

Agri-Food & Brexit: does it matter?

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The short-term

Immediate issues

Likelihood

- Is a full-blown emergency likely?
 - Uncertain at present
 - Political posturing but still possible (if folly)
 - Little or no civic preparation
- Does it matter?
 - Yes, if a crash-out on January 1 2021
 - Yes, even if more orderly no-deal

NB: Food is Minds not just Mouths & Markets

- Public unease (*Which?* surveys)
- Worst case
 - run on shops
 - panic / disorder
 - shortages
- What we could have in place:
 - Emulate Sweden: 2018 advice to have a family stockpile
 - Community preparation: cafés, networks.
 - Orderly distribution according to need and health

Food Emergencies: ideal vs reality

- UK is more used to international food crises → charity response
- A no-deal Brexit requires UK a multi-channel response
 - State (nat'l + local) + private + civil society
 - Food = Morale + Nutrients + Prices + Supply flow
 - Market corrections / compensations
 - Health template → rationing *in extremis*
- What happened in Covid-19?
 - Power to 9 retailers
 - Closure of hospitality
 - Rocketing food poverty – 1.2 m received (bad) food hampers → 8 m (Food Fdn)
- HMG puts onus on YOU preparing (not it):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-emergencies/preparing-for-emergencies>
- *Civil Contingencies Act 2004* (learning from lorry strikes) requires:
 - Resilience Forums
 - Annual reviews

Why does a no-deal matter for food system?

- Long lead time system even within Just-in-Time (JIT)
- UK food supply is heavily EU reliant
- Key foods for health disrupted
 - fruit & veg
 - Ambient foods
- weak Emergency Food planning
- Fear of panic buying
- at-risk groups particularly vulnerable
 - Covid-19 showed they were badly served
 - Patchwork support from voluntary sector

Supplies: what may happen if no deal

- Immediate delays at Dover up to c.7K lorries
 - “...we should look forward to a disorderly January...” Andrew Opie (British Retail Consortium to EFRA Committee, July 2020)
 - sanitary provisions to be provided, Rachel Maclean MP minister, Dept Transport, Oct 14 2020
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/oct/14/roadside-portable-loos-planned-for-lorry-drivers-delayed-by-brexit-checks>
- Disruption to JIT systems + other IT dependency
 - <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/experts-warn-of-inevitable-disruption-of-food-supply-chains-with-no-deal-brexit/>
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/14/uk-not-border-ready-with-only-four-months-to-go-until-brexit>
- Price rises → hit low income consumers
- Timing: January is a bad time of year
 - Andrew Opie (BRC): “If we see the border disrupted in January then we’re going to have a big problem, because then we won’t have the food in the country to move around.” <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/brexit/no-deal-brexit-will-cause-food-shortages-worse-than-coronavirus-panic-buying/645117.article>

Expectation of 2 day lorry queue build-up ('reasonable worst case')

Source: 46 page report by Border and Protocol Delivery Group presented to Exit Operations Committee (XO) Sept 2020 – leaked to *The Guardian*
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/14/uk-not-border-ready-with-only-four-months-to-go-until-brexit>



50k new customs officials needed,
FT October 18 2020

10 lorry Parks in preparation + customs clearance sites

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/ashford/news/10-brexit-lorry-parks-confirmed-including-two-in-one-kent-town-235216/> October 8 2020



Toilets on M20? RHA still sceptical

<https://www.truckanddriver.co.uk/latest-stories/plan-to-line-m20-with-portable-toilets-in-case-of-no-deal-brexit-no-relief-for-drivers-say-rha/>

Tariffs → prices

- BRC estimates (July 2020) presented to EFRA Committee:
https://brc.org.uk/media/675160/fair-deal-for-consumers_july2020_final_v2.pdf
- Average import tariff + 20%, but varies...
 - raspberries (14%),
 - strawberries (10%)
 - grapes (8%)
 - onions (8%)
 - tomatoes (14%)
 - sweet peppers (6%)
 - NB last 3 = biggest imports (AHDB figures)
- Export tariffs up (bad for farm/food exports)
 - e.g. lamb + 40%, minced beef +48%, cheddar +57%
 - NB President Trump put 25% tariff on Whiskey from UK in October 2019 → Scotch whiskey exports have fallen 30% <https://www.scotch-whisky.org.uk/insights/us-tariffs/>

IS THIS MORE PAPERWORK, NOT 'TAKING BACK CONTROL'?

What lies ahead *in extremis*

- Border controls:
 - inspection +2mins → tailbacks
- Just-in-Time supply chains:
 - no storage
- Labour: horticulture 75k, manufacturing 35%
 - SAWS abolished Sept 2013 → 2.5k 'pilot' 2019-20
- N Ireland / Republic border
 - 680k tonnes import/export
 - 3 GB retailers = 70% NI food
- Standards:
 - GM, hormones, antibiotics, BST, disinfectant-washed chicken

The Longer View

needed now

UK still has no coherent food policy

- Brexit was about what was DISLIKED...
- Still no policy package in place but Legislation is in train
 - Agriculture Bill (England only but important)
 - HoC rejected enshrining high standards in law
 - Agric Bill is about subsidies → ecosystems not food → Dimbleby NFS due 2021 (PTO)
 - Trade & Agriculture Commission on standards (but 1 yr temporary)
 - Environment Bill pending
 - Internal Market Bill reasserts England over other D.A.s
 - Trade Deals are the elephant in the room
 - Trump vs Biden = position on N Ireland /RoI border
- *NB HMG's Food 2030* policy in 2010 was triggered by 2007 oil/Commodity crisis and developed 2008-10 but axed June 2010 by new Government.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/cif-green/2010/jan/05/defra-food-strategy>

England's National Food Strategy (Dimbleby)

- NFS Part 1 published in July <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/partone/>
 - Recognised health problems
 - Recommended extension of school meals, poverty alleviation etc. – this was REJECTED October 2020
 - But backed weak Trade & Agriculture Commission
 - Doubtful public health, enviro, animal welfare expertise
- NFS Part 2 (the final report) due in 2021
 - Will the horse have bolted by then???

Remember the early warnings: Brexit raises...

source: Lang, Millstone, Marsden (2017) <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/newsandevents/2017/publications/food-brexit>

- Security of supply: stockpiling, less fresh perishables
- Labour: skills deficit e.g. vets and pickers / pruners/ grafters
- Costs: £ sterling ↓ → food prices £ ↑
- Public confidence: sourcing control
- Health standards: chlorinated chicken, hormone-fed beef, AMR
- Trade: disrupted 30% from EU + 11% from EU-negotiated
- Less control: Codex Alimentarius 167 MS / EU 27 MS
- USA deal: USDA insists UK must accept US standards
- etc

Battle of visions for UK food matter for health

see: Lang (2020) *Feeding Britain*

- *Atlanticist*
 - the UK gets food imports from the USA, produced & labelled to its standards
- *Globalist*
 - UK to be fed from non-EU countries, anywhere and everywhere
- *Neo-Colonial*
 - food comes from wherever land and labour are cheap enough to compensate for extra costs of lengthened supply chains
- *Outer-European*
 - food comes arms-length from the EU, as eg a member of the EEA or other non-EU Mediterranean countries, eg Turkey, Morocco, Israel
- *New European*
 - Brexit called off / re-join; argue for reforms; resume 30% of our food from EU member states and other sources negotiated as EU MS
- *Bio-Regional*
 - Radical restructure; sustainability / ecological public health driven; more horticulture, less animal agriculture; shorter supply chains

Land use in the UK, by crop - Horticulture is tiny!

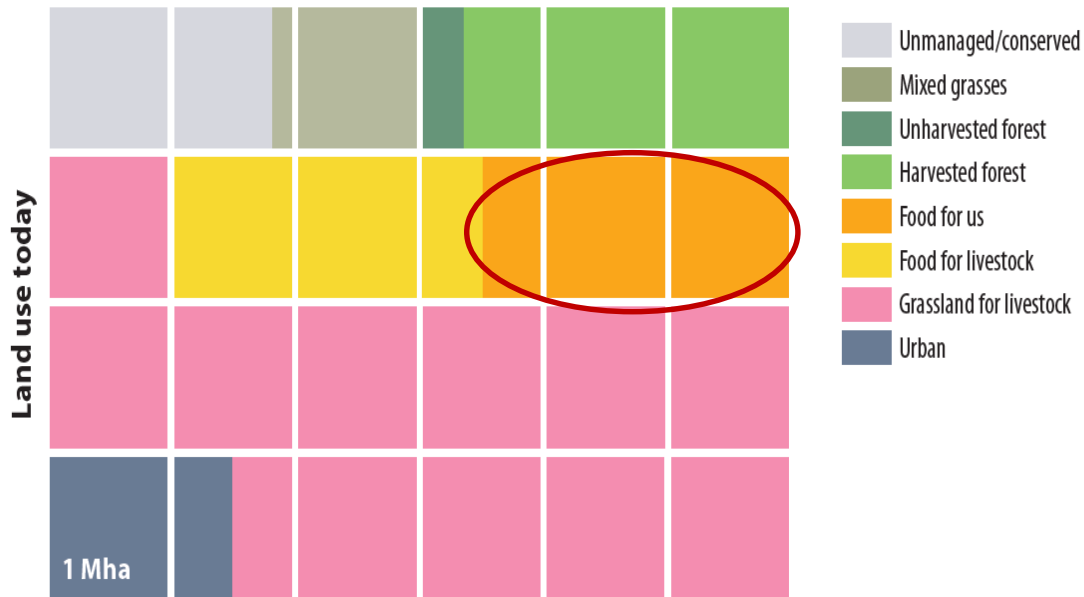
source: Defra (2019) Agriculture in UK Table 2.1

- Total agricultural area 18,703,000 ha
- Croppable area 6,084,000 ha
 - Arable 4,502,000 ha
 - Cereals 3,106,000 ha
 - Oilseeds 609,000 ha
 - Potatoes 140,000 ha
 - Other crops 647,000 ha
 - Horticulture 165,000 ha
 - Uncropped 265,000 ha
- Grassland 11,224,000 ha
 - Rough grazing 1,195,000 ha
- Woodland 1,016,000 ha
- Pigs 10,000 ha

Land use and **human** food: current to ideal (in CO2e)

source: ZCB: rising to the Climate Emergency (2019) p37 & 82

Current land use for **human** food



Land use for food doubles if Zero Carbon Britain

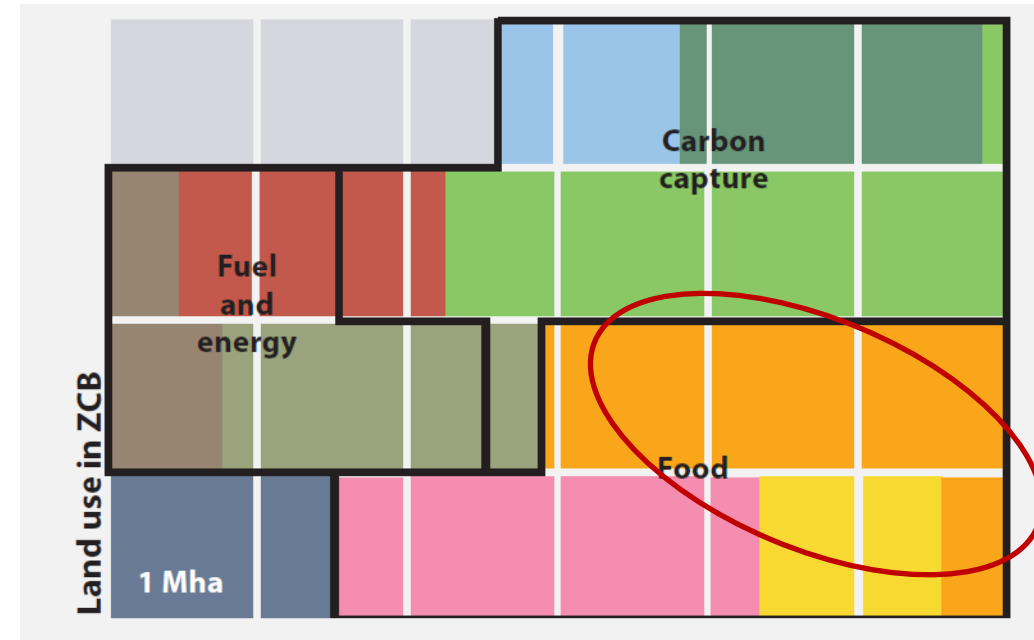


Figure 3.3: Approximate land use today (not including water courses and coastal areas). Based on data from Morton et al. (2008), Forestry Commission (2007), DEFRA (2012), NERC (2008), Bain et al. (2011) and Read et al. (2009).

Conclusions

Where now...?

Crisis planning must include food (even in rich countries)

- Brexit is a case study
 - Rich world peculiarities (JIT, long chains, consumer expectations)
 - Britain's policy assumptions exposed
 - Others will feed it
 - A concentrated food system
- Food planning easily gets lost
- Population approach is essential
 - Not just 'at risk' groups
- Multi-level approach:
 - international-national-local-domestic

The Great Food Transformation (EAT-Lancet 2019) actually requires UK shift of.....

- **Supply** → grow more of what we can (but sustainably)
- **Land use** → more land for trees, wilding, / less for farm animals
- **Food for health** → health to guide land use (more horticulture)
- **Food standards** → raised beyond EU (not lowered)
- **Sustainable dietary guidelines** → clear goals to link consumers
- **Market controls** → rebalance money flows / more to primary sectors
- **Labour** → investment in capacity
- **Horticulture** → skills and training (urgent need from FE)
- **Food infrastructure** → rethink what's needed for a good food system
- **Civil awareness** → revamp Resilience Forums to include food

What can the Faculty of Public Health do?

- Play a full role in debate: FPH Food SIG paper <https://www.fph.org.uk/media/2957/covid-19-and-food-a-fph-position-paper.pdf>
- Reinforce the local and regional dimension (as per Covid-19)
- Push hard for real public health approach to food strategy
 - Short-term: improve emergency planning
 - Urge Resilience Forums to include PH <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-resilience-forums-contact-details>
 - Long-term: legal standards - good food for all - in Nat Fd Strategy
 - Support the Future British Standards Coalition <https://www.sustainweb.org/news/oct20-future-british-standards-coalition-interim-report/>
- Promote sustainable diets as basis for food policy at all levels
 - link nutrition to ecosystems, social and economic criteria

more details in *Feeding Britain* part 3

