

Grain to Glass initiative - overview

From barley and hops in the field, to the glass of beer in your local pub, the chain of industries behind this unique British product has a major impact on economic and social life in rural Britain – something that’s not been at the heart of policymaking as we look to grow the economy. Grain to Glass aims to address this, and to promote policies that will support Britain’s barley farmers, hop growers, maltsters, brewers, publicans and beer drinkers.

Around 270,000 rural jobs in Britain depend on brewing and pubs, with over £3.5 billion paid in rural wages. However, with high taxes, heavy regulation, and falling beer consumption, the sector faces challenges which could be addressed, with thousands more jobs being created in a uniquely British industry - if the Government gets the policy framework right. The supply chain is playing its part, with growers working hard to improve the quality of barley and hops and schemes like ‘Red Tractor’ greatly enhancing the local provenance of British beers, but the Government could do more to help the industry to grow.

Key policies being put forward by the industries involved in the Grain to Glass initiative include:

- Brewing: a review of the structure and impact of beer duty on employment and growth in the rural economy.
- Farming: More investment in crop research and development; less and better regulation, both on and off the farm and in transport.
- Pubs: Support for pubs as a vital part of tourism infrastructure and a review of the impact of red tape.
- Planning: Planners and local authorities to recognise the importance of the pub as the hub of rural communities and to reflect it in their policies.

Key Objectives the Grain to Glass initiative:

- To increase understanding among Parliamentarians, the media opinion-formers and the wider public of the interconnected nature of the brewing supply chain, and its benefits to Britain.
- To consider the impact that tax and regulation in the brewing and pub sector has on the rural economy and agriculture in particular.
- To boost the image of beer by reminding the media (and therefore consumers) that beer is a product ‘grown’ from natural ingredients and pubs are an integral part of local communities.

What people are saying about the Grain to Glass initiative:

NFU President Peter Kendall said: “Beer and pubs are the beating heart of the British countryside, and farmers value the role that they play as community hubs, and in rural tourism, as much as anyone.

“But they are also a vitally important market. Sales of malting barley for brewing and distilling will be worth almost £400 million to British farmers this year, while the home-grown hop industry, after a long period of decline, is also showing signs of a revival, thanks to the real ale revolution.

“It’s in all our interests – not just farmers, brewers and publicans – but anyone who cares about this country’s economy, or loves the British countryside or enjoys a glass of beer – that we sustain the grain to glass supply chain, and everything that depends upon it, and that’s what this campaign is all about.”

Ralph Findlay, Chairman of the British Beer & Pub Association, comments: “As a brewer, and as a company running British pubs, I know how vital the agriculture industry is to British Brewers and the UK economy. Beer is a British product made from natural ingredients, and pubs are at the heart of local life. It’s a great British industry of which we are proud. The need for economic growth is now top of the political agenda, and rightly so. The right policy and regulatory framework can help us create much needed jobs in rural areas. The tax on beer is a particular issue that must be addressed by the Government, but a new approach on a wide range of issues is needed.”

James Berresford, Chief Executive, Visit England, comments: “Pubs are crucial to the tourism offer in rural areas. As well as being attractions in their own right, they can provide essential local services and support local food and drink, enhancing the visitor experience. We are delighted that the recommendations in this report support the objectives of the England Tourism Framework and urge you to take action to deliver growth in rural areas.”

Sandie Dawe, Chief Executive, VisitBritain said: “Last year 13 million international visitors enjoyed the great atmosphere that can be found at a British pub. Along with experiencing the warmth of our welcome, the pub allows all guests to feel part of authentic British life. It is clear that this appeal is as huge as ever, and for some nations going to a British pub is seen as one of the top priorities on their itinerary.

“This experience has been enhanced dramatically over the years, with 13 Michelin star restaurants now found in pubs across Britain. The fact that Michelin also produce an Eating Out in Pubs guide each year that features over 500 pubs across Britain is testament of how far things have come.

“Pubs are a shop window to Britain reflecting their urban or rural setting, they provide a welcome, beer, food and the chance to interact with local people.”