



**BRITISH AGRICULTURE BUREAU**  
REPRESENTING UK FARMERS & GROWERS

# **BUILDING OUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE**



# BAB: representing UK Farmers and Growers

The UK Farming Unions first established an office in Brussels in 1972 to represent the interests of UK farmers and growers as the UK joined the then European Economic Community (EEC). Officially known as the British Agriculture Bureau (BAB), for over 50 years this permanent base in Brussels continues to represent the 70,000 members of the NFU, NFU Scotland, the Ulster Farmers' Union and NFU Cymru.

We promote and represent the views of our members to the European institutions, other European partners and Brussels stakeholders. We represent the interests of UK farmers and growers through information gathering, analysis, influencing policy development, articulating the UK perspective, networking, building new relationships and alliances, and cementing existing ones.

We also represent the interests of UK farmers through our membership of Copa-Cogeca which brings together the voices of 22 million European farmers in a combined effort to promote the best interests of the agricultural sector among the EU institutions and other relevant stakeholders. This ensures that the concerns of UK farmers are heard and provides a platform to develop solutions to technical or trade barriers with the EU and beyond.



# Presidents' message

UK farming is looking to the future. Agriculture in the UK provides high quality products as part of a safe, traceable food supply chain worth £122 billion a year and employing 4 million people. Our industry and members support vibrant rural communities throughout the UK and remain at the heart of rural life. Through investment and innovation we can improve food resilience and play a leading part in a sustainable food revolution around the world.

Whilst the UK has left the European Union, it has never been more important for farmers across Europe to work together as we collectively face challenges on a global scale. The UK farming unions prioritised remaining part of the Copa-Cogeca family to share experience and knowledge. Whilst the approaches taken by our policy makers may differ, the ambitions and needs of farmers remain aligned and we continue to support and learn from one another.

Changes in agricultural support and the increased exposure of our markets to volatility are issues we have been discussing for years. In the UK we are now confronting the reality of how farmers adjust to changes in support payments whilst attempting to meet the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. In this conversation the importance of food safety and food security must not be lost. As farmers, we face the enormous challenge of feeding a population which will approach 10 billion by 2050. In Europe we have the

climate and natural resources to produce fresh, affordable and sustainable food. Agriculture must be recognised and valued as a sector that is part of the solution, one which can make a positive contribution to reducing emissions whilst continuing to feed the world.

Over a million people supported the 'Back British Farming' Food Standards petition calling on the government to safeguard the UK's high standards of food production in future trade deals. The message is clear; consumers are backing farmers to continue producing food to leading standards, even in the toughest global circumstances. Agriculture must play its part in meeting the sustainability challenges, but it is vital to have policies that recognise the importance of efficient and productive agriculture and that work with farmers to utilise their unique skillsets to deliver on the expectations of society.

World leading food production must continue to be at the heart of everything we do. We have a huge amount of work ahead of us, and the nature of that work is evolving. UK farmers are committed to working together, at both a national and international level, to embrace and follow the latest science and innovation, to seek new trading opportunities and defend our high standards. Through our BAB office we are committed to supporting British farmers to do this in Europe and to building our new relationship with the EU.



*Minette Batters*

**Minette Batters**  
NFU President



*Martin C. Kennedy*

**Martin Kennedy**  
NFU Scotland President



*David Brown*

**David Brown**  
UFU President



*Aled Jones*

**Aled Jones**  
NFU Cymru President

# Trade and standards

UK trade policy must respect domestic production standards and support a strong, competitive agricultural industry

Trade is fundamental to agriculture, the value chain it services and for the consumers who buy our products. The UK farming unions want to see international trade outcomes that support farmers to grow their businesses and to produce food for our domestic market and beyond

The UK is just **60%**  
self-sufficient  
in food 

Securing a Free Trade Agreement with the EU was vital for maintaining trade flows of agri-food goods. Whilst the UK is actively seeking new trade deals across the globe, as our closest and biggest market the EU remains an important trading partner and a primary concern for UK farmers. This is particularly true for farmers operating in Northern Ireland who, under the current Northern Ireland Protocol, will continue to follow EU rules on product standards. UK farmers share a common goal with our European colleagues to create a trading relationship that is as frictionless as possible and minimises unnecessary costs. This goal needs to be pursued by policymakers on both sides in a constructive, open and cooperative manner.

**£12.3bn** 

the value of UK exports of food and soft drinks

To enable and support a competitive agriculture sector, it is crucial that the UK's future trade policy respects domestic production standards whilst pursuing new market opportunities. It is wrong to expect UK farmers to compete with products imported from abroad which do not meet the same requirements or standards. In this respect the new UK Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) is key to providing expert scrutiny and comparison of all new UK trade deals.

The UK farming unions will continue to work to ensure the UK's trading position benefits our farmers and also our consumers, both at home and abroad, who truly value quality, sustainable and climate-friendly food.





# Science and Innovation

Policy must be science and evidence led with proportionate, risk-based approaches to encourage innovation and improve competitiveness

The application of science and the adoption of innovative practices and technologies are central to modern agriculture. Farmers need access to the right tools to meet the growing demand for food at home and abroad, to protect the environment, and to address the challenges of climate change. In order to develop the tools agriculture needs and to ensure both food safety and security, science must be at the heart of policy making. A strong evidence base is essential to ensure sound policies and robust decision making.

The sustainability goals being set by legislators and demanded by the public must be supported by the latest scientific innovations to avoid a significant reduction in domestic agricultural production. Developments in new breeding techniques are key to ensuring that agriculture can adapt to meet the demands of society and a growing global population – providing healthy affordable food while safeguarding the natural environment and adapting to climate change.

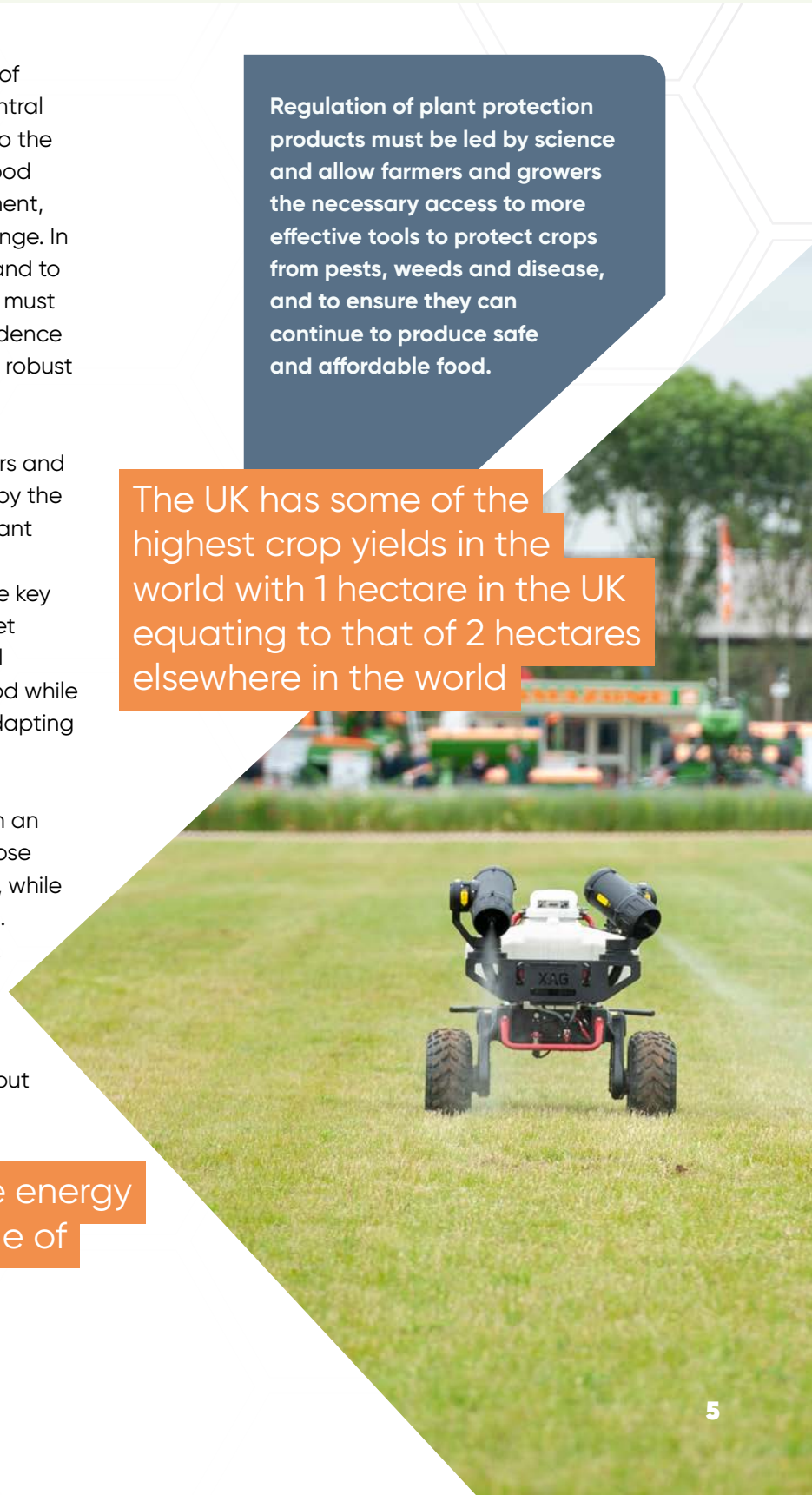
Farmers across Europe need to operate within an enabling regulatory regime that is fit for purpose and supports a productive agricultural sector, while protecting the environment and public health. Agriculture has a bright and innovative future. But this requires access to the technological advances that are on the horizon to ensure that farm businesses are not only given the support they need to survive and thrive now, but they start to plan and prepare for the future.

Regulation of plant protection products must be led by science and allow farmers and growers the necessary access to more effective tools to protect crops from pests, weeds and disease, and to ensure they can continue to produce safe and affordable food.

The UK has some of the highest crop yields in the world with 1 hectare in the UK equating to that of 2 hectares elsewhere in the world

Farmers produce renewable energy that helps power an average of

10 million  
UK homes



# Environment

Improvements in productivity through more efficient and careful use of natural resources can reduce farming's emissions and environmental footprint, but this will only happen if farm businesses are given the policy framework they need to adapt and thrive

UK farmers work hard to enhance the countryside, preserve habitats for native plants and animals, maintain footpaths, protect watercourses and support wildlife species. Good quality soil underpins our whole farming system and delivers a diverse range of public goods. This helps to enhance water quality, enables carbon storage, increases resilience to climate change, and mitigates against flooding.

Reducing the impacts of climate change by lowering greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality, are two of the most significant challenges we face. Improving agriculture's productive efficiency, effective land management, changing land use and boosting renewable energy and the bioeconomy will help both to reduce and remove greenhouse gas emissions. An ambitious productivity programme supporting research and development, knowledge exchange, training, advice, collaboration and incentivising the adoption of technical advances, together with investment in infrastructure, is critical. The sharing of knowledge amongst farmers across Europe is essential to develop new technology and uptake of best practices which allow both high quality food production and environmental benefits to be delivered.

Continued improvements in productivity through more efficient and careful use of natural resources can reduce farming's emissions and environmental footprint, but this will only happen if farm businesses are given the tools needed to adapt and thrive. The bottom line is that farm businesses need to be productive and profitable to be able to continue to deliver environmental benefits for all.



70% of UK landscape is managed by British farmers

The infographic features a stylized landscape with a tree on the left and a hill with two trees on the right. The text '70% of UK landscape is managed by British farmers' is displayed in green and orange.



30,000km of hedgerows have been planted and cared for by British farmers

The infographic features a stylized landscape with a tree on the left and a hill with two trees on the right. The text '30,000km of hedgerows have been planted and cared for by British farmers' is displayed in green and orange.



# Animal Health and Welfare

Research and evidence must be central to animal health and welfare policy

For farmers, the wellbeing of their animals is vital for a productive and sustainable business. UK standards on animal welfare and biosecurity are extremely high whilst our responsible use of medicines, including antibiotics, set a global example of best practice.

As elsewhere in Europe, the topic of animal health and welfare is high on the political agenda and increasingly in the media headlines. Discussions around welfare can often be emotive and agenda driven rather than based on evidence or experience. It is important that research and science relating to the health and well-being of farm animals is central to any debate on welfare. Our continued engagement with the European farming community allows us to share and exchange knowledge and best practice, supporting one another to uphold and promote high welfare standards.

When it comes to some of the key conversations on animal health and welfare, the UK agricultural sector sets an example of an industry-led success story. Assurance schemes, such as Red Tractor, provide customer confidence in UK standards of production and food safety, whilst alliances such as RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture) have guided a reduction in UK antibiotic usage of over 50% since 2014. Successes such as these must be recognised and supported by decision makers when designing future policy.

UK animal welfare legislation is extremely comprehensive and our costs of production often more expensive than that many other major exporting countries. It is therefore imperative that farm businesses are supported to remain productive and competitive on an international level to ensure high standards are maintained and augmented.

Over  $\frac{3}{4}$   
of UK Agriculture

is farm assured, meaning consumers have confidence British food is sustainable, traceable and farmed with care.

Use of 'Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics' for health has been

reduced by **75%**  
since 2014





**BRITISH AGRICULTURE BUREAU**  
REPRESENTING UK FARMERS & GROWERS

British Agriculture Bureau

Rue de Trèves 61

B – 1040 Brussels

+32 (0)2 285 05 80

[www.britishagriculturebureau.co.uk](http://www.britishagriculturebureau.co.uk)

 @UKFarmingUnions

