

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Pippa

And I'm Pippa. Many of us don't think twice about where the food in our kitchen comes from. One trip to the supermarket and we can buy anything we want, whether that's fruit grown in South America, tomatoes from Spain or rice flown in from Asia. Do you know where the food you buy comes from, Neil?

Neil

I try to pay attention and buy stuff that's locally produced, but actually, sometimes I don't really look. How about you?

Pippa

I actually have a calendar on my kitchen wall, which tells me which fruits and vegetables are grown at what times of year.

Neil

The reality is that the supply of fresh food to the UK is fragile. The UK imports around 40% of its food, and this supply chain can easily be disrupted by wars, shortages and, increasingly, by climate change. In fact, the UK government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently reported on the importance of **food security** – the term for having a reliable enough supply of affordable, healthy food to feed everyone.

Pippa

In this episode, we'll be investigating the issues affecting food production in the UK. As usual, we'll learn some useful new vocabulary, and remember – there's a quiz, worksheet and transcript of this episode on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

But first, of course, Pippa, I have a quiz question for you. I mentioned that Britain imports 40% of its food from other producers, mostly in Europe. But which European country does the UK import the most food from? Is it:

- a) France,
- b) the Netherlands, or
- c) Ireland?

Pippa

Hmm. I've seen the Netherlands on a lot of food packaging in the UK, so I'm going to say b) the Netherlands.

Neil

OK. Well, we'll find out if you're right later in the programme. According to the UK government's recent report, there are many issues affecting Britain's food supply: geopolitical conflicts like those in Ukraine and Iran, droughts and water shortages, loss of biodiversity caused by climate change... the list goes on and on. Here, climate reporter Mark Poynting discusses the report's conclusions with BBC Radio 4's The Food Programme.

Mark Poynting

And it really draws on scientific research to come up with what it calls a reasonable **worst-case scenario** for how biodiversity loss could affect UK security. And its conclusions are really quite **stark**. The first line of the report says, "Global ecosystem degradation and collapse threatens the UK's national security."

Pippa

The report describes a **worst-case scenario** where Britain runs out of food. A **worst-case scenario** is the worst possible thing that could happen in a particular situation.

Neil

Mark says the report's conclusions are **stark** – an adjective which in this case means obvious or severe.

Pippa

Another problem with **food security** relates to climate change. Carbon emissions from food production make up around a third of all greenhouse gases, from the diesel used to drive tractors, to fertilisers, to cows and sheep producing methane.

Emma Pinchbeck is the chief executive of the UK's Climate Change Committee. She spoke about this problem with BBC Radio 4's The Food Programme.

Emma Pinchbeck

The biggest chunk of emissions from agriculture comes from simply having **livestock** on the land. That's the **bit of the puzzle** that we need to think about going forward. And in the way that we've thought about it, for every cow or sheep we take off the land, we put on something else. And what that does overall is it makes farmers and landowners **part of the solution to climate change**, not the problem.

Neil

Livestock – that's farm animals such as cattle, sheep and pigs – contribute most of the carbon emissions from agriculture. Moving towards a sustainable food supply involves reducing the amount of meat and dairy we eat in favour of non-animal protein such as beans and lentils.

Pippa

Encouraging farmers and consumers to move away from meat is **a piece of the puzzle**, according to Emma. **A piece of the puzzle** means a part of the solution to a problem – in this case, the twin problems of **food security** and climate change.

Neil

Emma says it's important to think again about how farmland is used. For every cow or sheep taken off the land, something else, such as a fruit tree or vegetable crop, is put in its place. That way, farmers become **part of the solution, not the problem** – an idiom meaning that if you are not actively trying to fix a problem, you are helping it continue.

Pippa

Lots of ideas to chew over there, Neil. But now, isn't it time you revealed the answer to your question?

Neil

My question was, "Which European country does the UK import the most food from?" And you said b) the Netherlands... and you were absolutely correct, Pippa. It is the Netherlands. The UK imports £7.6 billion worth of imports, especially vegetables and dairy. OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **food security** – the situation where a country has a reliable enough supply of food to feed its population.

Pippa

The **worst-case scenario** is the worst possible thing that could happen in a particular situation.

Neil

The adjective **stark** has several meanings, including obvious and severe.

Pippa

Livestock are animals and birds that are kept on a farm, such as cows, sheep or chickens.

Neil

The phrase **a piece of the puzzle** means a part of the solution to a problem.

Pippa

And finally, the idiom **be part of the solution, not the problem** means that if you are not actively trying to fix a problem, you are helping it continue. Once again, our six minutes are up, but if this topic has made you hungry for more, why not check out our food topic page on our website, bbclearningenglish.com? Bye for now!

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

food security

situation where a country has a reliable enough supply of food to feed its population

worst-case scenario

the worst possible thing that could happen in a particular situation

stark

obvious, severe, harsh

livestock

animals and birds that are kept on a farm, such as cows, sheep or chicken

piece of the puzzle

part of the solution to a question or problem

part of the solution, not the problem

(idiom) if you are not actively trying to fix a problem, you are helping it continue