



UK FARMERS NAVIGATING CHANGE IN EUROPE

An agenda for the future





**3.9
MILLION**

people employed in
UK food sector

**UK FOOD AND
FARMING**

is worth

**£122
BILLION**



70%

of UK landscape is
managed by British
farmers

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

UK farming is a forward looking, progressive industry made up of a vast array of different farm business models. We provide the quality raw ingredients for our safe, traceable food supply chain and underpin the UK's food and drink sector which today is worth £122 billion and employs nearly four million people. Our industry and members support vibrant rural communities throughout the UK and remain at the heart of rural life. By producing food and supporting a viable rural economy, farmers also maintain and protect the environment and our landscapes. We know that to farm successfully we need healthy soil, air and water.

It is too easy in the furore over Brexit to overlook the fact that farming is a long-term industry, with today's decisions shaping the food we eat and the environment we enjoy for decades to come. Uncertainty does little to promote investment, yet what we need now is a clear agenda that drives change for the good of farming and the country. The UK Farming Unions' united call set out in this document is for ambitious policies that feed our citizens with high quality, affordable food and protect our climate, wildlife and countryside.

Agriculture has always needed to reform and adapt but it is clear that farming will undergo significant changes in the

foreseeable future. This is not only as a result of Brexit but changes in policy, markets, climate and consumer demand will inevitably result in a future full of challenges. However, that future will also be full of opportunities if we plan and act intelligently now. This must start with ensuring that developments on Brexit prioritise the needs of farming business and the welfare and long-term prosperity of the agri-food sector. Whatever the final Brexit outcome, we must maintain our positive relationship with our European neighbours and work with them to develop an enabling regulatory regime.

Our passion for UK agriculture can be seen at every level of policy making, starting on the ground through our work with farmers and growers in the field, spreading across the UK from Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh, extending into Westminster and across the water to Brussels.

We strive every day to maximise the potential of our sector and deliver a policy environment that continues to allow our members to grow and thrive. We are calling on policy makers to do the same: to make policy decisions that are in line with positions outlined in this document and to help us deliver a productive, profitable and progressive farming sector that benefits us all.



Minette Batters

Minette Batters
NFU President



A. McCornick

Andrew McCornick
NFU Scotland President



Ivor Ferguson

Ivor Ferguson
UFU President



J R Davies

John Davies
NFU Cymru President



BREXIT

Brexit has the potential to have a significant impact on UK agriculture and individual farm businesses. The UK's decision to leave the EU has dominated the political agenda domestically and in Brussels and without doubt will continue to be a priority for the years to come.

We have made clear that a no deal Brexit would be economically disastrous for our sector. We need to avoid a disorderly exit from the EU and ensure that any extension does not just delay no deal, but is used constructively to find workable solutions for farming businesses.

Our position on Brexit is clear.

- We need a trading environment that allows UK farmers to grow and thrive – we want free and frictionless trade and alignment on high standards of production.
- We need access to a competent and reliable workforce.
- We need adequately funded domestic policies that promote productivity.

So much remains uncertain on a range of vital policy areas that impact on our members. This is bad for business and is already having an impact on investment on farms throughout the EU.

What we do know however is that farmers across Europe still share common challenges, interests and goals and it therefore makes business sense to continue to collaborate, work with and learn from our nearest neighbours. We also know that no matter how our future relationship with the EU develops, EU regulation will still be important to our members – a close relationship may mean that we have a common rule book but even a more distant one may mean that EU rules still need to be respected for trade.

It is for these reasons that we will be maintaining our permanent office and staff in Brussels. We intend to continue to track developments in Brussels and to work closely with other European farm and food chain organisations for the benefit of UK farm businesses.

We are calling on you to

- Work to ensure that a no deal Brexit is avoided and that we do not face another 'cliff edge' scenario.
- Engage positively with EU colleagues to limit the negative impacts of Brexit on UK and EU farmers.
- Meet with us regularly to understand the specific concerns of UK farmers and act with these concerns in mind.

TRADE & STANDARDS

The trade deal between the UK and the EU is a primary concern for farmers. The industry across Europe shares the aim of a future relationship that keeps trade flows of agri-food goods as free and frictionless as possible and minimises any additional costs. We ask that it is pursued as a priority by all policymakers in a constructive, open and clear manner.

Regardless of Brexit, the principles that achieve the best outcome for farmers in any trade policy remain the same. With products of fantastic quality to sell, UK farmers are in favour of trade deals that provide new market opportunities. Yet all agreements must be balanced and recognise the particular costs, regulations and other sensitivities that UK farmers face compared to their global counterparts. Full assessments, carried out in conjunction with industry, should examine the impact of potential trade deals before they are concluded and inform the shape of agreements to ensure a level playing field for domestic producers and confidence and clarity for consumers.

The consideration of standards of production relating to animal welfare, use of medicines and plant protection products is essential in all trade policies. UK farmers are proud to maintain high standards and it must be recognised by decision makers and consumers that this comes at a cost. Trade deals and developments on global markets should be approached with these standards in mind. It is wrong to expect UK farmers to meet high standards at home, if products imported from abroad do not meet the same requirements and deliver the same benefits.

We are calling on you to

- Work with all policy makers to protect agri-food trade in a future relationship between the UK and the EU.
- Ensure that trade deals create opportunities for agriculture as well as fully taking into account the sensitivities of each sector.
- Safeguard the high production standards of UK agriculture and not allow them to be undermined by imports that do not meet the same high specifications.





30,000km

of hedgerows have been planted and cared for by British farmers, providing shelter for wildlife



We produce over

300

types of UK fruit, veg and potato

Farmers have planted

10,000

FOOTBALL PITCHES
worth of wildflowers



supplies

60%

of the
UK's demand
for sugar



£12.3
BILLION

The value of
UK exports of food and
non-alcoholic drinks



A little under

65%

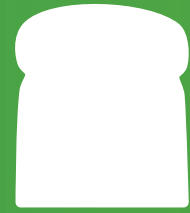
of our farmland is only suitable for growing grass to feed ruminant animals (cattle and sheep)



UK dairy farmers produce around

**14
BILLION**

litres of milk each year



11 MILLION

The equivalent of 11 million loaves of bread are produced every day in the UK and 85% of the wheat used is British

The UK produces

11 BILLION

eggs per year



Antibiotic use in pigs has dropped by

50%

over the past 2 years against a target of a 62% drop over 5 years



CLIMATE CHANGE

Recent national and international commitments require the agriculture sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the UK only 10% come from agriculture, a much lower proportion than in many countries. UK farmers very often bear the brunt of negative changes in weather patterns and the industry is ready to take on the challenge and contribute to the fight against climate change.

We have an ambition to contribute to the UK's net zero target for greenhouse gas emissions, and as farmers we have a unique role to play. Total greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture in the UK have fallen by 17% since 1990. Farmers are working hard in all sectors to reduce their environmental footprint through more efficient production. Policymakers should recognise the efforts and achievements made and ensure that policy measures promote continued climate mitigation action.

As well as reducing emissions, one third of farmers are also contributing to the production of renewable energy, which powers an average of 10 million UK homes. Farmers own or host over half of the UK's solar power and anaerobic digestion capacity and the majority of wind power. Renewable energy production has become part of the agricultural agenda and we must work towards enabling investment in order to allow this essential industry to continue growing. Only with a sustainable business will farmers be able to make the required investments for climate action.



We are calling on you to

- Champion policies that allow farmers to reduce emissions by boosting farm competitiveness and profitability.
- Support policies that enable farmers to adapt to climate change through new technologies and management practices.
- Support incentivising investment in renewable energies as it develops into a self-sufficient industry.



ENVIRONMENT

Alongside food production, caring for the environment is central to the work of our members. The iconic landscapes of the UK have been maintained by farmers for generations. Biodiversity, healthy soils, clean air and fresh water are all crucial for farming – without them it would not be possible to grow healthy food for the nation.

Farmers take part in voluntary agri-environment schemes across the UK, boosting biodiversity and enhancing the environment. On-farm activities such as planting hedgerows and flower margins provide habitats for birds, pollinators and other insects. An increased awareness and uptake of integrated pest management also contributes to biodiverse farming systems. Farmers in the UK have voluntarily invested over £182 million on farm infrastructure to improve water quality. Furthermore, reductions in pesticide application and an increase in nutrient planning over the last 30 years have played a critical role in meeting water quality needs for society. The benefits that have been seen indicate that further support to continue improvements is justified.

The farmed environment varies enormously across the UK, with different climate and soil conditions in different areas, as well as variations in the quantity and type of biodiversity. While some actions to conserve and enhance nature can be taken by all farms, it must also be recognised that some measures will be successful and provide benefits only if they are applied in the right place. Broad brush legislation does not always deliver the benefits needed and often results in a cost to farm businesses with no benefit.

We are calling on you to

- Support environmental legislation that has a clear evidence-base. Targets aimed at improving air, soil and water quality and for biodiversity must be achievable, measurable and affordable in order to allow farmers to continue producing food.
- Promote farm infrastructure improvements to improve water and biodiversity.
- Recognise that more targeted environmental measures are more effective than a one-size-fits-all approach.

HEALTHY PLANTS & ANIMALS

Keeping plants and animals healthy is vital to ensure the variety, availability, quality and safety of our food. Farmers take their role and responsibility in this seriously, whether through judicious and safe use of plant protection products, or targeted use of antibiotics. We are proud to do 'more with less' and of our success in finding new ways to achieve the same goals. We therefore need to avoid losing vital medicines and plant protection products, as the fewer we rely on, the less effective they become.

Regarding crop protection, farmers need an authorisation system for pesticides that is predictable, with science led decision making. Regulation should enable farmers to manage real-world risks, once the hazards associated with products have been identified. The increasing resistance of pests to treatment as fewer substances are available should figure in decisions. The challenges such choices may pose to the viability and efficiency of production and environmental management must be taken into account.

We believe that the wellbeing of farm animals starts with them being healthy. Facts and science on the health of animals should therefore be central in debates on animal welfare. At a European level this subject is often very emotive and it is frequently ignored that the top priority of all farmers is to care for their animals. UK farmers uphold some of the highest welfare standards in the world, in a number of cases going beyond what regulation demands. This needs to be recognised as animal health and welfare rules are discussed and the evidence and facts behind outcomes must be fully taken into account.

We are calling on you to

- Work towards a system of regulating plant protection products that is led by science and accounts for risk, pest resistance and production impacts.
- Approach debates on animal health and welfare from a scientific and factual standpoint, bringing evidence to bear on this subject.



SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Science and innovative thinking are at the heart of all agricultural production. 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. This does not just mean new products and technologies on farm, though this too is important, but also innovative management practices, policies and exchange of knowledge.

In order to develop the tools farmers need, science must be at the heart of policy making. A robust evidence base is essential to ensure sound policies and to overcome overly politicised decision making. Politicians should continue to demand scientific advice and sound risk assessments, and refer to them when making decisions. Furthermore, farmers must be consulted and included in all research targeted at the sector to ensure that the end results are practical and useful for farming businesses.

It is essential that our industry is able to successfully compete internationally and advances in plant breeding are a key component in achieving this. We must have access to new breeding techniques so that agricultural practices are able to adapt to meet the demands of society – providing healthy affordable food while safeguarding the natural environment and adapting to climate change. Without innovation in this area, investment in agricultural technology will be diverted elsewhere.



We are calling on you to

- Work to ensure that science and reliable data sources are the foundation of agriculture policy.
- Promote the importance of having farmers play a central role in agricultural research and development.
- Recognise the importance of innovation and the benefits of the UK remaining at the forefront of innovative developments and thinking.



The UK Farming Unions have had an office in Brussels since 1972 that performs a crucial lobbying function for members. Officially known as the British Agriculture Bureau (BAB), this permanent base in Brussels represents the 70,000 members of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales, NFU Scotland, The Ulster Farmers' Union and NFU Cymru

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