



BRITISH FARMING: SETTING THE STANDARD



Introduction

We are at a pivotal time for the future of farming and the food on our plates. Nothing will determine this more than how the Government shapes trade deals with the EU and other countries around the world.

Food produced in the UK is produced to some of the highest animal welfare and environmental standards in the world. We have very robust levels of traceability which enable consumers to buy British food with confidence. British farmers are incredibly proud of the standards they produce food to, and consumers have made it clear they want these standards to be maintained, with more than one million signing the NFU's food standards petition. It is crucial that any food allowed into this country should be produced to the same high standards, otherwise British farmers will be competing against imported food produced in ways that would be illegal in this country.

British farming has so much to offer. As this document sets out, British farmers are world leaders in so many areas, from protecting and enhancing the environment to animal welfare and sustainable food production. But they also have a key role to play in tackling the challenges of climate change and providing further public goods like protection from flooding. Therefore it so important for the Government to take action to ensure that British farming not only survives but thrives.

Having the confidence to invest is vital if businesses are to plan for the long-term, but that confidence will only come if the right policies are in place. Our future domestic agricultural policy must address this. Farm businesses invest long-term, so an abrupt cliff-edge to long established policies and income streams must be avoided, with sufficient time provided for new



policies to be agreed and implemented. This will provide the certainty and continuity for farmers to produce more of the food the British public eats and to continue to look after our cherished countryside and iconic landscapes to the high standards the British public expects.

British farmers and growers are proud to produce the safe, traceable, nutritious food we all love to eat to world-leading standards. British farming can be one of the leading lights of post-Brexit Britain if the Government provides certainty and confidence and chooses to become a global leader in championing the sustainable, climate-friendly food that our farmers produce here.

Minette Batters
NFU President



Championing Farming Values

The UK has some of the highest food safety, animal welfare and environmental standards for food production in the world, as well as a temperate climate that is ideal for producing a range of food products. Every day, British farmers champion our values through responsible farming that upholds our high standards, as well as making a positive contribution to our communities and our economy.

If high-standard food production does not take place here, we will have to look elsewhere to meet our requirements for food to feed a growing population. A consequence of this is that more food will be consumed in Britain from places where the same high standards are not applied. Allowing such products into the UK to displace environmentally sustainable domestic food production essentially offshores and, in some cases, increases the environmental footprint of the food we consume. For example, British beef and lamb is among the most efficient and sustainable in the world due to our extensive, grass-based systems. According to the government's Committee on Climate Change, emissions from beef production in the UK are about half the global average.

The world's population depends on a small and precious area of farmland for all its food needs. About 37% of the world is farmland and this area must grow everything an increasingly hungry world needs. Increasing food production is challenged by the world's shrinking natural resources, including arable land and fresh water. Food security is further

threatened by climate change. As a country with the resources to expand production, the UK would be able to contribute to a global food trading system focused on those parts of the world that will struggle to feed their populations.

There is therefore a compelling moral argument to ensure British farming makes the most of our productive farmland to help us continue to make a meaningful contribution to our own needs, wherever we farm. We can do this by utilising our availability of resources, infrastructure, skills and generations of knowledge.

Many technologies are developing to help us produce more from less and British farmers are already working towards making UK agriculture net zero by 2040. But we cannot lead this farming revolution alone. With record high levels of public support, farmers across the UK are counting on MPs to continue to champion farming values and Back British Farming.



75%

**OF THE PUBLIC
HAD A
FAVOURABLE
VIEW
OF UK FARMERS
IN JUNE 2020**

compared to 69%
in 2019



86%

**AGREED THAT
BRITISH FARMS
SHOULD GROW
AS MUCH FOOD
AS THEY CAN
TO PROVIDE
NATIONAL FOOD
SECURITY**

88%

**OF THE PUBLIC FEEL THAT
IT IS IMPORTANT THAT
BRITAIN HAS A PRODUCTIVE
FARMING INDUSTRY**

the **highest figure** for 3 years



89%

**OF THE PUBLIC
STILL FEEL**

**FARMING IS FAIRLY
OR VERY IMPORTANT
TO THE UK ECONOMY**

a **4% increase**
since 2019



77%

**OF RESPONDENTS IN 2020
AGREED THAT FARMERS
SHOULD CONTINUE TO
RECEIVE FINANCIAL
SUPPORT POST BREXIT**

a **4% increase** since 2019

Trade

Farmers in many other parts of the world do not have to produce food to the same high standards British farmers do, which often means they can produce at a lower cost. If food produced in this way is allowed to be sold in the UK it will leave British farmers at a competitive disadvantage as, in some cases, it could be illegal for UK farmers to produce food in the same way.

Justifiable fears remain that, following Brexit, the UK will begin to allow imports of food produced to lower standards than those required of our farmers.

This is an issue of great concern to the British public. More than **one million** people pledged their support for British farming and food production by signing the NFU's petition urging government to ensure future trade deals do not lead to an increase in food imports that would be illegal to produce here.

A Trade and Agriculture Commission to review trade policy and develop solutions that can hold all food imports to the UK's high standards, was created after more than **78,000** people wrote to their MP urging them to support its introduction.

Rules on farm practice ensure that British food is among the safest in the world and that consumers can buy with confidence. A trade policy that does not require the same objective protections undermines this confidence in the food supply overall and is an additional risk to human, plant and animal health.

UK production rules result in benefits for the nation beyond food production. For example, minimum space requirements for animals are positive for their health and wellbeing; UK leadership in responsible use of animal medicines contribute to the global fight against anti-microbial resistance; and a variety of standards on farming methods help deliver habitats for a variety of wildlife. Our advances in combatting modern slavery and human exploitation continue to support the UK's position as a global leader. Not requiring the same of imported food undermines these achievements.

The UK has a Gangmasters Act, and the Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), to deliver greater worker welfare outcomes. Labour providers must have a GLAA licence and meet standards on health and safety, accommodation, pay, transport and training. Labour providers are also subject to inspections to ensure compliance. The legal UK worker welfare standards are much stronger than most countries.



Traceability

Britain has some of the most robust levels of food traceability in the world. The Red Tractor scheme ensures all produce is traceable from farm to fork and the Union Jack on the label confirms the food has been produced entirely in the UK. This kind of traceability is vital for food safety.

Cattle traceability: In the UK, all cattle are registered at birth, individually identified, and all movements throughout their life are centrally reported and monitored. In the UK, fresh beef is subject to beef traceability rules that require the country of birth, rearing and slaughter on-pack. Cattle in the USA do not have the same national system in place and cannot offer the same degree of traceability and assurance.



Animal Health and Welfare

The UK offers some of the best farm animal welfare standards in the world, with a robust and comprehensive legal framework well-developed industry bodies that recognise the importance of animal health and welfare; credible quality assurance schemes and voluntary codes of practice. In general, the principal producing and exporting countries located in South America, North America, Oceania and Asia have a much less developed legal framework compared to the UK. British farmers are rightly proud of these high standards in our farming practices, but the cost of it puts them at a commercial disadvantage compared to other countries.

Battery cage egg production: The UK banned the keeping of laying hens in battery cages in January 2012 and converted to larger and higher welfare enriched cages at a cost to farmers of £400 million. Non-EU overseas competitors continue to use battery cages, meaning cheaper production costs but at a significant detriment to animal welfare.

Sow gestation stalls: Sow stalls (metal cages used for pregnant pigs) have been banned for use in the UK since 1999. In other countries, including those in the EU, sow stalls are only partially banned. Some countries have no restriction at all on their use.

Antibiotics and Hormones

The UK is the fifth lowest user of on-farm antibiotics across 31 European countries, beaten only by the Nordic countries (Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland) where the dry, cold climate is a key factor in stopping bacteria breeding and therefore reducing demand. The amount of antibiotics used on UK farms has been reduced by 53% between 2014 and 2018.

The use of hormones for growth promotion in farm animals is banned in the UK. Hormone use is common in some parts of the world along with low dose antibiotics to increase growth rates in animals.

Antibiotics in food production: In the UK we have tight controls on the use of antibiotics and routine preventative use of antibiotics is being phased out by government, veterinary profession and industry initiatives. The UK works to the EMA (European) definitions that our authorities agree better protects medicines used for human health. Other countries work to WHO definitions, which are not as stringent.





The Environment

Agriculture is uniquely placed to be part of the solution to climate change, as both an emissions source and a sink. Farmers have a special responsibility to protect carbon reserves already in our soils and vegetation. Our goal is to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions across the whole of agriculture in England and Wales by 2040.

But at the same time as reducing our impact on the climate we should not reduce our capacity to feed people with high quality, traceable, sustainable British food. That is why our net zero roadmap builds on a portfolio of different measures to help fight climate change, including increasing productivity so we use resources more efficiently, storing carbon on farm in soils and hedgerows, and generating clean renewable energy. We must not achieve our climate change ambitions simply by exporting UK production, or our greenhouse gas emissions, to other countries.

Plant Health

The UK has the most advanced biosecurity measures it has ever had. Our National Action Plan on Sustainable Use of Pesticides is recognised as world leading in raising standards and reducing risks to consumers and the environment. The UK Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food consistently finds over 97% of UK-produced food meets or exceeds trading standards – better than imported food.

British farmers are at the forefront of developing sustainable plant health solutions that will enable them to produce crops that meet the needs of consumers, the environment and profitable farming businesses.





I'm Backing British Farming



Tel: 024 7685 8500



Fax: 024 7685 8501



Email: nfu@nfu.org.uk



www.nfuonline.com



NFU SUPPORTED BY

NFU Mutual

