

A Festive Taste of Agroecology: A Nature-Friendly Farming Celebration

Parliamentary Briefing

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Agroecology offers a positive, practical path to a fairer and healthier food system. By working with natural processes, it restores soils, protects biodiversity, and strengthens long-term food security. Just as importantly, it places social equity and public health at the centre of how we produce and access food. Agroecological farming ensures growers are fairly rewarded, reduces chemical and antibiotic use, and supports diets rich in fresh, nutritious food—helping prevent the diet-related illnesses that hit low-income communities hardest.

This approach transforms food from a source of inequality into a driver of wellbeing, reducing waste and building transparent, community-focused supply chains. With the right enabling policies, we can accelerate this transition and create a system that nourishes people, sustains farmers, and restores the environment. Agroecology is not only an environmental solution—it is a health and justice solution, and a clear route to a food system that works for everyone.

What is agroecology?

Agroecology offers a practical framework for transforming the UK's food system to meet environmental, social, and economic goals. Defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization as "[an integrated approach that applies ecological and social principles to the design and management of agricultural systems](#)," agroecology recognises that farming is part of a wider system linking land, food, and communities. It seeks to optimise the relationships between plants, animals, people, and the environment while promoting resilience, fairness, and long-term sustainability.

Agroecology aligns closely with the goals of the [2020 Agriculture Act](#) (and was explicitly mentioned in the legislation) by supporting biodiversity recovery, soil health, and rural economic growth. Agroecological systems—such as mixed farming, agroforestry, and pasture-based livestock—help reduce dependency on synthetic inputs, increase carbon sequestration, and build resilience to climate shocks – which helps deliver the objectives of the Government's current [National Food Strategy](#). Crucially, agroecology also considers fairness in supply chains, equitable access to good food, and the role of farmers as land stewards.

While progress has been made across the UK to transition towards a more nature-friendly approach to farming, efforts remain largely fragmented. By embedding agroecology across agricultural, trade, and planning policy, Government can create a productive, resilient, and socially just food system—one that restores nature, supports farmers, and secures the nation's food future. Agroecology is not just about how we farm, but about how we feed and sustain our nation.

Key asks

- Use PQs, debates and amendments to demand cross-government accountability for food system transformation with agroecology as part of the National Food Strategy.
- Press DEFRA SoS for long-term clarity on ELM schemes, ensuring fairness for smaller farms and growers.

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- Back motions and inquiries calling for a Sustainable Horticulture Strategy to expand agroecological fruit and veg production.
- Champion investment that expands community access to affordable, healthy, sustainable food, linked to cost-of-living and inequality debates.

How can agroecology deliver for inclusive growth?

Agroecology offers a clear pathway to inclusive national growth, uniting environmental recovery with public health, and community wellbeing. By restoring soils, boosting biodiversity, and reducing reliance on high-input farming, it strengthens climate resilience while lowering long-term costs for farmers. It also drives SME-led economic growth, with local food businesses generating financial return and creating green jobs that keep value circulating in communities - for [every £10 spent in a local food business nearly £25 is generated for the local economy](#). When supported through planning, procurement, and supply-chain investment, agroecology expands access to nutritious, locally produced and culturally appropriate food. By seeking to open up access to land, provide training and support to those wanting to get into farming, and centring community spaces and enterprises, agroecology uplifts those most marginalised by the food system and empowers all citizens. Agroecology also builds resilience by protecting farmland and improving local processing and distribution, delivering stronger local economies.

How can agroecology improve the nation's health?

Agroecology can play a powerful role in long-term food security by reducing health inequalities by [ensuring everyone has access to nutritious and affordable food](#). By prioritising soil health, diverse cropping and low-impact land management, it increases the supply of fresh, seasonal produce and reduces reliance on ultra-processed foods, supporting healthier diets in communities most affected by diet-related illness. Agroecological projects that link food growing with social prescribing, community kitchens and food support schemes also deliver direct physical and mental health benefits. Evidence shows that investing in healthy local food generates major social returns, easing pressures on the NHS. Nationally, [diet-related illness costs the NHS and welfare system £91.9 billion annually](#), underlining the need for a healthier, more sustainable food system. By embedding growing spaces in new developments, improving access to good food and strengthening local supply chains, agroecology helps create neighbourhoods where healthy eating becomes the easy, everyday choice—building a fairer, healthier society.

How can agroecology deliver for the environment?

Agroecology offers a highly effective route to restoring the environment while producing food sustainably. By working with natural processes, it rebuilds soil health, increases organic matter, and enhances the land's ability to store carbon—making farms more resilient to droughts and floods. Healthy soils also reduce the need for synthetic fertilisers, cutting emissions and improving water quality. Agroecological systems support far richer biodiversity through mixed cropping, agroforestry, and habitat-rich margins that boost pollinators and natural pest predators. This reduces reliance on pesticides and helps recover declining insect and bird populations. By lowering energy use, reducing pollution, and reconnecting fragmented habitats, agroecology creates resilient landscapes and a regenerative model of production. In turn, it protects the climate, restores nature, and strengthens the environmental foundations of long-term food security.

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