

#OSR Reboot: Read all about it!



Reboot Goals:

RESTORE UK OSR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH

REVERSE BIODIVERSITY DECLINES

LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR UK FARMERS

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United Oilseeds **#OSRReboot**

CULTIVATING SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND BIODIVERSITY

#OSR Reboot: SETTING THE SCENE

Why the UK Must Rebuild Oilseed Rape: A Collaborative Path Forward

In the mid-2010s, the UK's farming sector faced a seismic shift when neonicotinoid (Neonics) seed treatments were banned. Neonics had been integral to oilseed rape (OSR) cultivation, offering effective protection against pests like cabbage stem flea beetle. In the absence of this tool, and resistance to alternatives, average yields in England plummeted from over 3.5t/ha to around 3.0t/ha in just a decade. This sharp decline stands in stark contrast to Scotland, where flea beetle is not as significant an issue to date, and yields have continued to improve thanks in part to advancements in plant genetics.

The unintended consequences of the neonic ban have been profound. For English growers, the combination of lower yields and higher establishment risks has rendered OSR cultivation increasingly unprofitable. Many have chosen to abandon the crop altogether, exacerbated by pressure from the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), which has encouraged alternative land uses and has taken good arable land out of production. Today, OSR plantings in the UK are at their lowest level since 1983.

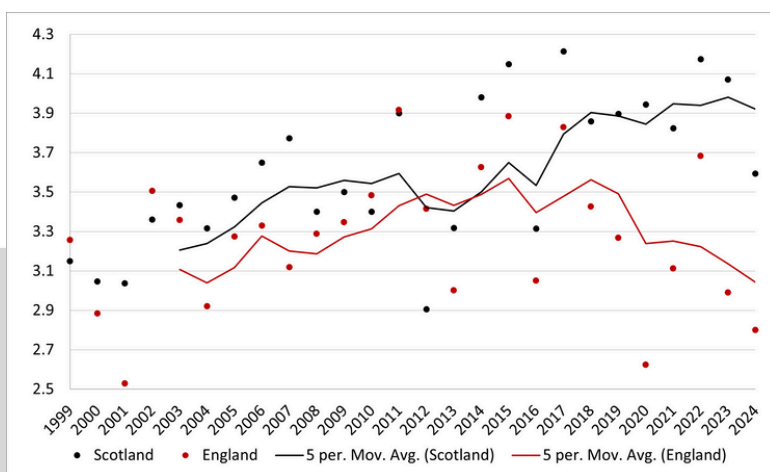
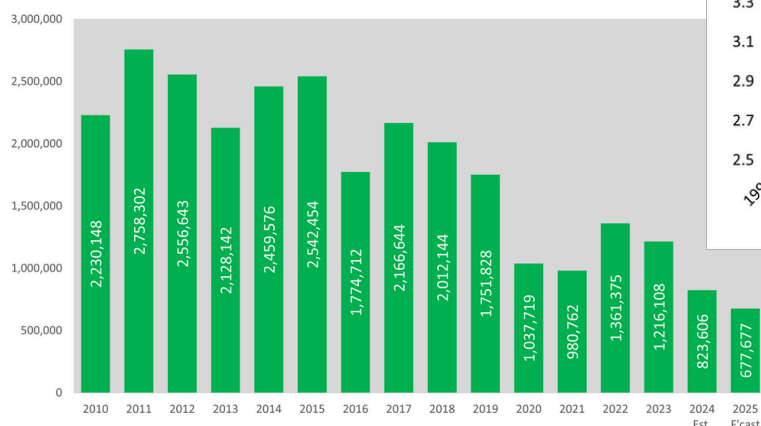
This decline in domestic production has led to a significant supply-demand imbalance. The UK's crushing capacity, close to 2 million tons annually, far exceeds the current domestic OSR output, which is insufficient to fill even the Liverpool crush facility, let alone Erith, Stratford, or feed processors. Despite falling domestic production, demand for OSR remains robust, necessitating a surge in imports. Shockingly, 64% of the OSR imported this year is projected to come from countries that still use neonics, including Ukraine (34%), Australia (23%), and Uruguay (7%).

The reliance on imports presents a troubling irony. By banning neonics, the UK has effectively offshored its OSR production to regions where these treatments remain standard practice. This shift undermines the principle of a level playing field for UK farmers and exacerbates environmental concerns. Shipping emissions associated with importing OSR from halfway around the world, on top of the continued use of neonics in those countries, raise serious questions about the net environmental benefits of the policy.

The industry driven #OSRReboot of OSR cultivation aims to address these challenges head-on. By championing sustainable practices and advocating for policies that level the playing field, this collaboration seeks to restore the profitability and viability of OSR production in the UK.

Without effective measures, the unintended consequences of the neonic ban will persist, jeopardising domestic agriculture while threatening food security, economic growth, and biodiversity.

Below: UK Domestic OSR
Production 2010 - 2025



Above: Average yield changes England and
Scotland 1999 - 2024

#OSR Reboot: FOOD SECURITY

Food Security is National Security (Labour Manifesto 2024)

Food security has become a pressing issue in the UK, and with United Oilseeds championing the OSR Reboot, we are placing the spotlight firmly toward edible oils and the critical role they play in our diets and food systems.

The Labour government has emphasised that food security is national security - a message that underscores the strategic importance of domestic food production in safeguarding the nation's resilience. Among the key contributors to food security is rapeseed oil, derived from oilseed rape (OSR), a cornerstone ingredient found in countless products, from salad dressings and mayonnaise to crisps, soups, and food service staples. Despite its ubiquity in the food supply chain, the future of this essential crop faces significant challenges that demand urgent attention.

For many years, UK consumers have encountered bottles labelled "vegetable oil" on supermarket shelves, likely assuming it to be a blend of oils. However, the reality is that these bottles predominantly contain rapeseed oil. Accounting for a 40% share of the UK edible oils market, rapeseed oil far outstrips its competitors in importance. For context, it is 13 times more significant to the UK market than olive oil, which often garners disproportionate attention in the media, and in conversations around the dinner table.

Yet, while rapeseed oil's market dominance remains undisputed, the source of this vital product has shifted dramatically. Less than a decade ago, the UK produced all the rapeseed it consumed domestically. Today, as a result of difficulties in growing OSR, only 14% of the rapeseed oil used in the UK is derived from homegrown crops, leaving the nation heavily reliant on imports. This dependence poses serious risks in an era of global supply chain volatility and geopolitical uncertainty.

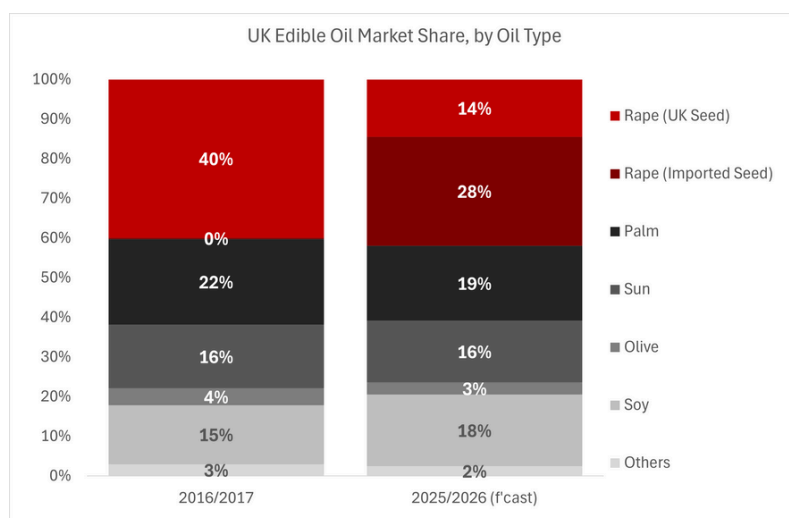
An Irreplaceable Domestic Resource

Unlike crops such as olives, palm, soy, and sunflowers, which cannot be cultivated in the UK, oilseed rape represents the nation's only viable option for a domestically produced edible oil. This makes the decline in UK-grown OSR a critical issue for national food security. Without intervention, the country risks exposing itself to severe supply shocks that could disrupt everything from food manufacturing to animal feed production.

Rapeseed meal, a byproduct of oil extraction, is also a high-protein feed essential for ruminant diets. Substituting domestically produced rapeseed meal with imported alternatives such as soya not only increases costs but also carries potentially significant environmental consequences. We believe the OSR Reboot, which promotes innovative practices and sustainable farming methods, will play a pivotal role in reversing this trend and securing a stable domestic supply of oilseed rape.

An Urgent Call to Action

The decline of UK-produced rapeseed oil is more than just a farming issue; it is a food security emergency! Policymakers, industry stakeholders, and consumers must recognise the strategic importance of oilseed rape to the nation's food system. Supporting efforts to bolster domestic production will not only safeguard the UK against supply shocks but also promote environmentally sustainable agriculture. **The time to act is now, before the UK's reliance on imported edible oils deepens, leaving the nation's food security in a precarious position.**



#OSR Reboot: ECONOMIC GROWTH

A Billion-Pound Opportunity: OSR and the Path to Economic Growth

Over the past decade, the UK has experienced a dramatic reversal in oilseed rape (OSR) trade, which underscores the urgent need to revive economic growth. Once a net exporter, the fifth largest in the world to be precise, with close to three quarters of a million tonnes of OSR output, the nation now faces the reality of importing nearly 1.3 million tonnes next year.

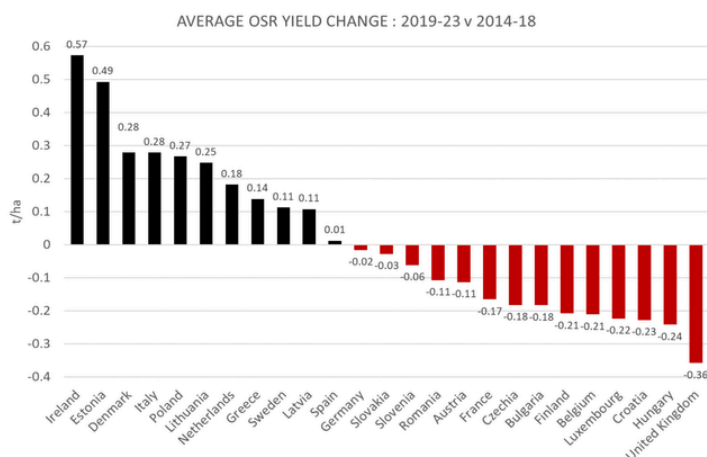
This shift amounts to a staggering 2 million tonnes of lost net trade – a figure that equates to just shy of £1 billion in value per year! To put this into perspective, the DEFRA budget is £2.3 billion, and the total contribution of agriculture to the UK economy is approximately £14 billion.

However, the impact stretches far beyond these figures. Agriculture underpins an intricate value chain that drives growth across multiple sectors. Breeders, agronomists, input specialists, hauliers, traders, and crushers all benefit from a thriving domestic market. When we lose output, we lose the multiplier effect – a powerful force that creates jobs, innovation, and value across the entire economy.

The Uneven Playing Field - One of the most frustrating factors behind this decline is the uneven playing field created by global differences in regulation. While the UK has adhered to its decision to ban the use of neonicotinoid insecticides (neonics) in OSR, many of our competitors, such as Australia, Ukraine, and Uruguay, continue to use them, maintaining higher yields and achieving stronger export positions as a result. Even within the European Union, where neonics are officially banned, until very recently several countries secured derogations to allow their continued use. This has left British farmers at a disadvantage, forced to comply with stricter rules while competing against imports produced under significantly less stringent conditions. In essence, we have simply offshored the neonic issue, resulting in even more neonic-treated produce being imported into the UK from across the globe.

This imbalance is one of the key reasons United Oilseeds has launched its OSR Reboot Campaign, which aims to reinvigorate domestic OSR production, providing, amongst other things, farmers with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to restore the UK's position as a competitive player in the global market. By addressing the challenges posed by regulation, trade disparities, and market access, this campaign is a vital step toward reversing the decline in this critical crop.

The OSR Reboot aligns perfectly with Labour's mission to kickstart economic growth, offering practical solutions to these challenges. It supports UK agriculture by enhancing national food security, stimulating rural economies, and ensuring a level playing field for British producers. Through its focus on innovation, sustainable practices, and fair trade policies, the OSR reboot can drive the revitalisation of both the agricultural sector and the broader economy, turning Labour's vision into actionable progress.



The challenge is clear: without bold action, the UK risks losing even more ground.

However, with the right policies in place, Labour can reignite economic growth, ensuring that British farmers, and all those who depend on them, have the tools they need to compete and thrive.

#OSR Reboot: BIODIVERSITY



Reviving OSR: A Lifeline for Pollinators and Biodiversity

Imagine a spring without the buzz of bees or the vibrant hum of hoverflies. This silence is no longer hypothetical; it is becoming a creeping reality in the UK. Pollinator populations continue to decline, with the UK Biodiversity Indicator for pollinators showing a staggering 24% decrease in distribution between 1980 and 2022. The reasons for this decline are unclear but the 2013 EU ban on neonicotinoid insecticides, supposedly implemented to protect pollinators, has not prompted any recovery. The situation demands urgent action.

This decline is not happening in isolation. Agriculture plays a pivotal role, particularly in the cultivation of flowering crops such as oilseed rape (OSR). OSR flowers provide a nutrient-dense source of pollen and nectar during late spring and early summer, a critical period known as the "hunger gap" for pollinators. Without these resources, insects like bees and hoverflies face severe food shortages just as their colonies are establishing and expanding.

Recognising this, United Oilseeds launched the "OSR Reboot" initiative in the summer of 2024. Designed to revitalise OSR cultivation in the UK, the campaign addresses key challenges such as pest pressures and declining yields. By encouraging farmers to reintroduce OSR into their rotations, the initiative aims to boost biodiversity and provide essential foraging habitats for pollinators. Supported by key organisations such as the Bee Farmers Association, the OSR Reboot has the potential to create a win-win-win scenario for agriculture, the environment and the economy.

But the road to recovery is complex. Rewind to 2013, when the neonicotinoid ban was implemented without a thorough evidence base or impact assessment. Ten years later, the outcomes are clear: a drastic reduction in homegrown OSR production, continued pollinator declines, and a rise in the resistance of alternative controls that may harm beneficial insects. Disappointingly, the reduction in domestic OSR production has offshored the problem, with the UK increasingly relying on imports from countries where neonicotinoid use remains widespread. This shift not only undermines the intended environmental benefits of the ban but also contributes to a larger carbon footprint due to the transportation of imported OSR, often over long distances.

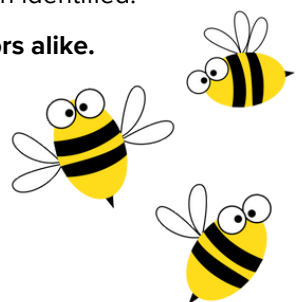
Initiatives like the OSR Reboot exemplify proactive efforts to create a pollinator-friendly landscape. One such example is the collaborative Enigma V project, which brings together industry partners to drive innovation in sustainable crop protection. By exploring advanced strategies that reduce reliance on traditional chemical solutions, this initiative not only supports resilient OSR cultivation but also enhances biodiversity and ecosystem health.

These efforts align with broader environmental objectives, including Labour's nature recovery goals. By reintroducing OSR under biodiversity-promoting conditions, these initiatives are providing meaningful steps toward restoring pollinator health and creating sustainable ecosystems.

The message is clear: reversing the decline in pollinators requires integrated strategies and collaboration across sectors. Through initiatives like the OSR Reboot and cutting-edge projects like Enigma V, we have the tools to balance productive farming with environmental stewardship.

But the Government can also do its bit by encouraging farmers to include flowering crops in the arable rotation through the SFI payment scheme, looking at the nitrogen-fertiliser restrictions on Autumn-planted OSR, and promoting knowledge transfer channels to improve the uptake of integrated pest management (IPM) tools that have already been identified.

Now is the time to act to secure a thriving future for our ecosystems, agriculture, and pollinators alike.



United Oilseeds **#OSRReboot**

CULTIVATING SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND BIODIVERSITY

#OSR Reboot: A VITAL BREAK CROP



More Than Just a Break Crop: The Multifaceted Benefits of OSR

Oilseed rape (OSR) has been a cornerstone crop in UK agriculture for the past 60 years, offering a wealth of benefits that make it indispensable in today's modern farming operations. From enhancing crop rotations to improving soil health and addressing cash flow challenges, OSR serves as a true multipurpose asset to farmers and the broader agricultural industry.

Agronomic Benefits - For UK farmers, incorporating OSR into crop rotations provides a crucial break from cereals, helping to disrupt weed, pest and disease cycles. This not only reduces reliance on chemical controls but also significantly boosts yields in subsequent first wheat crops. Moreover, OSR's deep-rooting system and large root mass enhance soil structure, mitigating compaction and improving drainage. Its ability to thrive in pan-free soils makes it an ideal choice for sustainable land management practices.

From a weed management perspective, OSR production allows for the application of a different set of herbicides compared to cereals. This diversity in weed control strategies helps tackle problematic weeds such as blackgrass more effectively, ensuring long-term field productivity across the whole rotation.

Operational Efficiencies - As the first crop to harvest in the farming calendar, OSR enables an early start to fieldwork. This staggered timeline reduces workload pressures during the busiest time of year, particularly in wet conditions. Early harvesting also ensures that farm storage facilities are emptied before the main cereal harvest, optimising storage utilisation and minimising logistical bottlenecks.

Economic Advantages - OSR is a highly sought-after crop in the UK, with an annual demand of approaching 2 million tonnes. This year we expect 1.2 million tonnes to be imported. Its status as a freely traded commodity makes it an attractive choice for farmers, offering flexible cash flow management. The early harvest timing provides an opportunity for generating income during one of the most expensive periods of the crop year.

OSR plays a vital and unmatched role in the efficient utilisation of digestates, slurries, and specialist food waste products, materials that are restricted from use on cereal crops. These inputs can be applied to OSR fields in the autumn, slashing input costs while driving sustainable nutrient recycling. For a livestock sector generating significant quantities of waste, OSR offers a practical and environmentally sound solution, transforming these by-products into valuable resources for crop production.

Risk Management - From a risk management perspective, oilseed rape operates under distinct market fundamentals, being more closely tied to crude oil markets due to its role in biofuel production. Unlike UK crops such as wheat, barley, and oats, which align with UK Feed Wheat futures, OSR is linked to the European Rapeseed futures contract. While commodities often trade in tandem, they can diverge, highlighting the value of diversifying farm portfolios. The past year illustrates this well: UK Feed Wheat dropped by £30 since January 2024, while rapeseed rallied by £80, peaking at a £100 increase.

A Sustainable Protein Source - From an animal feed perspective, OSR presents the UK farming industry with a highly nutritious alternative to imported soy. By promoting the cultivation of OSR domestically, the UK can reduce its reliance on soy imports, which carry potentially significant environmental and geopolitical risks. This aligns with broader efforts to enhance self-sufficiency and sustainability in UK agriculture.

Oilseed rape is far more than just another break crop. It is a cornerstone of UK food security, supporting domestic production and reducing reliance on imports. By including OSR in their rotations, farmers contribute to healthier soils, effective pest and disease management, and improved farm profitability. Moreover, the crop's high demand and versatility align seamlessly with Labour's economic growth strategies and nature recovery plans, which aim to bolster biodiversity and create a sustainable agricultural future.

#OSR Reboot: Have your say...



Have Your Say

Urgent Call to Action: OSR Needs Your Voice!

Take Action for OSR:

We All Have a Role to Play!

Whether you are a grower, a breeder, an agronomist, or supplier, the future of UK oilseed rape affects us all. From the field to your shopping basket, OSR is vital to our economy, environment, and food security. **It's time to make sure our voices are heard.**

Write to your MP today and tell them how these issues impact you. Here's some topics:

- Direct impact to your farm/business
- Economic & Food Security impact
- Encourage greater diversity in the rotation
- SFI Options for flowering crops
- Offshoring of neonicotinoid usage/Unfair competition (Unlevel playing field)
- Environmental benefits of OSR
- Impact on Pollinator numbers
- Expedite plant protection registrations for new pest controls
- Certified seed imports legislation

OSR impacts all of us—whether you grow it, sell it, or buy it. Write to your MP today and help shape the future of UK OSR!

Act now for OSR's future!

Additional Details can be found at:
unitedoilseeds.co.uk/osr-reboot

FIND YOUR MP:
<https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>