

BRITISH BEEF PRODUCTION

Overview of
UK standards



AHDB



British red meat has a great story to tell. But that story often gets drowned out because of the tendency to portray all farming all over the world as the same, even though it isn't.

In the UK, most livestock is grazed in extensive grass-based systems. According to the Government's Committee on Climate Change, greenhouse gas emissions from UK beef are about half the global average.

British farmers are proud of their high standards of production and aim to farm in as climate-friendly a way as possible with a view to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

British red meat is produced to some of the highest welfare and environmentally sustainable standards in the world. Our extensively grazed pastures provide habitat for wildlife, while actively managed pastures take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it.

The US has access to import UK pork and beef products. Visit meattheukexporters.com/exporters for a list of UK traders.

Red Tractor

Red Tractor is a not-for-profit company providing stability and consistency through a single set of assured standards. It is a champion of British food, farming and consumer safety, linking farming, food production, processing and packing.

Approximately 46,000 British farmers and major supermarkets work to our world-leading standards, making life simpler for everyone.

The Red Tractor logo lets buyers know that the food and drink is traceable, safe and farmed with care.

Inspections are only carried out by independent companies to ensure they are completely impartial.

Their team of expert assessors safeguard Red Tractor standards from farm to pack.

Approximately 23,600 beef and lamb producers in the UK are members of Red Tractor.

For more information about Red Tractor standards for pork, beef and lamb, visit assurance.redtractor.org.uk



Hybrid vigour

Beef production is based on a wide range of cattle breeds, usually incorporating crosses to benefit from hybrid vigour. Suckler cows are crosses selected for their maternal characteristics. Hybrid vigour is maximised by crossing these with a 'terminal sire' – a bull with good meat-producing characteristics, which might be a continental breed (Limousin or Charolais) or a traditional British breed (Hereford or Aberdeen Angus).

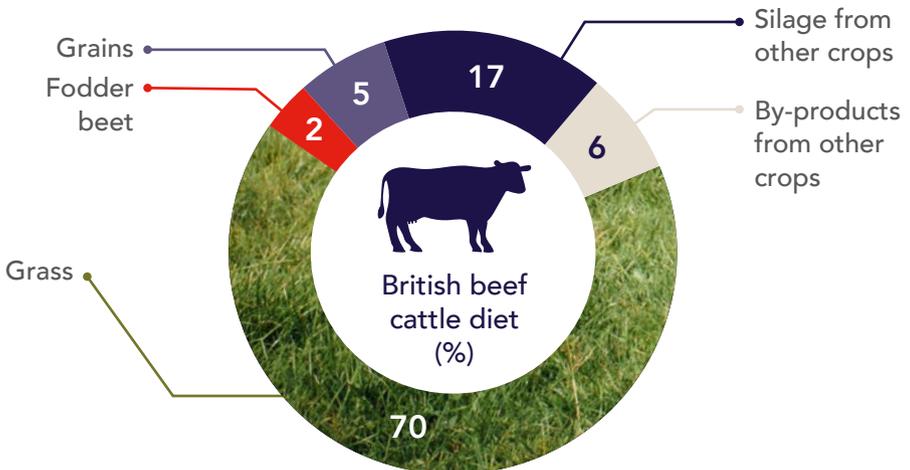
British beef is famous for its quality, which is the result of centuries of breeding, experience and care during farming and processing. Added to this is extensive science and research.

About 70% of a typical British beef cattle herd's diet is grass, with the remainder made up of by-products, silage and grains from crops that would never have been used in the human food supply chain.

87% of UK beef is produced using predominantly forage-based diets. This means UK beef production is not a driver of deforestation, unlike some other beef producing countries.

Livestock farmers also use co-products such as brewers' grains and by-products like bread crusts to feed their animals. This helps reduce the food chain's greenhouse gas footprint and prevents these products from ending up in landfill.

By enhancing the use of by-products and crop residues as feed, and using the unique ability to consume a diverse range of feed resources, most of which humans cannot digest, there is an opportunity to increase the resilience of food production in a changing climate.



Greenhouse gas emissions

British farming is ambitious to reach net zero greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions by 2040, and work to achieve further production efficiencies is a key part of this. Measures such as using natural feed additives and further improving cattle health will help reduce methane emissions from livestock.

These steps, along with the British herd size remaining steady, mean the impact of methane from livestock will decrease gradually, provided the number of animals does not increase.

To stop further global warming, the priority must be to reduce the levels of long-lived gases such as CO₂ and progressively reduce methane levels.

Actively managed pastures that are grazed by livestock is a good carbon sink, capturing CO₂ in the vegetation and storing carbon in the soil, which could otherwise be released into the atmosphere.

Research indicates that breeding, nutrition and animal health offer opportunities to make further reductions, and farmers are already making improvements in these areas. By using better genetics and making further improvements to animal welfare, we will continue to reduce our emissions.



Antibiotics

The UK is the fifth lowest user of on-farm antibiotics across 31 European countries, beaten only by the Nordic countries. The amount of antibiotics used on UK farms has been reduced by 53% between 2014 and 2018. Careful and appropriately managed use of antibiotics is necessary to protect animal welfare, and farmers only use them when necessary.

Strict withdrawal periods are stipulated for each licensed veterinary medicine, including antibiotics. This means that animal products can only enter the food chain when they are safe for human consumption.

The use of hormones for growth promotion in farm animals is banned in the UK since 1988.



Traceability

Cattle identification and traceability is an integral part of maintaining consumer confidence in British livestock.

To ensure traceability, cattle are required to be correctly identified in accordance with legislation (by double ear tagging) and issued with a corresponding passport.

All cattle have a passport, which enable the movement of animals to be traced. Movements must be notified to the British Cattle Movement Service and recorded on a central database.

The Compulsory Beef Labelling Programme rules apply to anyone selling or supplying fresh or frozen beef anywhere in the supply chain.

Every food business that sells or supplies meat must set up a traceability system (also called a traceability control system).

This ensures that wherever beef is sold, it can be traced back to where it originated.

Welfare

Farmers care deeply for the health and wellbeing of their animals as they are the core of their business. The UK has always been at the forefront of animal welfare legislation and offers some of the best farm animal welfare standards in the world, with robust and comprehensive legal framework protecting animal health and welfare.

The UK has extremely well-developed industry bodies that recognise the importance of animal health and welfare, as well as a significant number of credible quality assurance schemes, and health and welfare programmes and/or initiatives.

The Animal Protection Index, which ranks countries around the world for their commitment to improving animal welfare, identified the UK as one of the top countries to receive the highest grade.

Cattle are housed indoors for a range of health and welfare reasons. Limited grass growth over the winter and poor weather leading to flooding mean that, in some areas of the UK, it is not possible to graze cattle outdoors to ensure that their nutritional needs are met.





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AHDB is a statutory levy board, funded by farmers, growers and others in the supply chain. Our purpose is to inspire our farmers, growers and industry to succeed in a rapidly changing world. We equip the industry with easy-to-use, practical know-how which they can apply straight away to make better decisions and improve their performance. Established in 2008 and classified as a non-departmental public body, AHDB supports the following industries: meat and livestock (cattle, sheep and pigs) in England; horticulture, milk and potatoes in Great Britain; and cereals and oilseeds in the UK. AHDB's remit covers 72% of the total UK agricultural output. Further information on AHDB can be found at **ahdb.org.uk**

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