sustainably report was delivered and designed by the communications agency Meeting Place on behalf of Solar Energy UK.

[www.meeting-place.uk](http://www.meeting-place.uk)

