

Dear Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer

We are writing to you in your first 100 days to congratulate you on becoming Prime Minister and ask you to back British fruit and veg. With your support, we can save our horticulture sector and the NHS - both of which are in crisis – while also helping nature.

Fruit and veg are essential for a healthy diet, and British growers can deliver a huge variety of produce from the rich soils our nation provides. Across the country, growers of all scales are working tirelessly to achieve a simple but vital mission: to nourish people with good food.

But the sector faces devastating decline. Nearly half of our growers fear for the survival of their businesses and fruit and veg consumption in the UK is at the lowest level in half a century. Less than a third of us eat our five-a-day.

What's more, the produce that does reach us is too often imported from countries that are increasingly impacted by extreme weather. Almost half of our veg and more than 80% of our fruit is imported. This cannot go on.

We urgently need more – not less – home-grown fruit and veg, or we face further disaster for supermarket shelves, our health, and the environment.

British growers don't want to give up. They can help turn the tide on the public health crisis that is being driven by unhealthy diets and is costing the NHS billions. But they can't do it alone.

We call on you to back our farmers and help to scale up production across the nation – including around our towns and cities. You can start by committing to double the land used for horticulture in England. This would be a small change as the sector currently uses less than 2% of farmland – meaning more land is currently used to play golf than to produce fruit and veg.

And with the right support from your new government, growers can be empowered to grow more and in a nature-friendly way, like our organic and regenerative producers who are nurturing the land, restoring wildlife and protecting waterways.

Your intervention could make it possible for all fruit and veg producers to thrive – from field scale horticulture, to orchards, organic farms, market gardens and more – while also protecting precious lowland peat soils. Every grower has a part to play.

By going further than the previous government's *Blueprint to grow the UK fruit and vegetable sector*, and producing a bold, cross-departmental horticulture strategy, you could help restore the resilience of our food supply, improve the fairness of our supply chains, and get more British produce on people's plates.

If done alongside action to influence people to eat more fruit and veg, you could be the government that helps to deliver healthy and sustainable food security for generations to come.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the steps government can take in delivering this ambition.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Browning, Soil Association Chief Executive
Arthur Parkinson, author of *The Pottery Garden* and *The Flower Yard*
Andrew Burgess, Burgess Farms and Chair of NFU Organic Forum
Andy Dibben, Abbey Home Farm

Anna Jones, chef and author of a Modern Way to Eat
Anthony Snell, Windmill Hill Fruits (LEAF demonstration farm)
Ben Andrews, Broadward Hall Farm
Caroline Lucas, former Green Party leader and former Member of the European Parliament
Dr Catherine Chong, co-founder of Farms to Feed Us and climate economist
Claire Ratinon , grower and author of Unearthed
Charles Dowding, horticulturalist and author of No Dig
Dr Chris Van Tulleken, author of Ultra-Processed People
Ed Ayton, Brand Assistant at Abel & Cole
Gareth Roberts, Director and Operations Manager at Regather
Guy Singh-Watson, founder of organic veg box company, Riverford
Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, chef, TV personality and River Cottage founder
Baroness Jenny Jones of Moulescoomb
Jo Lewis, Chief Executive at the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Joe Rolfe, Managing Director at RB Organics
Katharine Jenner, Director of the Obesity Health Alliance
Leon Ballin, Programme Manager for Sustainable Food Places
Luke King, Operations and Commercial Director at Riverford
Martin Lines, Chair of the Nature Friendly Farming Network
Pete Richardson, Organic Growers Alliance
Professor Kevin Fenton, President of the Faculty of Public Health
Rebecca Laughton, Horticulture Campaigns Co-ordinator at the Landworkers' Alliance
Sarah Langford, Langford Farm, and author of Rooted
Sebastian Pole, co-founder of the Earthsong Foundation
Sinead Fenton, Aweside Farm
Sue Pritchard, Chief Executive at the Food Farming and Countryside Commission
Suzy Russel, network coordinator at Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Tom Hunt, chef and author of The Natural Cook
Vicki Hird, Strategic Lead on Agriculture at The Wildlife Trusts
Will White, Sustainable Farming Campaign Coordinator at Sustain

References:

- Home-grown: A roadmap to resilient fruit and vegetable production in England – a report by the Soil Association, Sustain and The Wildlife Trusts:
<https://www.soilassociation.org/media/27380/homegrown.pdf>
- According to Riverford's #GetFairAboutFarming campaign, almost half our growers fear they could go out of business within a year: <https://getfairaboutfarming.co.uk/>