



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Request for views on the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board Summary of views and government response

April 2020



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Contents

Ministerial foreword.....	1
Introduction	1
The case for maintaining a statutory levy.....	1
Accountability to levy payers	2
The structure of AHDB	2
Priorities	2
Next steps	3
Executive summary	4
AHDB purpose and activities.....	4
Governance.....	4
Funding	5
Levy collection.....	5
Introduction	6
About the respondents.....	6
Section 1: AHDB purposes and activities.....	8
Section 2: Governance	30
Section 3: Funding	39
Section 4: Levy collection	56
Regional events – Summary of discussion	60
Annex 1: About the analysis	66
Annex 2: Types of response	67
Annex 3: List of responding organisations	69

Ministerial foreword

Introduction

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) was created in 2008 and brought together a number of predecessor levy bodies. This request for views is the first time we have reviewed its operation in this way and I am delighted that so many levy payers and others in the industry took the time to respond. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

The agriculture and horticulture industry is undergoing significant change and we are keen to see it prosper and grow. This includes improving its efficiency and profitability, making its contribution to net zero targets and being competitive on the global stage. AHDB already carries out a wide range of services to support farmers and growers and it is well placed to support the industry through this period, building on its current successes. The request for views provides us with an opportunity to make changes that will reflect the responses of levy payers and other stakeholders to ensure we have an organisation fit for the future.

In recent weeks, the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has had a huge impact on all of us. We cannot, at this stage, assess the medium to longer-term impact of the outbreak on the farming sector but clearly AHDB will have an important role to play in supporting farmers and growers as we all recover from this emergency.

The case for maintaining a statutory levy

The responses show that the majority of respondents feel there is a need for a statutory levy to continue. The fragmented nature of some sectors of the farming industry means that there is a strong case for some form of statutory levy to support collective endeavour in areas such as market access, research and development, technical advice and knowledge exchange. It is clear that levy payers value AHDB's position as a trusted and independent source of information and expertise. Equally, the request for views revealed some areas where there is scope for improvement. It is apparent that respondents want to see an overhaul of the current structures of AHDB and a reform of its governance so that it is operating in a more modern and effective way. Whilst AHDB has made efforts to reduce its organisational costs, there is further to go and so I am keen for these changes to be implemented as quickly as possible. Levy payers want a greater say in how their money should be spent and they want to know that what they are getting is excellent value for money. I and my counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland believe AHDB must take seriously the need to reduce bureaucracy, give greater accountability to levy payers and ensure a wider representation of levy payer views.

Accountability to levy payers

There is strong support for a ballot of levy payers every five years as to whether a levy in each sector should continue. A ballot of levy payers could potentially provide industry with greater ownership and a say in the future direction of AHDB. I have asked my officials and officials from the devolved administrations to scope out this proposal further. In principle, I envisage AHDB would consult levy payers in each sector and put before them a five year programme of activity, for both cross-cutting areas and sector-specific priorities. Levy payers would then be able to vote on whether that programme is the most appropriate to support their sector.

The structure of AHDB

AHDB has made good progress to ensure it works in a more joined-up fashion and to reduce duplication among the sectors through the consolidation into a single Board. However, there is still a tendency for sectors to work in silos and I have concluded that we should offer greater clarity about those areas of work which should be part of a single, central entity and those areas which are rightly sector-specific. I believe we should take this opportunity to think from first principles about how many separate levies there should be and how the levy should be calculated and collected. I want to ensure that we structure AHDB so that the UK can excel and outperform the rest of the world. I want us to have an ambitious approach.

In designing a new governance structure, AHDB should look at the proposals put forward by stakeholders and the recommendations of the Agricultural Productivity Working Group (which reports to the Food and Drink Sector Council). For example, I would like AHDB to explore the options for formation of an “Evidence for Agriculture” hub that provides stronger links with other providers of information, advice and support. At the same time, we should also look to build links between marketing and promotional activity at AHDB and other bodies that carry out similar activity.

Priorities

Now that we have left the European Union and are charting a new course in both agriculture and trade policy, AHDB will need to deliver against two key priorities: market development and improving farm performance. There was strong support in the review for structuring AHDB around these two core themes, with more focus on business resilience, skills, environment, reputation and market development at home and overseas. These areas are more crucial than ever if we are to realise the full potential of our industry. Different sectors will have different requirements against these so a reformed AHDB needs to be adaptable enough to respond, whether that means focusing on opening up new export markets for beef and lamb or providing technical expertise on integrated pest management for cereals and horticulture.

AHDB's future priorities must address a number of new or expanded requirements that are cross-sector. This view came through strongly in the responses and chimes with what industry stakeholders are telling me through other channels. These include services focused on delivering our net zero targets, environmental sustainability, knowledge exchange, skills, building an evidence repository, benchmarking and support on EU Exit and trade. There is also a case for AHDB livestock sector boards to do more collaborative work at an industry level on animal health.

Next steps

It is vital that we work in partnership with AHDB to implement these changes as soon as possible and against a background of common goals and ambitions. There are practical considerations that we must consider in taking these reforms forward, which are likely to include the need for legislative changes. I am also mindful that for some sectors AHDB works across the devolved administrations so changes must also benefit those levy payers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. I am keen to move forward quickly and I know that AHDB is committed to working with Defra and the devolved administrations to make the changes required. An area where I see scope for a relatively quick win is in relation to the horticulture levy where I am aware that AHDB is already reviewing the levy calculation and will soon be coming forward with proposals for change.

An emphasis on communication and engagement throughout the reform process will be important, so that all farming businesses are aware of what AHDB's future role will be and can take advantage of the range of AHDB services available to them.

The Secretary of State has recently appointed Nicholas Saphir as the new Chair who will, no doubt, bring a fresh perspective, vision and new ideas for the organisation. I and my counterparts in the devolved administrations look forward to working with AHDB as it moves into this new phase.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff of AHDB for all their hard work to date to support the agriculture and horticulture industry and I am confident they will embrace the opportunity ahead.

Victoria Prentis

Executive summary

This is a summary of responses to the request for views on AHDB, its current activities and its future role in supporting the agriculture, horticulture and processing industries.

When asked about their current overall view of AHDB the participants' responses were mixed with 43% of participants having a positive view, 36% choosing negative options and 20% selecting 'Neither positive nor negative'.

AHDB purpose and activities

Currently AHDB has four purposes which are set out in the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board Order 2008. Nearly three quarters (72%) of respondents agreed that these purposes should include marketing, and efficiency and productivity. 58% agreed that sustainable development should also be included in AHDB's purposes.

AHDB activities are split into the following areas; research, knowledge exchange, market development, export development, market intelligence and communications. Of these, there was support for doing more activity in market development, export development, and research, with slightly less support for doing more on knowledge exchange. There was less support for doing more on the other activities of market intelligence and communications; however, the respondents did feel these activities should continue at a level similar to that currently undertaken.

As the agricultural and horticulture industry changes, AHDB will have to adapt to deliver what the industry needs. The request for views suggested areas in which AHDB may do more activity in the future. Of the suggestions, environmental sustainability, a knowledge hub and EU exit support had the most support with over two thirds (67% to 68%) of respondents choosing these services. Others suggested future services should include increased public engagement, in particular defending the industry, and working to create a better relationship with the consumer. Additionally, providing skills training for the industry and promoting employment in the agriculture and horticulture industry were suggested.

Governance

Respondents strongly supported having the opportunity to vote on the continuing existence of the statutory levy every five years, with 69% supporting this proposal. There was a mixed response to the question of whether additional levy payer representation is needed, with 45% of respondents in favour of the idea and 31% against.

Analysis of the free-text comments highlighted that many respondents believe the board, sector boards and committee structure does not serve the needs of levy payers well: the board is out of touch, needs to be representative of levy payers and should be more transparent and accountable to levy payers.

Funding

There was strong support for the continuation of a statutory levy, with 64% of respondents agreeing that AHDB should continue to operate a statutory levy to undertake activities in their sectors. There were comments from respondents in some sectors that the levy funding system needs to be revised and changes made to the way the levy is calculated.

There was little overall support for alternative funding mechanisms, with a voluntary system supported by only 22% of respondents, and there were suggestions that this method would be flawed and would not work. There was a little more support for AHDB moving to charging for their services, with 33% of respondents supporting this idea with some saying that this would make AHDB more market-focused.

When asked if the right businesses are currently paying the levy, nearly half of respondents (47%) agreed. The most frequently mentioned comment for this question was that others in the food supply chain should contribute to the levy such as supermarkets, processors and packers.

Levy collection

Overall, respondents were content with both the point at which the levy is currently collected and the current way the levy is calculated. However, a higher number of respondents from the potato and horticulture sectors were not content with the method of calculation. A major theme that emerged from the written comments was that there was dissatisfaction with levy being based on turnover for the horticulture sector.

Introduction

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) is a UK statutory levy body, funded by farmers, growers and others in the supply chain. AHDB was created in 2008 following an extensive review of its predecessor levy bodies. The Board serves six agriculture and horticulture sectors, with varying coverage across England, GB and the UK. Altogether, AHDB's sectors cover over 70% of the total UK agricultural and horticultural output.

The levy is deemed to be a para-fiscal tax, meaning that money is raised to fund services and activities for the benefit of the levy paying sectors. Money raised is paid to the AHDB and levy raised from each sector is ring-fenced to be spent for the benefit of the contributing sector.

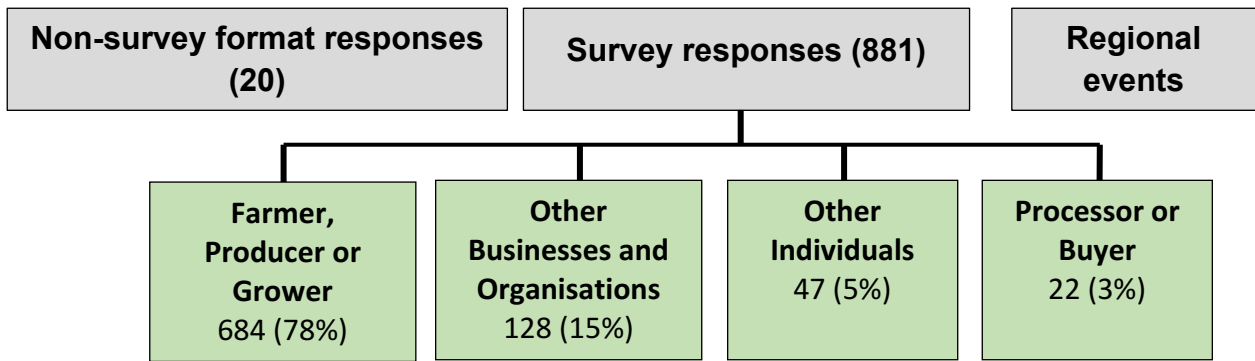
AHDB's overarching purpose, developed in consultation with levy payers, is to "inspire our farmers, growers and industry to succeed in a rapidly changing world". Its vision is for a "world-class food and farming industry inspired by, and competing with the best". AHDB's activities include benchmarking of performance, maintaining crop protection, research and development, working alongside government to access export markets, consumer marketing campaigns, horizon publications and providing online resources.

The request for views ran from the 31st August to the 9th November 2018 and sought the views of levy payers and non-levy payers into the continuing need for AHDB, the statutory levy and what the levy board should deliver. This document provides a broad picture of the views and comments received.

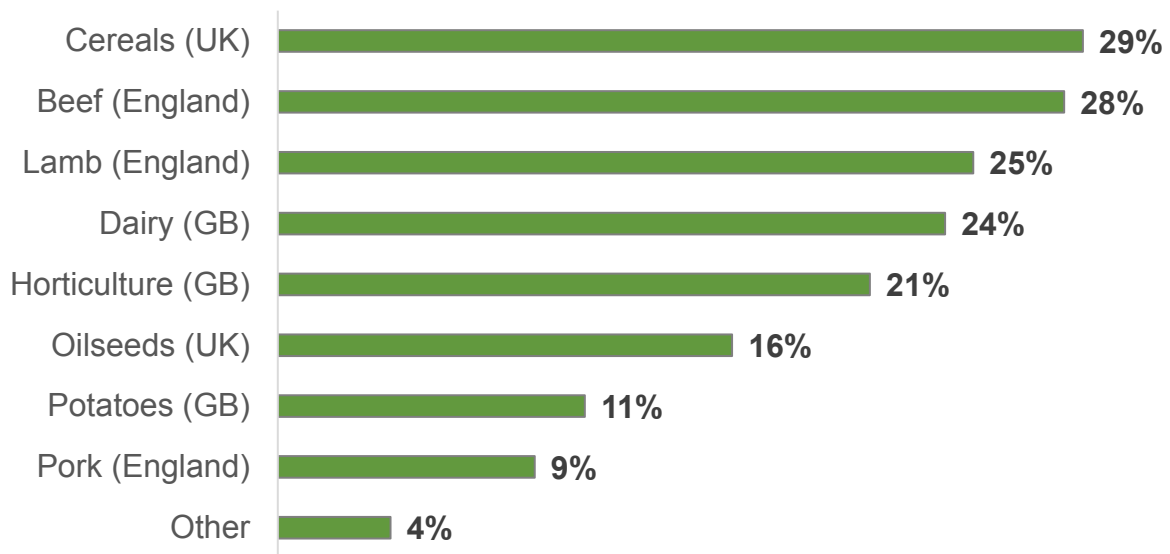
About the respondents

In total there were 901 responses; 881 to the survey, 20 written responses (that did not follow the survey format) and from three regional stakeholder events. Where responses included the name of an organisation these are listed in Annex 3.

Of the online survey respondents, 84% stated that their region was England, 6% Scotland, 5% Wales, and 1.4% Northern Ireland. The remaining 3.6% selected 'Other'. Some provided explanations that included covering the whole of the UK or at least more than one region. 722 (83%) of the respondents stated that they were levy payers and 153 (17%) stated that they were non levy payers.



Proportion of respondents who pay levy in each sector

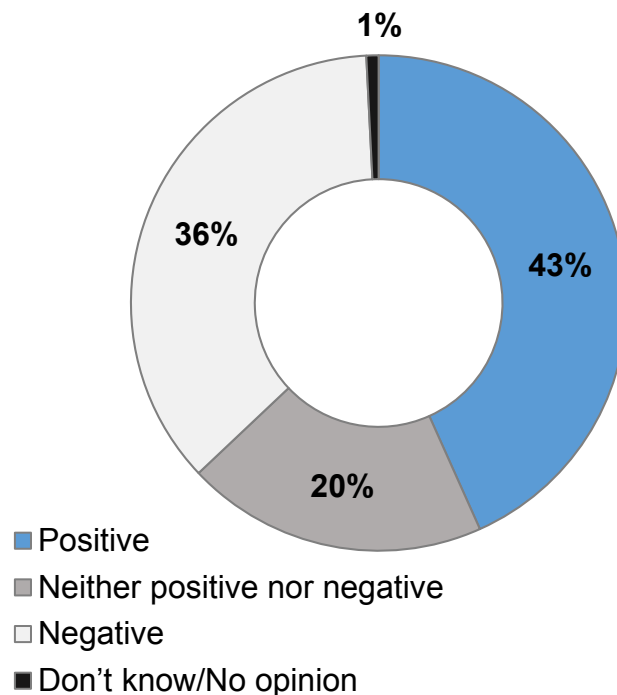


These figures sum to more than 100% because many respondents pay the levy in more than one sector.

Section 1: AHDB purposes and activities

Question 1: Please indicate which of the following best describes your current view of AHDB by ticking one box in the table.

Proportion of participants who selected an option for their current view of AHDB



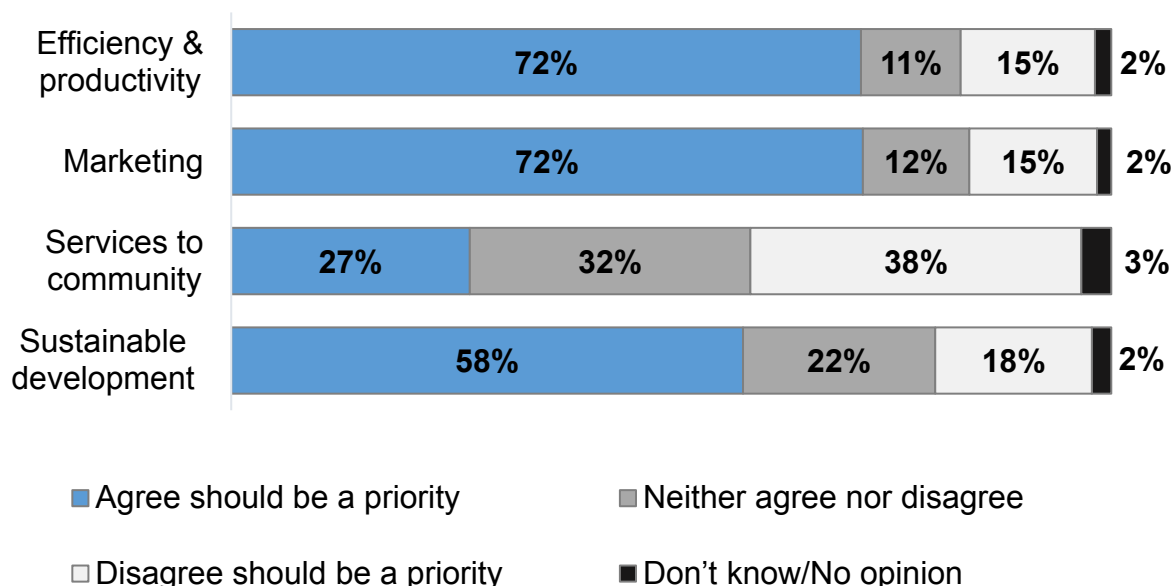
99.9% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option. Response categories were 'Very positive', 'Mainly positive', 'Neither positive nor negative', 'Mainly negative', 'Very Negative', 'Don't know' and 'No opinion'. Some response categories have been grouped together for analysis.

The overall view was quite mixed with 43% of participants having a positive view of AHDB, 36% choosing negative options and 20% selecting 'Neither positive nor negative'.

The proportion of positive responses across the sectors was fairly consistent. Respondents answering about the dairy sector had the lowest number of positive options selected at 34% with the potatoes sector having a similar frequency of positive options selected at 37%. Both of these sectors responded with more negative than positive options (43% and 44% selected negative options in the dairy and potatoes sectors, respectively). On the other hand, those responding about the cereals and oilseeds sectors selected positive options the most frequently, with 58% doing so for both sectors.

Question 2: Currently AHDB has four purposes or aims which are set out in the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board Order 2008. Please indicate how strongly you think that any of these should be priority aims for the levy board in the future.

Proportion of participants who selected an option for AHDB priority purposes



Almost all (97-99%) of respondents answered this question across each AHDB priority. Respondents were able to select a single option for each priority purpose. Response categories were ‘Strongly agree should be priority’, ‘Agree should be priority’, ‘Neither agree nor disagree’, ‘Disagree that should be priority’, ‘Strongly disagree should be priority’, ‘Don’t know’ and ‘No opinion’. Some response categories have been grouped together for analysis.

Q2(a) - Increasing efficiency and productivity in the industry

Overall, participants responded positively to this question, with nearly three quarters (72%) of survey respondents agreeing that this purpose should be a priority. This view was shared across the majority of sectors, with those responding as part of the cereals, oilseeds and horticulture sectors responding the most positively and those responding about the dairy sector the least positively.

Q2(b) - Improving marketing in the industry

Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents agreed that improving marketing in the industry should be a priority purpose. There was a large variation in responses to this

question among the sectors. A higher proportion (87%) of those responding about the lamb sector agreed that marketing should be a priority, whereas those responding about the horticulture sector were the least keen with far fewer respondents (39%) agreeing that this purpose should be a priority and over a third (37%) disagreeing that marketing should be a priority.

Q2(c) - Improving or developing services that the industry provides or could provide to the community

Overall responses to this category were fairly mixed with 27% agreeing that this should be a priority and 38% disagreeing, while 32% selected that they neither agreed nor disagreed. This was fairly consistent across sectors.

Q2(d) Improving the ways in which the industry contributes to sustainable development

Nearly 60% of respondents agreed that this should be a priority. This was consistent across all sectors.

Question 3: Please explain if there is anything else which you think should be a priority purpose for the levy board.

Over a third (36%) of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, and, of those, over two thirds (69%) made comments relating to the question itself. The majority of responses to this question did not address the question directly (i.e. they did not provide additional priority purposes). However, the priorities for AHDB identified in the responses were grouped into six themes which emerged from comments. These themes are fairly evenly distributed in terms of numbers of respondents.

One theme that emerged from comments was that **informing the public and improving the reputation of the farming industry** should be a priority. In these comments, most respondents want AHDB to educate and promote the farming industry to the public, including informing the public on how food is produced. The majority of these comments come from those responding about the dairy sector. The National Pig Association (NPA) commented that informing the public about farming and improving food production education in schools should be part of the existing Services to Community priority purpose.

Another theme that emerged was suggestions to **defend the farming industry from scrutiny, misinformation in the press and react to changing attitudes to food consumption**. Several respondents who answered about the dairy sector expressed concern about the negativity of anti-dairy messages in the media and feel that their sector is inaccurately misrepresented.

“Promoting, marketing and defending our industry is vital and cannot be done by individual producers”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-South East

Many respondents suggested that a new purpose could be to **support those involved in the farming industry and attract new entrants to the sector**. On this, many respondents noted that training and skills development should be a priority, and a small number suggested that staff wellbeing should also be a priority.

“Increased focus on education and opportunities for young farmers entering the industry, especially those with few direct links to agriculture currently”

Livestock auctioneer, England-South West

A further theme that emerged was the importance of **sustainable development including environmental sustainability and stewardship**. Of those who answered on this, many responded that a priority is to make agricultural and horticultural production sustainable by incorporating agroecology, better resource/land use efficiency and crop management. Some respondents want soil management to be a priority. A few respondents commented

that a priority should be mitigating the impact that agriculture has on climate change and to reduce its carbon footprint.

“Climate change, soil degradation, water quality, biodiversity loss, poor animal health and welfare – or steps to regulate those more effectively – pose existential threats to many levy paying businesses over a 10- to 20-year timescale, as well as being material to agriculture’s licence to operate”

Innovative Farmers/Innovation for Agriculture

It was suggested that **support is needed to make the agricultural and horticultural industry profitable, resilient and adaptive to change**. Most of the respondents regard business profitability to be vital, some suggest that AHDB should help the industry prepare for future change, and some want AHDB to have a role in ensuring the future of agriculture and increase industry resilience. The National Sheep Association (NSA) suggested a priority purpose should be to secure a viable future for all levy payers and to secure the industry. Most of the responses come from those commenting about the lamb and horticulture sectors.

“Focus on increasing resilience of the industry and enabling greater profitability to minimise reliance on external sources of support”

Consultant, UK and International

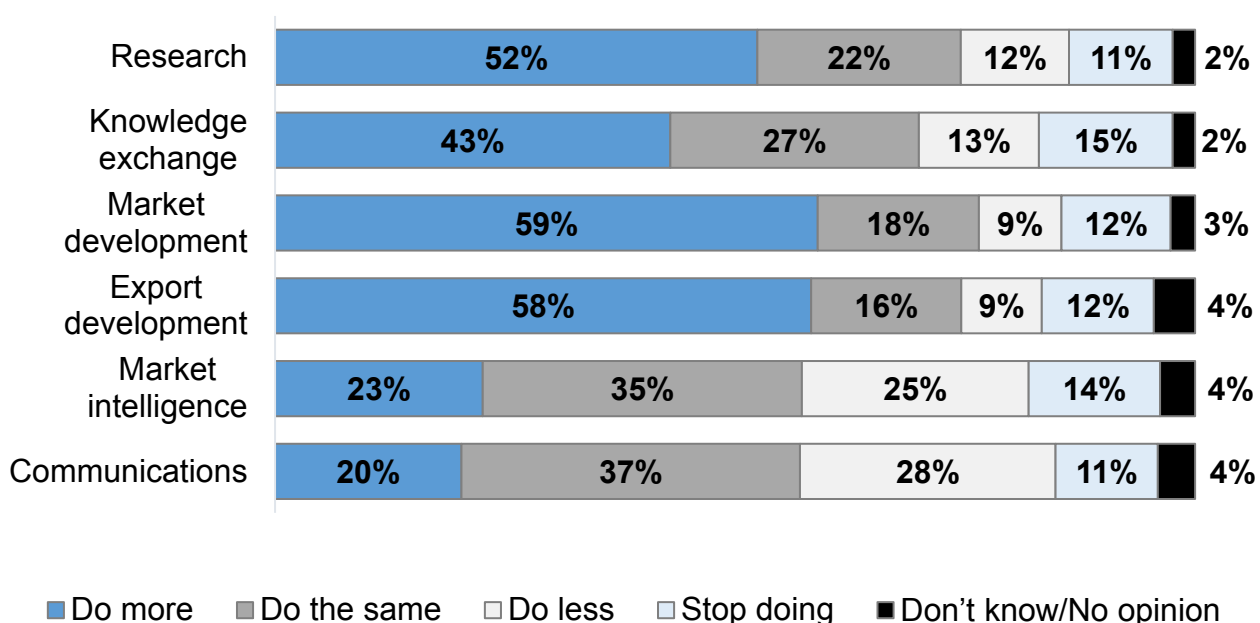
There was also support **for improving efficiency, fairness and transparency in the food supply chain**, with most of these respondents demanding a level playing field and fair treatment for farmers from large companies and retailers. Some of those who responded would like to see more efficiency, better communications and supply chain transparency.

“To champion the fair treatment of individual farmers in the hands of large companies and retailers so that they can assist where they believe that farmers are treated unfairly”

Dairy Farmer, England-South West

Question 4: AHDB currently undertakes the following activities for its sectors: (a) Research, (b) Knowledge exchange, (c) Market development, (d) Export development, (e) Market intelligence and (f) Communications. For each activity please indicate whether you think AHDB should do more, the same, or less in your sector(s) over the next five years.

Proportion of participants who selected an option for AHDB activities



98-99% of respondents answered this question across each AHDB activity. Respondents were able to select a single option for each activity. Response categories were 'Do much more', 'Do a little more', 'Do the same', 'Do a little less', 'Do much less', 'Stop doing', 'Don't know' and 'No opinion'. Some response categories have been grouped together for analysis.

Q4(a) - Research

Overall, just over half (52%) of all respondents agreed that AHDB should do more on research. This view was shared across the majority of sectors, with approximately 70% of those who responded about the oilseeds, horticulture and cereals sectors agreeing that AHDB should do more research. Almost 20% (the highest percentage of all sectors) responding about the potatoes and dairy sectors selected 'Stop doing', although they still dominantly selected 'Do more' (at 49% and 45%, respectively).

Q4(b) - Knowledge exchange

43% of all respondents suggested that they want AHDB to do more on knowledge exchange and just over a quarter (27%) of respondents selected 'Do the same'. However, 15% of respondents selected 'Stop doing'. There was some variation in responses to this question across sectors, with a slightly higher proportion of those responding as part of the cereals, oilseeds and horticulture sectors agreeing that more should be done on this activity.

Q4(c) - Market development

Nearly 60% of respondents agreed that AHDB should be doing more market development, with the majority of those within this category selecting the 'Do much more' option. Overall responses by sector are very mixed with the strongest support for more marketing coming from beef and lamb sector respondents and the least support from the oilseeds and horticulture sectors.

Q4(d) - Export development

The majority of respondents (58%) agreed that AHDB should do more on the export development activity, the majority of those within this category selecting the 'Do much more' option. Of that 58%, those responding about the lamb sector responded with the most support (79%) for doing more export development. This is to be contrasted with those responding about the horticulture sector who were, compared with other sectors, much less supportive with 24% wanting more, 22% wanting less and 28% selecting 'Stop doing'.

Q4(e) - Market intelligence

Results for this activity are very mixed with just over a third (35%) of respondents selecting 'Do the same', a quarter (25%) selected 'Do less' and nearly a quarter (23%) selected 'Do more'. There was variation across sectors, with the those responding about Horticulture and Potatoes sectors having the largest share of 'Stop doing' selections and around 40% of those responding about the pork, beef, lamb and oilseeds sectors selecting 'Do more'.

Q4(f) - Communications

Overall, there was a mixed spread of selections for the communications activity. 37% of respondents agreed that AHDB should do the same amount of communications activity, nearly 30% selected 'Do less' and 20% selected 'Do more'. Responses are fairly consistent across each sector.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more details, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

Nearly half (around 47%) of the total number of respondents to the request for views (881) responded to this free-text question, and of those approximately 80% made comments relating to the question itself. Responses have been grouped according to the AHDB activity mentioned.

There was a larger number of responses regarding research, knowledge exchange and market development services than for export development, market intelligence and communications.

Research

A theme that emerged from the free-text comments was that of **making research better targeted**. In these comments, most respondents want AHDB's research activities to be better directed and farmer-led. Some respondents suggested that current AHDB research does not have a practical benefit, it is too simple or already known by farmers. These opinions were shared evenly across all sectors.

The National Pig Association (NPA) commented that AHDB needs to engage better with the pig sector on the research programme and that NPA members do not see any benefit of research on their farms. Dairy UK suggests that the AHDB research agenda is not responsive to the immediate concerns of the farming industry, particularly environmental issues. The National Sheep Association (NSA) stated that AHDB research (and knowledge exchange) has a low impact and there is far more information and services available than are being used.

“Research must be strategic, system level, and bought in to practical application”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-East Midlands

Respondents made comments regarding **AHDB's role in research**. Most respondents suggested that AHDB should facilitate research rather than deliver it with several of those respondents who selected 'Stop Doing' and 'Do much less' to question 4(a) mentioning this. Many respondents commented that research is currently being duplicated by AHDB (and a more coordinated approach is needed), AHDB should collaborate on research with match funding options, and research can be found outside of AHDB. Those respondents who had the opinion that research can be found outside of AHDB typically selected 'Stop doing' and 'Do much less' to question 4(a). Overall, there were similar views across all sectors.

“Research is always important but lots of others are doing itAHDB could interpret more research instead of always needing to do it”

Farm advisor, England-South West

Knowledge exchange

Another theme that emerged was that **AHDB's Knowledge Exchange could be more effective or relevant**. Of those who gave answers on this, most stated that knowledge exchange is not relevant to them, it is too simplistic or they know it already. Many respondents also noted that knowledge exchange needs to be more effective if it is to be used. Many commented that AHDB is not knowledgeable enough, information is incorrect or out of date, and knowledge exchange is not delivered by people who have the necessary expertise. Some respondents suggested that it is not well communicated by AHDB. These views were shared evenly across sectors.

“Knowledge exchange must be more relevant, currently it is very ad hoc and not targeted to the levy payer sector”

Field vegetables grower, England-South West

There were **positive responses regarding AHDB's knowledge exchange activity**, with the majority of those who have positive sentiments having selected either 'Do a little more', or 'Do the same' to question 4b. A small number of respondents shared a positive view of AHDB Monitor Farms. The NPA responded that farmer-to-farmer learning is effective, Monitor Farms are a great success on the arable side and strategic farms are showing promise in the pig sector. They also stated that benchmarking groups run by AHDB pork have had some success. The NSA suggested that there is some good work being done by AHDB under the headings of research, knowledge transfer, and benchmarking.

“The development of local monitor farms has been a positive part of the AHDB's work in the cereals/oilseeds sector as has the introduction of the strategic farms network in other sectors”

Scottish Land and Estates

An emerging theme that came from comments was about AHDB's role in knowledge exchange. Most respondents said that the activity can be found elsewhere or can be done by farmers themselves. Many respondents also suggested that organisations other than AHDB should undertake knowledge exchange and that AHDB should facilitate rather than deliver it. The vast majority of respondents that have these sentiments selected either 'Stop doing', 'Do much less' or 'Do a little less' to question 4b.

“KE information is readily available from many other sources outside of AHDB”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-South West

A theme that emerged less frequently from free-text comments concerned **AHDB's interaction with farmers**. Most respondents suggested that AHDB does not interact with enough of the farming community and that farmers need to input into knowledge exchange. The NPA said that AHDB knowledge exchange teams have built up relationships and trust with farmers over the years, but they must improve time management and ensure that activities benefit all farmers, not only the noisy few.

“KE needs to be two-way - researchers must engage and connect with farmers”

Tree-fruit grower, England-West Midlands

Market development

The theme that emerged from responses which received the most comments was about **AHDB's role in improving the image of the farming industry**. Many respondents suggested that as part of the market development service more should be done to defend the farming industry from negative press and combat misinformation, with many of those comments from those responding about the dairy sector. Many respondents also shared the opinion that more should be done to educate and inform the public about farming matters. The NPA agreed with these sentiments and suggest that a cross-sector 'this is farming' learning resource is needed and should be led by AHDB.

Some respondents suggest that as part of AHDB's market development service more should be done to promote and champion UK agriculture in a positive way. Overall, the number of respondents commenting on this are fairly even across the sectors but were received more frequently from those responding about the beef, lamb and pork and dairy sectors.

“The marketing role should expand such as to influence the public awareness and perception of farming in a positive way. Indeed, this could be the most important achievement”

Arable grower, England-South West

Another theme arising from the free-text responses was the importance of **promoting domestic produce and developing the domestic market**. The majority of respondents that have these sentiments selected 'Do much more' to question 4c. The majority of responses came from those responding about the beef and lamb sectors.

“I feel the AHDB should be promoting and championing home grown produce in all sectors”

Horticulture grower, England-South East

Comments also referred to what **AHDB's involvement should be in providing a market development service**. On this, most respondents suggested that the market development service is available from sources other than AHDB. Respondents who had these sentiments selected either 'Stop doing', 'Do much less', 'Do a little less' or 'Do the same' to question 4c. Additionally, many people stated that the market development service should be undertaken by others, rather than AHDB. The majority of responses come from those responding about the horticulture sector with none from the beef, lamb or dairy sectors.

“Horticulture generally has a short or direct route to customers and therefore carries out marketing with those customers”

Protected edibles grower, England-South East

It was suggested that **AHDB's market development service is not well thought of**. On this, most respondents are of the opinion that AHDB's market development service should be more effective. Some respondents believe that the market development service does not benefit them and some suggest that the service needs to represent better value for money and needs to show added value. Views shared evenly across sectors.

“We need to develop markets better”

Arable farmer, England-East of England

Export development

Most comments stated that **export development is an essential service and is 'vital as we exit the EU'**. On this, most responses on this subject stated that this should be a priority service. The majority of respondents who have this view selected 'Do much more' to question 4d. Many responded specifically on the importance of opening new markets outside of the EU. The majority of respondents who share this view answered about the beef and lamb sectors. The NPA stated that there are huge opportunities for British pork to export post-Brexit.

“We will need to develop new export markets as trade deals are negotiated particularly for products such as lamb to provide alternatives to supplying the EU”

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

Respondents made comments about what **AHDB's involvement should be in providing export development services**. Many stated that export development can be found elsewhere, outside AHDB and that it should be undertaken by others rather than AHDB.

“I don't see the role of the AHDB in taking a greater role in export development - there are others who do this (e.g. DIT) but I would hope that

DIT would consult closely with the AHDB in developing the export value proposition”

Agri-Tech East

Respondents also **criticised AHDB’s export development service** commenting that it is not effective enough and needs to improve. Some put forward that AHDB’s export development service does not benefit levy payers enough and a few respondents were of the opinion that AHDB’s export development service is not good value for money or gives insufficient return on investment.

“Though they are included in the AHDB Horticulture strategy, market development, export development and market intelligence are, for the most part, not required to be carried out by AHDB”

Protected edibles grower, UK

Market intelligence

There were **negative opinions of AHDB’s market intelligence service** and this emerged the most frequently from free-text responses. Of these, most respondents were of the opinion that the service does not represent sufficient value for money, does not benefit levy payers enough and the quality of the service needs improving. Respondents who expressed these views mostly selected either ‘Stop doing’, ‘Do much less’ or ‘Do a little less’ to question 4e. Some respondents questioned the source, reliability and transparency of data used in market intelligence. The NPA responded that members value the service but question the source of information as it does not always reflect real market values.

“There is a need to improve confidence in AHDB statistics there is a lot of scepticism over the information disseminated”

Arable processor/buyer, England-South East

There were also **positive opinions about AHDB’s market intelligence service**, although less frequently commented on, with some noting the usefulness of the service to their businesses.

“We feel that this [market intelligence] is already a great resource and should continue to be supported”

Askham Bryan College

Another theme that emerged from comments was **AHDB’s current role in market intelligence**. On this, most respondents stated that market intelligence services can be found elsewhere with the majority selecting ‘Stop doing’ for question 4e. This view was particularly strongly held by those answering about the horticulture sector. Some of those

who responded believe that market intelligence should be undertaken by others rather than AHDB.

“I do not believe that there is much point in doing market intelligence when much of the data is freely available”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-East Midlands

Communications

Responses on the subject of the communications service received the fewest comments.

Respondents gave **negative opinions of AHDB’s communications service**. On this, many said that AHDB’s communication service needs to be more effective, of better quality and there should be less of it. A few respondents suggested that AHDB’s communication service should become better focused and target the right people. Responses are fairly evenly spread across the sectors. The NPA responded that their members stated that the volume of communications is excessive and not valued. They added that AHDB needs to improve how it communicates its activity to levy payers, so that focus should be on less, but better, communication to improve that levy payer awareness.

“Most of the communications with me are repetitive and unhelpful”

Livestock farmer, England-South West

Fewer respondents had **positive opinions of AHDB’s communications service** but there was praise for communication on the impact of Brexit.

“Communications - we feel that this is already a great resource, for example the recommended list will be utilised by the majority of farmers”

Askham Bryan College

Comments related to AHDB activities in general

Many respondents made more general comments about AHDB activities rather than being specific about a particular activity. A few of the most frequently commented on topics are discussed here.

Respondents suggested that for all services a change in approach is needed, as well as a review of priorities. Respondents also commented that generally AHDB services needed to provide better value for money and demonstrate a better return on investment. Some respondents suggested that AHDB services do not benefit them enough while a few believed that AHDB requires additional funding to undertake all of its activities and that AHDB are trying to do too much.

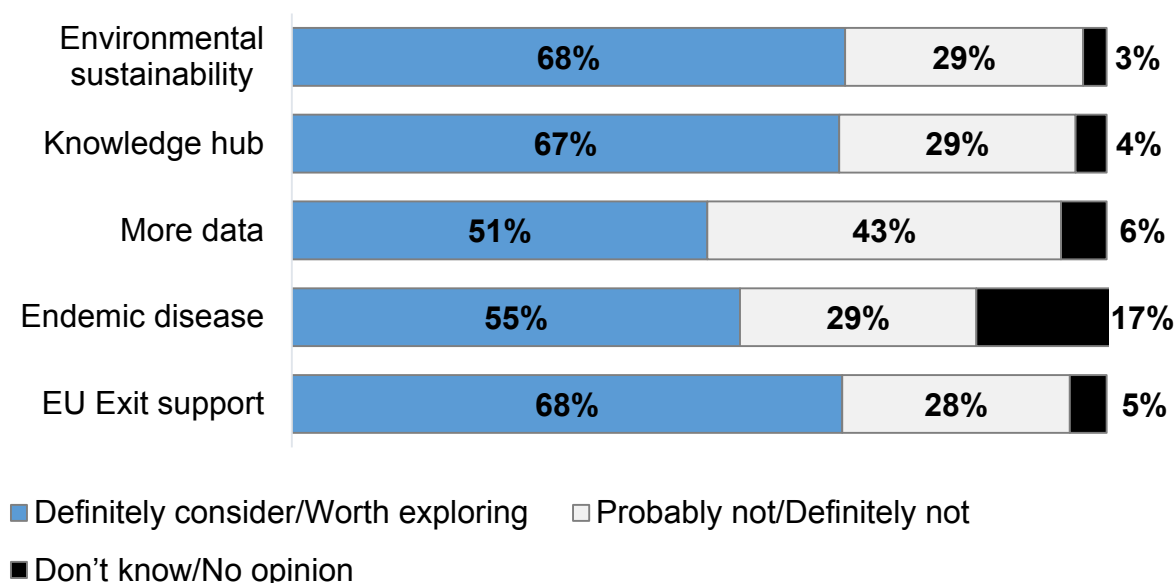
Dairy UK responded with concern that the advice and services of AHDB tend to be less targeted at larger, more efficient dairy farmers. As these farmers make a larger financial contribution to AHDB then it is important to the legitimacy of the organisation that the needs of these farmers are taken into account.

“AHDB need to do less but do it better, currently poor value for money”

Livestock farmer, England-West Midlands

Question 5: AHDB currently provides services for various sectors in different parts of the UK. These services could be expanded in the next five or more years, if there is a strong case for this.

Proportion of participants who selected an option for future AHDB services



97%-98% of respondents answered this question across each future service. Respondents were able to select a single option for each service. Response categories were 'Definitely consider', 'Worth exploring', 'Probably not', 'Definitely not', 'Don't know' and 'No opinion'. Some response categories have been grouped together for analysis.

Q5(a) - Environmental sustainability

Overall, 68% of respondents indicated that environmental sustainability should be considered or would be worth exploring, with a further 29% not considering it worth exploring. The sectors with the lowest proportions of those selecting 'Should be considered' or 'Would be worth exploring' were potatoes (59%), lamb (61%) and beef (62%), whilst the other sectors were fairly consistent, ranging from 69% to 76%.

Q5(b) - Knowledge hub

67% of respondents indicated that a knowledge hub should be considered or would be worth exploring, with those responding about the oilseeds sector the keenest for this (82% selected either 'Definitely consider' or 'Worth exploring'). The lowest proportion of those selecting either 'Should be considered' or 'Would be worth exploring' was among those

that responded to the survey as part of the potato sector (54%), with those answering about the dairy sector responding in a similar way (56%).

5(c) - More data

51% of respondents indicated that AHDB should consider or it would be worth exploring having a more significant role in data services, with 43% indicating it should not. Respondents representing most sectors broadly agreed with this split, with those responding about the oilseeds sector favouring the service the most (63% selected 'Should be considered' or 'Would be worth exploring') whereas those from the dairy sector are more against the proposed service (49% selected 'Probably not' or 'Definitely not').

5(d) - Endemic disease

55% of respondents indicated that they would like services on endemic disease to be considered or would be worth exploring, with 29% selecting 'Probably not' or 'Definitely not'. There was a large variation in interest among sectors, with the 73% of the pork sector indicating it would be worth considering or exploring it (the highest of all sectors), compared with only 37% of respondents who answered about the potato sector and 41% of those who responded about the horticulture sector.

5(e) - EU exit support

Overall, 68% of respondents indicated that EU exit support services should be considered or would be worth exploring, with 28% indicating it would not be. The sectors with the lowest proportion of 'Should be considered' or 'Would be worth exploring' selections were potatoes (56%), horticulture (57%) and dairy (62%). More than 70% of respondents from all sectors agreed that this service should definitely be considered or worth exploring, with pork and lamb sectors expressing the most agreement.

Question 6: If AHDB were to provide one new activity for your sector(s) that is not listed in the question above, what should it be?

Approximately half (49%) of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, and of those approximately 78% made comments relating to the question itself. Just over half (51%) of responses did not address the question directly (i.e. did not provide new activities that are not listed in question 5), with those comments relating to activities that are currently undertaken by AHDB and views on the listed activities in question 5.

The most frequently suggested new activity that emerged was about **engaging with the public**. In their comments, most said that they wanted to see a stronger defence of the industry, work on creating a better relationship with the consumer and to improve the image of the industry. Those who held this view were mostly responding about the beef, lamb and cereals sectors. Some respondents suggested that educating the public/consumer could be a new activity, with this opinion shared across nearly all sectors (but not from those responding about the horticulture sector). Additionally, some of those who commented about public engagement suggested that engaging with children in schools should be considered. Most of those who hold this view were responding about the beef and lamb sectors.

“[AHDB should be] Helping farmers improve relations with the British public”

Dairy farmer, England-South East

Respondents suggested that **training staff and promoting employment in the agriculture and horticulture industries** should be a new activity. Most suggested that they want AHDB to provide skills training to those involved in agriculture and horticulture. Respondents from across all sectors shared this view, with a greater number from those responding about the horticulture and cereals sectors. Some respondents commented that they would like AHDB to have an active role in promoting agriculture and horticulture as a place to work and encouraging new entrants into those industries. Most respondents who shared this view were answering about the dairy sector.

“Supporting training and skills of the next generation in agriculture”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-East of England

Responses suggested that **AHDB should undertake supply chain activities post-farm**. Respondents gave several suggestions including specific product marketing, a better understanding of consumer needs, better tracking of product movement, improving supply chain efficiency and transparency, help in representing farmers against large retailers, and improving relationships between farmers, processors and retailers. Responses were

received from those commenting about nearly all sectors (but not the potatoes sector) and most frequently from those responding about the beef and lamb sectors.

“Helping farmers to deliver the products required by their customers. Identify ways to maximise the proportion of the final product value that is actually received by the farmer”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-East of England

Respondents also suggested that **AHDB should not undertake any new activities**, with some proposing that it should focus and improve upon its current activities. This view was shared evenly by those responding about every sector.

“AHDB should not be taking on new activities which would dissipate its resources”

Arable farmer, England-East of England

Comments related to current AHDB activities (as for Question 4)

Of the responses that did not address the free-text question directly (approximately 51%), most responded about activities that AHDB currently undertakes (those referred to in question 4). This includes **support for research** with this viewpoint shared across almost every sector (the pork sector being the exception) and most responses from those commenting on the horticulture and cereals sectors. There was **support for market development**, which came from all sectors, but mostly from those responding about the beef, lamb and dairy sectors. **Support for knowledge exchange** was shared a little less frequently, with this opinion offered from across all sectors (those responding about the beef, lamb, dairy and horticulture sectors mentioned this a little more frequently).

Comments related to the proposed new activities in Question 5

Respondents shared their views on the proposed services in question 5. There was **support for environmentally friendly and sustainable farming methods** such as organic farming and improving soil health. Other suggestions included promotion of mixed farming, responsible land use and carbon capture. Responses were received from those responding about each sector, most frequently from the cereals, lamb and beef sectors.

Comments made about the **‘More data’ service** suggestion from question 5 were more evenly spread, noting the importance of data and offering support for AHDB to take a more significant role with data (in particular market data). Some suggested that AHDB should act as a data collection hub, distributing raw data and analysing it. This view was shared fairly evenly across all sectors with those responding about the beef, cereals, lamb, dairy and oilseeds sectors a little more frequently. The National Sheep Association (NSA) stated

that the Livestock Information Programme should fulfil information and traceability functions in a practical delivery model.

Some organisations responded on behalf of their members via email and post, providing comments on AHDB purposes and activities.

Views on AHDB

The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) stated that they were mainly positive about AHDB with NFU Scotland saying the same for horticulture and potatoes growers. NFU members were of the opinion that if AHDB ceased to exist there would be a strong desire to rebuild many, if not most of its functions straightaway. Conversely, NFU Scotland responded that many Scottish dairy farmers are relatively negative towards AHDB, feeling that better value for money needs to be shown.

General views on activities

General comments were received about AHDB purposes and activities. The quality of AHDB's activities was praised and it was noted that there are industry weaknesses in productivity and skills which need improving. Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) suggested that promotion, marketing and research should continue as priority areas, although AHDB would benefit from commissioning work which allowed levy payers to direct future priorities. The NFU and the Fresh Produce Consortium regard Extension of Authorisation for Minor Use (EAMU) applications as a vital service for horticulture members. There is concern amongst the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) members about AHDB's activities. The CLA also suggested, as did NFU Cymru, that collaboration with other levy bodies (QMS in Scotland and HCC in Wales) could be beneficial, limit duplication of work and maximise value for money in the meat sectors.

Research

Research by AHDB is seen as essential by CAAV, NFU Cymru, NFU members in cereals and oilseeds, and by NFU Scotland members in horticulture. The NFU Dairy Board praised AHDB's breeding and genetic evaluation work. However, the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) does not believe that research is a good use of AHDB budget, that they should cease this activity, and instead become a body that challenges research institutions to identify research relevant to industry. A few organisations, including CLA, NFU Cymru, and the NFU, criticised AHDB for not being focused enough on the needs of levy payers and industry, citing a need to engage with levy payers to determine areas of research and give them project ownership.

Members of NFU Scotland said that research needs to be transferable to Scotland, citing that horticulture ornamental work being carried out in southern England, for example, would not suit conditions in the north. The NFU suggested that there should be more focus on innovative and alternative farming systems, as these have been somewhat neglected.

NFU Scotland proposed that for horticulture AHDB could look into solutions to the decline in labour force and crop prediction/modelling. The Fresh Produce Consortium said that more work needs to be done to bring opportunities identified in previous research to fruition into commercial products available to UK growers. The NFU Dairy Board suggested farm-level research on ammonia to help producers meet emissions targets.

Knowledge exchange

There were positive comments regarding AHDB's knowledge exchange activity. NFU Scotland stated that knowledge transfer events are valued by potato growers and that those levy payers who engage with AHDB Dairy have a high opinion of it. CAAV stated that knowledge exchange is essential to the industry in light of EU-Exit and technological advances. They complimented AHDB's Monitor Farm and Strategic Farm network, as did NFU Cymru, suggesting that practical demonstration of best practice works well and that more resource be put into setting up permanent local 'hubs'.

In contrast, the TFA suggested that AHDB should scale back knowledge exchange activities except when providing targeted support to newly established farming and horticultural businesses. Many Scottish horticulture growers are put off by the time and costs to attend seminars a long way from Scotland, according to NFU Scotland, and they would like to see more events in Scotland (an opinion also shared by potato grower members of NFU Scotland). The Scottish Dairy Cattle Association responded that meetings are often poorly attended by active dairy farmers with advice deemed to be too basic.

There were concerns from NFU Cymru about duplication of this activity in the dairy sector in Wales with Farming Connect, and that knowledge exchange needs effective communication across the country. NFU Scotland stated that AHDB needs to attract cereals and oilseeds growers who are not interacting with AHDB and that AHDB should become the 'go-to' place for growers seeking information.

Market development

Organisations suggested that market development should be a priority, including the Scottish Dairy Cattle Association, combinable crops and horticulture grower members of NFU Cymru, the NFU Livestock Board, NFU Scotland and the TFA. AHDB Dairy's "Be Scrumptious" campaign was seen as successful by the NFU and NFU Cymru who would like targeted marketing campaigns to continue, with generic marketing being popular with dairy levy payers. CAAV, the CLA and the NFU Horticulture and Potatoes Board questioned the effectiveness and value of generic domestic marketing campaigns and whether AHDB is the body that should be doing this, although the last of those suggested that promoting British food, plants and flowers could be supported. It was suggested that AHDB's current marketing initiatives lack a consistent identity or message and in some instances, the sector driven approach can result in direct competition. The NFU and NFU

Wales consider that for the cereals, oilseeds and horticulture sectors finding niches and value-adding opportunities is key.

Export development

Dairy sector members of NFU Cymru and the NFU, and potato, cereal and oilseeds sector members NFU Scotland see scope in greater effort and additional funding of export development activities. According to the NFU Cymru Dairy Board AHDB has a vital role to play in aligning the industry with an evidenced-based strategy for import substitution of dairy products imported from the EU. CAAV stated that there is a need to develop markets in countries which have rapidly growing affluent populations, whilst retaining markets in the EU.

Market intelligence

The market intelligence activity in the dairy sector was praised by NFU Scotland and the NFU, with members of the NFU Horticulture and Potatoes Board seeing this as a valuable service that they would like to be undertaken in the horticulture sector. The NFU and NFU Cymru said that AHDB's Horizon Scanning work is of great value and more resource should be given to it. On the other hand, the TFA said that market intelligence work could be scaled back and AHDB must not become overly focused on providing information that is already widely available elsewhere and already known to the farming community. The CLA stated that this activity should remain with AHDB but the government might consider collecting data.

Communications

The CAAV responded that their members are generally aware of AHDB's existence but relatively little is known of what work it does. The CLA stated that while there have been some improvements to communications this continues to be an area of dissatisfaction amongst levy payers. They noted that there is a particular challenge of getting more levy payers to access information digitally. NFU Scotland believes that AHDB Dairy holds much valuable data, but it is not good at sharing this with levy payers.

On future services

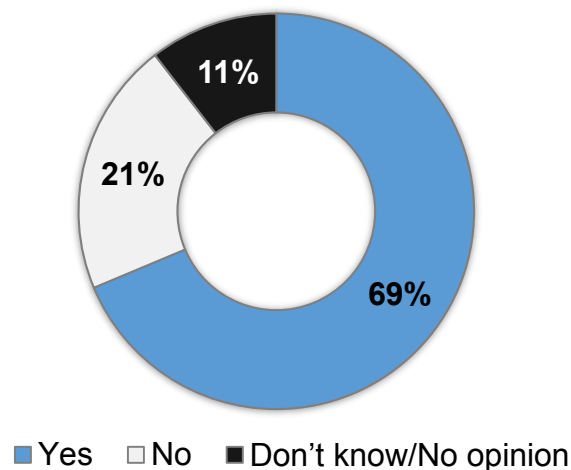
Some organisations made comments on possible future activities that AHDB could undertake. The TFA suggested that AHDB could have a role in developing the necessary skill base for staff in the agriculture and horticulture industry. There was suggestion from the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, National Sheep Association, National Beef Association and British Pig Association (joint response) that a small proportion of AHDB's work and its levy be used in partnership with others to maintain the genetic health and diversity of native livestock breeds. CAAV proposed that it might perhaps be too ambitious for AHDB to be the "go to" place for knowledge, rather it could function better as a knowledge portal

to share knowledge from other sources. There was limited support for additional functions from NFU Scotland apart from combatting disease and pests for the potato sector.

Section 2: Governance

Question 7: Should levy payers be given the opportunity to vote every five years on the continuing existence of the statutory levy in their sector?

Proportion of participants who selected an option on being given the opportunity to vote every five years on the continuing existence of the statutory levy



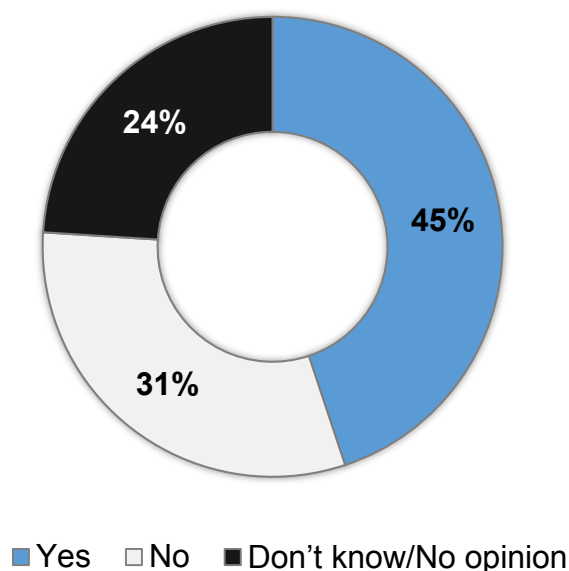
99% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Overall, 69% of respondents said they should be given the opportunity to vote on the continuing existence of the statutory levy every five years.

Dairy sector respondents expressed the greatest desire to vote with 75% selecting 'Yes' (and 18% selecting 'No'), whilst those from the oilseeds sector expressed the least desire with 55% choosing 'Yes' (and 32% choosing 'No'). All other percentages were similar across sectors.

Question 8: Would you like to see additional levy payer representation for your sector(s)?

Proportion of respondents who selected an option on whether they would like to see additional levy payer representation in their sector(s)



99% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Overall, 45% of respondents to this question indicated they would like to see additional levy payer representation for their sectors, while 31% would not. Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents selected 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

There was variation in views across the main sectors, with around half (between 47% and 55%) of respondents answering about the pork, beef, lamb and horticulture sectors selecting 'Yes', whereas fewer of those responding about the cereals, oilseeds, dairy and potatoes sectors selected the same option. Those responding about the dairy and Potatoes sectors selected 'No' more often than 'Yes'.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

Nearly 40% of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, with the majority of those making comments that related to the question.

A theme that emerged from comments was about the **level of representation of sectors in AHDB**. Of these, most respondents who commented on this were content with the current level of representation from their sector and that no change to the current situation is required. The vast majority of those who expressed these opinions selected 'No' to

question 8. Responses are shared across all sectors, most frequently from those answering about the cereals sector.

“I believe we have good representation for my sector and they do a good job of informing and spreading the word”

Cereals grower, Scotland

On the same subject, a near equal number of respondents stated that their sector or their produce is not being represented adequately in AHDB and request more representation. The majority of those who expressed these opinions selected ‘Yes’ to question 8. Responses are shared roughly evenly among all sectors, although there were fewer responses from those commenting on the oilseeds, dairy and potatoes sectors. The Ulster Farmers Union commented that it is very important that Northern Ireland has a voice within AHDB.

“I am not aware that you have a sector board for organic farmers”

Cereals grower and processor, England-South West

Another theme that emerged from responses was about **levy payer influence and representation generally and within AHDB sectors**. Respondents who commented on this said that as levy payers they want to have more influence on the activities that AHDB undertakes, be able to agree on strategic direction and to have a say in how AHDB spends its money. The majority of respondents who hold these views selected ‘Yes’ to question 8. Comments were received from those answering about every sector, with a higher proportion from those answering about the lamb, beef and cereal sectors.

“AHDB need to be more approachable and levy payers should play a part in informing the strategy”

Lamb producer, England-East Midlands

Respondents made comments about the **amount of interaction between levy payers and AHDB**. On this, respondents expressed that currently AHDB does not sufficiently interact or engage with levy payers, with some people not aware of AHDB activities and there is frustration that levy payers are unable to share their thoughts with AHDB. Responses are shared between all sectors and the majority of those who expressed these opinions selected ‘Yes’ to question 8.

“The AHDB should be in regular consultation with its levy payers about crucial decisions it may be going to make and the direction it should go”

Livestock farmer, England-Yorkshire and the Humber

Comments related to AHDB boards (as for Question 9)

Free-text responses regarding **levy payer representation within AHDB boards** received the most comments, with these comments more directly answering question 9 than question 8. On this, most respondents believe that the current board and sector boards do not contain the right members to represent levy payers and would like more farmers and levy payers on the boards. Responses included comments that the boards need to be more diverse and that often the same individuals are on boards. The majority of respondents who hold these views selected 'Yes' to question 8. These views were shared across all sectors, although there were no comments about this subject from those responding about the pork sector. Dairy UK suggested that the composition of the board needs to be balanced to represent the diversity of dairy farming.

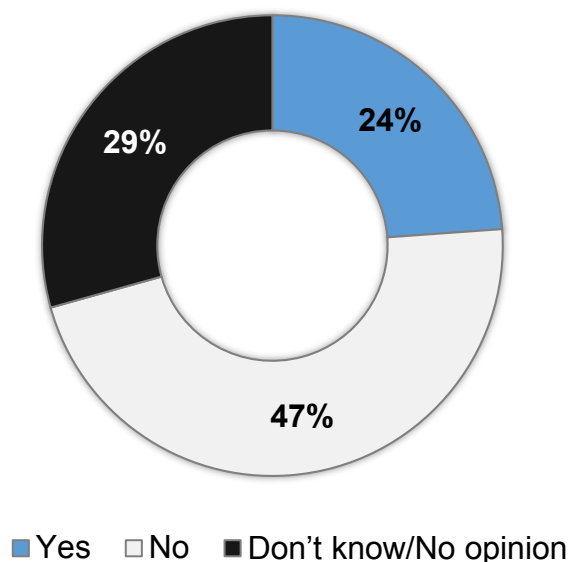
Respondents also felt that **the sector boards lack authority**. Comments were most frequently contributed by those answering about the pork, beef and lamb sectors. The National Sheep Association (NSA) said that sector board members are not representative of levy payers.

In addition, many respondents expressed that they would like **more involvement in the recruitment of AHDB board and sector board members**, with many suggesting that they should be elected to their positions by levy payers. Comments on this view were received principally from those responding about the lamb, beef and dairy sectors. Dairy UK responded that greater transparency along with increased sector and industry engagement is required for the process of appointing the leadership of AHDB and the members of the boards. The NSA stated that it is important to have a proportion of board members who are elected by levy payers.

Some respondents stated that AHDB management is too cumbersome, overstaffed and not cost effective.

Question 9: Does the current AHDB board, sector board and committee structure serve the needs of levy payers well?

Proportion of respondents who selected an option on whether the AHDB board, sector board and committee structure serve levy payers needs well.



99% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Nearly half (47%) of respondents agreed that currently the AHDB board, sector boards and committee structure does not serve the needs of levy payers well. 24% selected 'Yes' (the least frequently selected option) and nearly 30% of respondents selected either 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

There is some variation in views on this across the sectors, with respondents answering about the meat (pork, beef and lamb), dairy and potatoes sectors selecting 'No' between 50-60% of the time whereas those responding about the cereals, oilseeds and horticulture sectors selected 'No' less frequently at 30-40% of the time. About a third (35 to 36%) of respondents answering about the cereals and oilseeds sectors selected 'Yes', which was more frequent than other sectors (although there was a near even split between response categories within those two sectors).

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

Nearly 45% of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, with the majority (60%) of those making comments that related to the question.

Respondents most frequently made comments about the **representation, accountability and transparency of the AHDB board, sector boards and committee**. Most respondents feel that the AHDB board is currently out of touch with levy payers and needs to be representative of levy payers. This includes comments that the board itself should have members who are levy payers themselves. The majority of respondents who held these views selected 'No' to question 9. Most of those who voiced these opinions answered from the beef and lamb sectors.

Many respondents would like AHDB to be more transparent and accountable to levy payers. The vast majority of those who expressed these opinions selected 'No' to question 9. Around half of those who held these views were answering about the Lamb sector.

Some respondents believe that there is a lack of transparency on AHDB board appointments and that levy payers should have a say in the process, with some suggesting this could be done through voting. Some respondents thought that sector boards need more authority and currently lack influence with many of those who responded with this view answering about the pork sector. Some respondents would like there to be more representation at board level for their sector, including organic produce, with many of those responding about the beef and lamb sectors.

Some respondents considered that sector boards need more authority and currently lack influence, with many of those who responded with this view answering about the pork sector. On the same topic, the National Pig Association (NPA) said that members are concerned that the pork sector board has limited influence over AHDB activity and lack the ability to effect change once decisions have been taken that they are not comfortable with. NPA would like individual boards to have a much greater say on the overall running of AHDB.

“AHDB is too top heavy without proper representation, the majority of levy payers will not know who is on their sector board”

National Beef Association

Another theme that emerged, though less frequently, concerned **AHDB board management and structure**. Most respondents who commented were in agreement that the current AHDB board, sector board and committee structure is overly bureaucratic, AHDB has become overstaffed, described as being 'top-heavy', and is slow in decision making and delivery. The vast majority of those who expressed these opinions selected 'No' to question 9. These responses are fairly evenly spreads across all sectors.

The NPA is concerned that the current AHDB structure requires every decision to go through multiple approvals from senior management, resulting in a lack of reasonable autonomy by AHDB staff over their activities in delivering the strategy.

“Seen from the Horticulture point of view, the AHDB Board adds an additional layer of bureaucracy. Whilst some AHDB activities are complementary across

the sectors and can exploit the benefit of greater scale, the majority are not. Centralisation of policy making removes it further from the influence of grower levy payers”

Protected edibles grower, England-Yorkshire and the Humber

Respondents made comments about the **communication between the boards and levy payers**. These comments were expressed with similar frequency to the previous theme (AHDB board management and structure). On this, most respondents stated that there is a need for better communication and engagement between the board and levy payers. A frequent complaint is that levy payers are not being listened to and the boards appear distant. The majority of those who expressed these opinions selected ‘No’ to question 9. Responses were shared fairly evenly across all sectors with a slightly higher number of responses from those answering about the beef and lamb sectors. The NPA believes that AHDB should be proactive in engaging with members so they can influence future direction. The NSA is not confident about the AHDB board and its various board/committee structures strategy for the sheep industry. AHDB appears to have arrived at many of its answers from within, rather than proactively listening to the views of others.

“[The AHDB board structure] Doesn't allow for greater engagement of the levy payers. People who have to pay in should have a say on the representation”

Livestock farmer, England-South West

Respondents **responded positively about the AHDB board and committee structure**. Of these, most expressed that they are content with the current board and committee structure and that the structure works. Many comments were broadly positive about the board and committee structure but suggested that improvements could be made. The majority of those who expressed these opinions selected ‘Yes’ to question 9. The majority of respondents who commented were replying about the cereals sector.

“I think the board and Horticulture sector board gives a good range of experience and industry representation to serve the needs of levy payers”

Crop protection manufacturer, England-East of England

Some organisations responded on behalf of their members via email and post and we providing comments on AHDB governance.

General comments

The NFU (including NFU Cymru and NFU Scotland) said that AHDB has become too large, is top heavy and needs to become less bureaucratic and more responsive in order to be able to serve levy payers well. The Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) suggested

that there is a need for a radical refocussing of AHDB work and that AHDB has had the luxury of a guaranteed income without having to justify its existence or its value to those who fund it. The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) responded that there needs to be more focus on delivering value to the levy payer rather than delivering government objectives. Defra's involvement is essential; however, it is vital that the board is run for industry needs not to deliver government objectives.

On board and sector board members

The NFU and NFU Cymru proposed that levy payers should be given more say on AHDB board appointments (including the main board and sector boards) with the TFA suggesting that they would like AHDB to provide greater transparency on board appointments. On the subject of what is needed from board members, the CLA commented that a range of expertise is required to run AHDB effectively, there should be more independent members on the sector boards and that they must reflect the diversity of UK Agriculture. Similarly the NFU want sector board members to have a sector-wide or industry-wide view; AHDB boards, committees and panels must be sufficiently represented by primary producers. NFU Scotland stated that those members who are in the cereals, oilseeds, horticulture and potatoes sectors agree that AHDB boards serve the needs of levy payers well, whereas those in the dairy sector disagree with this and those in the lamb and beef sectors said they did not know.

Transparency and accountability of AHDB boards and decisions

Several organisations saw AHDB board and sector board accountability as an area that needs improving including the NFU, the TFA and NFU Cymru. The TFA suggested that accountability could be improved by holding more open board meetings. The CLA wrote that a more democratic and inclusive process is needed for decision making by AHDB boards which could include regional structures that take in the views of those in the supply chain and academic institutions. Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) responded that greater transparency on board activities is essential.

Sector structure

Organisations responded about the current sector board governance structure. The CLA commented that the sector structure is detrimental to industry development resulting in duplication of activities and poor value for money, and that the self-interest of the individual sector boards are a barrier to overall performance. It was acknowledged that sector strategies should inform the broader AHDB strategy but the main board needs to be able to invest additionally in opportunities or challenges as they arise. The TFA suggest that the sector boards have too much power with no central control of AHDB activities, and that AHDB strategy should be directed by the main board and implemented, rather than decided, by sector boards.

Levy payer representation

Some organisations remarked on levy payer representation suggesting that levy payers should work alongside AHDB and have more involvement in AHDB's decision making. The CLA and NFU agreed with this sentiment. The NFU stated that engagement with levy payers must happen on a country-wide basis and AHDB should cater for the requirements of those in different areas of the UK. There is a need for AHDB to ensure that the needs of Welsh and Scottish levy payers is represented, as indicated by the FUW and NFU Scotland.

Setting strategies

On setting AHDB strategies, the NFU suggested that sectors boards should have more responsibility in contributing to and have the power to approve and sign-off on AHDB's greater strategy. The CLA responded that more should be done to integrate external expertise into the development of AHDB strategies. NFU Cymru remarked that the AHDB board must be able to take strategic decisions where they cut across sectors and that sector boards should be held accountable to levy payers for the delivery of the strategy.

Five year vote

On the option to vote on the continuation of AHDB levy every five years, the NFU and NFU Cymru did not support having a vote, whereas there was agreement across all sectors of NFU Scotland that levy payers should be able to vote.

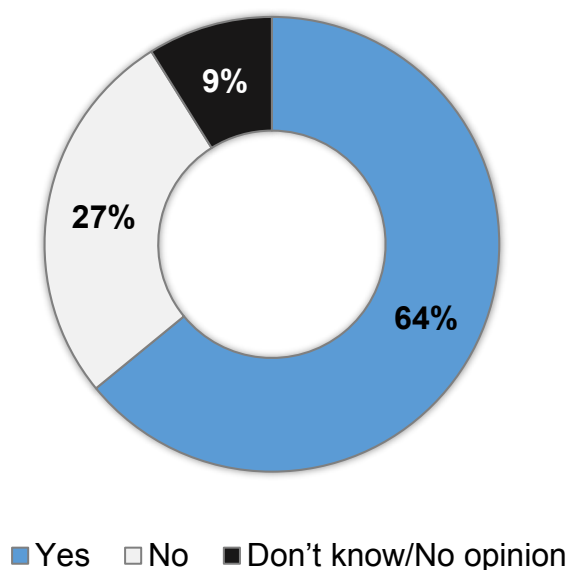
Review, evaluation and scrutiny of AHDB

Organisations also made comments on review and scrutiny of AHDB. The TFA suggested that AHDB should be required to expose itself to regular, external evaluation, which is placed in the public domain, including its funding, governance and levy payment system. The NFU and NFU Cymru similarly suggested reviews to ensure that AHDB is agile, flexible and accountable. FUW noted the importance of continually evaluating the existence of the statutory levy through consultation with levy payers. The NFU Livestock Board stated that the AHDB board should release an independently assessed report annually, assessing AHDB's performance against its strategy. The NFU proposed a new governance structure for AHDB, which distinguishes between business development functions and market development functions.

Section 3: Funding

Question 10: Should AHDB continue to operate a statutory levy to undertake activities in your sector(s)?

Proportion of respondents who selected an option on whether AHDB should continue to operate to undertake activities in their sector(s)



99% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

In total, 64% of respondents agreed that AHDB should continue to operate a statutory levy to undertake activities in their sector(s). Of those who responded about the dairy and potato sectors, 52% and 53% respectively selected 'Yes', compared with those responding about the lamb, cereals and oilseed sectors who selected 'Yes' more frequently at 71%, 74% and 77% respectively.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

About 42% of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, with the vast majority (89%) of those making comments that related to the question.

The main themes that emerged from the free-text comments for this question have been split into those that selected 'Yes' and those who selected 'No' for question 10. There was a higher proportion of free-text comments from respondents who selected 'Yes' than respondents who selected 'No' to question 10. A small number of those who made

comments selected either 'Don't know' or 'No opinion' and the themes that emerged from these comments have not been reported.

Themes that emerged from those respondents who selected 'Yes' to question 10

The most common theme that emerged was that **a body such as AHDB is needed and the levy should continue to be statutory** for collective funding to undertake activities. Some respondents were of the opinion that a leading body such as AHDB is needed to support all farmers and that only a statutory levy system enables this. Some respondents gave positive opinions on AHDB such as highlighting that it is good value for money and that it works well. Responses on this theme are shared fairly evenly across all sectors, although a higher proportion came from those answering about the cereals sector. Dairy UK stated that AHDB should continue to be funded by a statutory levy. Additionally, there should be no cap on the cost of the levy and AHDB should be able to raise funds for sector specific initiatives, giving greater operational flexibility to react to unforeseen developments.

“We value highly what AHDB does. Farmers need an umbrella organisation to act on their behalf and to avoid the duplication and inefficiency of numerous small groups of farmers who would be exploited by private companies”

Arable farmer, England-East of England

Another theme that emerged, though it was less frequent, was that **AHDB is necessary so it can focus on and undertake certain activities**. On this, most respondents said that AHDB is needed to undertake research and that AHDB should focus on that activity. Responses on this theme are shared fairly evenly across all sectors, although a slightly higher proportion came from those answering about the cereals and oilseeds sectors. Many respondents suggested that AHDB is needed to undertake market development and that AHDB should focus on that activity. Respondents who had this point of view were responding dominantly about the lamb and beef sectors.

“Farmers need a body to fund research in to new developments and represent us as new markets emerge to promote our produce”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-South West

Respondents suggested that **the levy funding system needs to be revised**. On this, most respondents believe that the current levy calculation method is unsuitable and needs to be fairer. Some respondents would like to see levy collected from a wider range of people, for example, from certain producers and from the wider food supply chain. Responses about this subject mostly came from those responding about the horticulture

sector. The NPA stated that a statutory levy should be maintained for the pork sector, although many questioned whether the current levy rate is suitable as the pig sector pays proportionately a higher percentage per unit of production than other sectors.

“Whilst we agree there is a need, the currently level within horticulture is too high and the way it is calculated doesn't take into account some of the input costs in base producer”

Hardy nursery stock grower, England-East Midlands

Respondents suggested that they **would like more say in how levy money is spent and how AHDB is run**. Respondents would like greater transparency and accountability from AHDB, with responses being shared quite evenly across all sectors. The NPA commented that levy payers should have more of a say about the areas of activity that AHDB Pork is involved in and the level of spend in each.

“I believe the statutory levy funding should continue however greater accountability of spending of the budget is vital so that levy payers can get a better understanding of its spend”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-South East

Themes that emerged from those respondents who selected ‘No’ to question 10

The themes that emerged from these free-text comments were of roughly equal frequency.

Respondents were of the opinion that **the AHDB statutory levy does not benefit them**, with some suggesting that they can obtain similar services elsewhere. Comments on this theme were received from respondents answering about all sectors and most frequently from the horticulture, beef and cereals sectors.

“As a business we have gained very little from the existence of the levy board”

Hardy nursery stock grower, England-West Midlands

Respondents also stated that the **AHDB statutory levy does not give good value for money**. Many suggested that AHDB levy money could be spent better elsewhere. Responses were quite evenly spread across all sectors.

“I do not feel that we get value for money”

Field vegetables grower, England-West Midlands

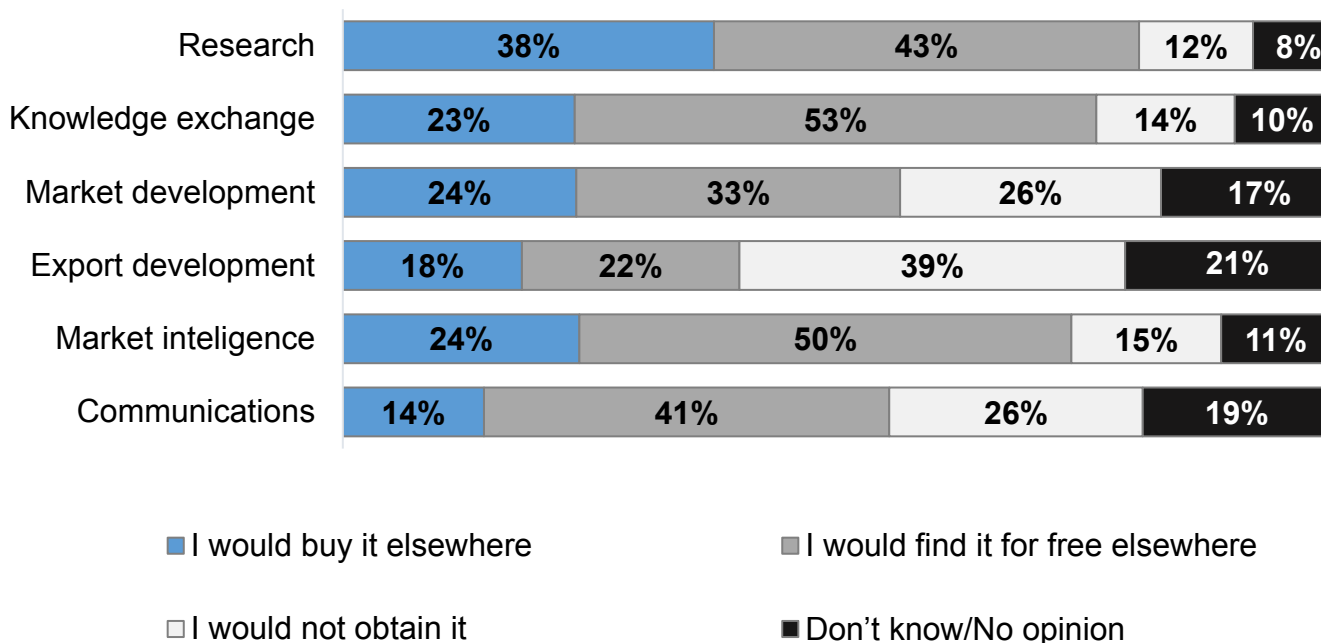
Another theme that emerged was that respondents **did not think the AHDB levy should be statutory**, with most of these of the opinion that AHDB levy should be voluntary. Some suggested that the current statutory levy system must be fairer or needs to work better. Responses are shared evenly across all sectors.

“If someone feels that they get no benefit from the AHDB, then they should have the choice not to pay for it”

Cereals farmer, England-South West

Question 11: If AHDB did not provide these services funded through the levy, what would you consider essential to buy or source elsewhere?

Proportion of respondents who selected each option for AHDB services.



93%-95% of respondents answered this question across each service. Respondents were able to select a single option for each service.

Q11(a) - Research

43% of respondents selected that they would find research for free elsewhere and 38% of respondents would buy research elsewhere if AHDB did not provide this service. Respondents who answered about the pork, lamb, beef, and dairy sectors more frequently selected that they would find research elsewhere for free, whereas more respondents who answered about the horticulture, oilseeds and cereals sectors selected that they would buy research elsewhere.

12% of respondents selected that they would not obtain research, with this view shared evenly across all sectors. 8% selected either 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

Q11(b) – Knowledge exchange

The majority of respondents (53%) stated they would find knowledge exchange for free elsewhere if AHDB did not provide this service. 23% of respondents selected that they would buy this service elsewhere and 14% would not obtain knowledge exchange if AHDB

did not provide this service. This is consistent across sectors. 10% of respondents answered 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

Q11(c) – Market development

Responses to this category were fairly mixed with 33% of respondents selecting that they would find it for free elsewhere, 26% that they would not obtain it and 24% that they would buy it elsewhere if AHDB did not provide market development services. 17% of respondents answered 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

This view was fairly consistent across most sectors, although there is more deviation in the pork, cereal, oilseeds and horticulture sectors. Respondents who were answering about the cereal and oilseeds sectors selected that they would buy market development elsewhere the least frequently (20% and 17% respectively) and respondents answering about the pork sector selected the least frequently (22%) that they would find it for free elsewhere. Those who selected 'I would not obtain it' did so least frequently (18%) in relation to the horticulture sector.

Q11(d) Export development

Responses to this question were very mixed. 39% of respondents selected that they would not obtain export development if AHDB did not provide it. This selection was especially prevalent from those responding about the dairy, cereals, oilseeds and horticulture sectors (with 44% of those from cereals sector the highest). 22% of respondents selected that they would find market development elsewhere for free if AHDB did not provide this service and 18% selected that they would buy it elsewhere. 21% of respondents answered either 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

Q11(e) Market intelligence

Half (50%) of the respondents stated they would find market intelligence for free elsewhere if AHDB did not provide this service. There was some variation among the sectors, the highest being the 53% of respondents who answered about the lamb and oilseeds sectors stating they would find it elsewhere for free, whereas 38% of respondents from the pork sector selected the same option. 24% of respondents answered that they would buy this service elsewhere if AHDB did not provide it and 15% would not obtain market intelligence. 11% of respondents answered either no opinion or don't know.

Q11(f) Communications

41% of respondents selected that they would find communications services for free elsewhere if AHDB did not provide them. This opinion was fairly consistent across sectors, with the highest being the potatoes and dairy sectors (47% and 42% respectively) and at 35% the lowest in the pork and horticulture sectors. 26% of respondents would not obtain communications services if AHDB did not provide them and 14% would buy this service

elsewhere (this selection was most highly chosen by those answering about the pork and horticulture sectors). 19% of respondents answered either 'No opinion' or 'Don't know'.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

About one third (34%) of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, the vast majority (80%) of those who did made comments relating to the question.

The theme that emerged most frequently from respondents' comments was regarding the **availability of other sources of services if AHDB did not provide them**. Most respondents commenting on this theme suggested that services are available elsewhere from various sources such as suppliers, the internet, farming press, consultants and, for research and knowledge exchange, from universities, research institutions and agritech centres. Some respondents stated that these services are available elsewhere but would not be of the same standard as what AHDB currently provides or that those services would be more expensive.

Some respondents said that they obtained these services from elsewhere (non-AHDB source), particularly research and knowledge exchange. This view was mostly stated by respondents who were responding about the horticulture, dairy and the cereals sectors.

“We currently purchase our own research and knowledge exchange within the business hence the current AHDB research is not valued”

Pig genetics business, England-Yorkshire and the Humber

Another theme that emerged was on **who should be providing these services to industry if AHDB did not provide them**. In these comments, some respondents answered that if AHDB did not provide these services that they would do that work themselves, with most responses concerning research. Many of the respondents who answered about doing these that work themselves were responding about the horticulture sector. Some respondents suggested that if AHDB no longer provided these services they would not be able to afford or wouldn't pay for services coming from other sources.

“Small businesses like ours would not be able to buy these services as they could not be provided as cheaply as through AHDB because private suppliers would seek a profit from each area”

Arable farmer, England-East of England

Respondents gave comments regarding the **priority of services**. Most respondents stated that these services are a priority, particularly research, with some highlighting knowledge exchange, market development and market intelligence as key services. Most respondents

who felt that research was a priority service were responding about the horticulture sector, with many also from the cereals sector.

“Research is very important. Without pesticides or biological control our country would suffer significantly. Food security is vital otherwise there could be significant unrest”

Agronomy and crop protection company, England-North West

Some respondents stated that these services are not a priority, particularly export development. The majority of those who expressed this view also selected the ‘I would not obtain it’ option for export development.

Comments not directly related to the question

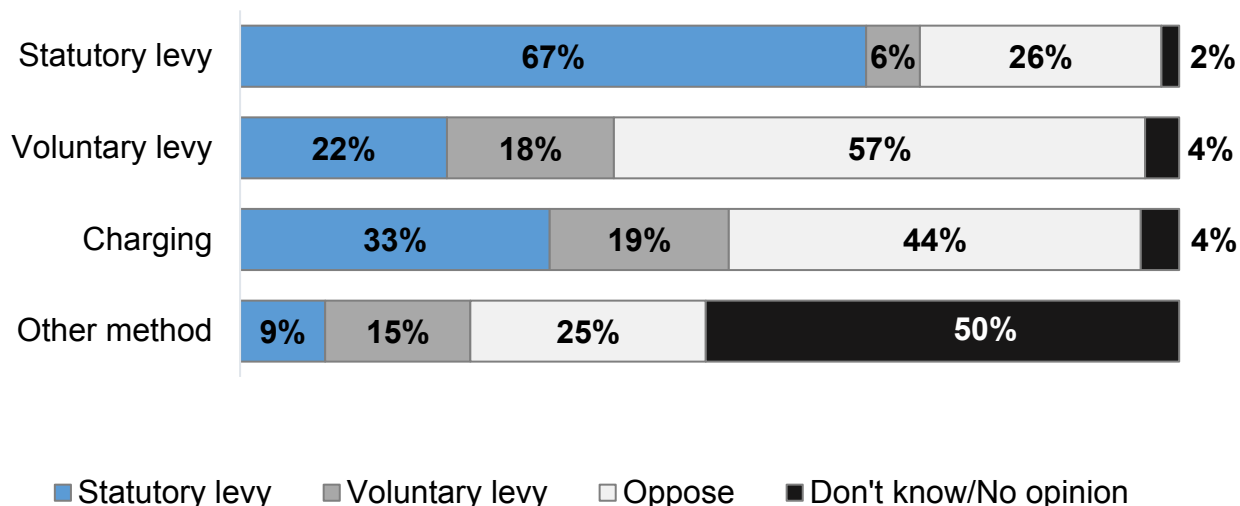
There were many responses to this free-text question that did not address the question directly but respondents took the opportunity to comment. Most of those the comments provided **positive views of AHDB services**.

Many respondents value the independent, unbiased and impartial service that AHDB offers. The majority of responses regarding appreciation of AHDB’s independent and impartial service are from those responding about the cereals sector, with the fewest coming from the horticulture sector. Many responded positively about the quality of AHDB services, the value the services that AHDB provides and feel that those services are needed. Some respondents value the collective pooling of funds so that AHDB can provide these services. A few respondents commented that AHDB services would be missed if they were no longer being provided, which would be a loss to the industry.

There were fewer responses displaying negative views of AHDB services. Many of those responding about the beef and lamb sectors (although some from other sectors also commented) suggested that AHDB services do not provide value for money. Some suggested that AHDB services are of poor quality and some suggested that AHDB services are ineffective or are of no value.

Question 12: How would you prefer to see AHDB's services to your sector(s) funded?

Proportion of respondents who selected each option for funding of AHDB services.



Between 81%-95% of respondents answered this question across each funding method. Respondents were able to select a single option for each funding method. Response categories were 'Strongly support', 'Support', 'Neither support nor oppose', 'Oppose', 'Strongly oppose', 'Don't know' and 'No opinion'. Some response categories have been grouped together for analysis.

Q12(a) – Statutory levy

There was strong support for AHDB services to be funded by a statutory levy with two thirds (67%) of respondents selecting support options, with over 50% supporting the statutory levy across every sector. Respondents who answered about the lamb (73%), cereals (75%) and oilseeds (78%) sectors most frequently selected 'Strongly support' or 'Support'. Respondents who answered about the dairy and potatoes sectors were less positive with about half (54% and 57% respectively) in support and nearly a third (34% and 36% respectively) selecting oppose options.

Q12(b) – Voluntary levy

Overall, most (57%) respondents oppose a voluntary levy as the funding mechanism for AHDB services, with less than a quarter (22%) of respondents supporting it. Respondents answering about nearly every sector strongly opposed the voluntary levy mechanism selecting oppose options 57%-63% of the time, the exception being those who answered about the dairy sector who selected oppose options less frequently at 46% of the time.

Q12(c) – Charging

Responses to this category are fairly mixed with many respondents (44%) selecting that they oppose a charging mechanism to fund AHDB services, 33% selecting that they would support it and 19% selecting that they would neither support nor oppose it. There was relatively consistent opposition to the charging funding method across the sectors, although those responding about the pork sector opposed the least with just over a third (36%) selecting the oppose options. There was some variation over the sectors offering support for charging with the lowest support from the oilseeds sector at just over a quarter (27%) and those responding from the pork sector selecting support options the most frequently at 49%.

Q12(d) – Other method

This question received a lower response rate than the others. Overall, half (50%) of respondents selected either 'No opinion' or 'Don't know' options when responding to funding AHDB services by another method. A quarter (25%) of respondents oppose funding AHDB services by another method with 9% supporting it. Responses are fairly consistent across all sectors.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail including what 'Other method' you would prefer, if any, whether you have different views for different sectors.

Nearly a third (31%) of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, the vast majority (70%) of those that did so made comments relating to the question.

Comments that offered **support for the statutory levy mechanism** to fund AHDB services were the most frequently repeated. Of these, most stated that any funding method other than statutory would not be suitable to fund AHDB services. The National Pig Association (NPA) sees a statutory levy as the only equal, fair method in which all levy payers can access services provided by AHDB. According to the National Beef Association (NBA) a statutory level is the only way to ensure that all contribute to industry development regardless of the size of their business.

Many respondents agreed that the current statutory funding method is the most appropriate and that it works well. Some suggested that without a statutory funding method AHDB would cease to exist. Some respondents felt that the statutory levy supports and benefits all levy payers, others think that a statutory levy is the most effective way to ensure that AHDB receives the necessary funds to be able to carry out its services. The Ulster Farmers Union stated that a statutory levy gives transparency and reassurance that levy funds are used to take forward work for the industry and gain support from industry.

The vast majority of respondents who expressed these opinions selected 'Strongly support' to question 12a. Most responses on this theme came from those responding about the oilseeds, beef and lamb sectors.

“I believe a statutory levy is really the only way to fund and achieve the aims of a levy board”

Livestock farmer, England-South West

A widely held view was that **a voluntary levy funding method is flawed**, with respondents agreeing that a voluntary funding method would not work. Comments included that it would increase bureaucracy, would reduce the independence of AHDB's services, many people would not contribute to funding it and that non-levy payers would benefit, which would be seen as unfair. The vast majority of respondents who expressed these opinions selected 'Strongly oppose' or 'Oppose' to question 12b. Responses were evenly spread across sectors. The Scottish Dairy Cattle Association (SDCA) suggested that a voluntary levy or other method would not work. The NPA responded that inevitably income would drop in the case of a voluntary levy.

“Voluntary contributions will result in a massively reduced income, uncertain cash flow and lead to the failure of the AHDB business model”

Auctioneer and small-scale beef and sheep farmer, England-South West

Respondents offered their **suggestions for another funding method for AHDB services**. The most frequently mentioned suggestion was a basic statutory levy with the option of paying a voluntary levy or charging for additional services. Other suggestions, though made less frequently, included raising funds through sector businesses to spend on mutually beneficial activities, a levy method that reflects market prices and raising funds through a food tax.

“The 'other method' would be a basic sector statutory levy with the option of additional charges for additional information available through closed user groups”

Arable farmer, England-East Midlands

Some respondents expressed support for a charging funding method, with respondents agreeing that if AHDB services are of value then charging producers, growers and others would work as a funding mechanism. Comments included that charging allows for individual choice (as to whether to pay for services), so is fairer, offers better value for money, is more efficient, and would drive better quality services from AHDB. The National Sheep Association (NSA) suggest that certain services such as the Livestock Information Program could be charged, although this would need further discussion.

“If AHDB charged we could pick and choose what we needed”

Mixed-sector farmer, England-East of England

There were fewer comments regarding **opposition to a charging funding method**. Comments on this included that charging would only work for particular services, issues or products, it would be more difficult to develop a long-term strategy, is more expensive than statutory and it increases bureaucracy. The NPA stated that a charging approach would be unsustainable for producers in the pig sector who are working to tight budgets and uncertain returns from the market to fund such services. The vast majority of respondents who hold this opinion selected oppose options for question 12c.

“The industry would become more insular and specific, as people would work more with just their own grower group and customer.....this could lead to more targeted results, but may also lead to increase costs and potential duplication of work”

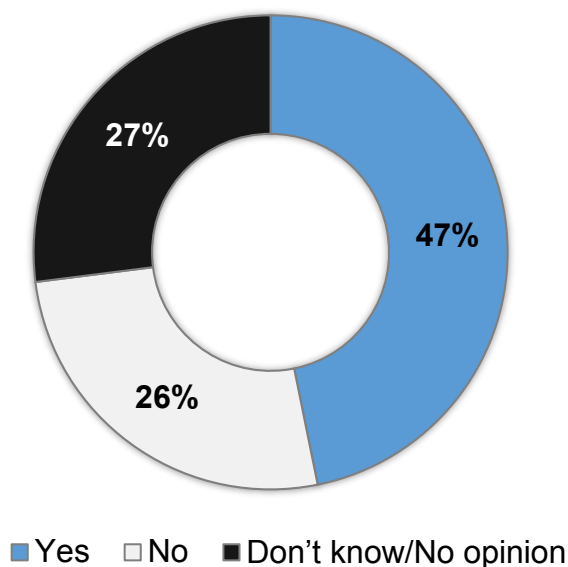
Mixed-sector farmer, England-East Midlands

Comments not directly related to the question

A relatively high number of responses to did not address this free-text question directly. Of these, most respondents shared their views on who should be contributing to the levy to fund services, with many suggesting that the government should contribute or match-fund the levy. Some respondents shared views on alternative methods of levy calculation with particular reference to the horticulture sector.

Question 13: If a statutory levy continues in your sector(s), do you think that the right businesses are paying the levy today?

Proportion of respondents who selected an option on whether the right businesses are paying the levy today.



98% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Overall, participants responded that if the statutory levy were to continue in their sectors, the right businesses are currently paying the levy, with nearly half of respondents (47%) agreeing with this opinion. The second most frequently selected response options were 'No opinion' or 'Don't know' with over a quarter (27%) choosing either of those options.

There was some variation in views on this across the sectors, with respondents answering about the cereals and oilseeds sectors selecting 'Yes' around 60% of the time (the highest of all sectors), and the beef, lamb and pork sectors broadly agreeing that the right businesses are paying the levy (selecting this between 47% and 52% of the time). On the other hand those responding about the dairy, potatoes and horticulture sectors responded with a fairly even split between 'Yes', 'No' and 'No opinion/don't know'.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

Just over a quarter (27%) of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, and of those just over 40% gave comments relating to the question itself. Overall the response rate to the question was relatively low.

Of those who responded in the free-text question, most felt that **others in the food supply chain should contribute to the levy**, particularly retailers such as large supermarkets. Many of those who responded commented that processors, including abattoirs, should contribute to the levy and a few respondents agree that packers should pay the levy. Most responses were from the beef and lamb sectors.

“Retailers exceeding a certain turnover should contribute. They make the most money out of food and yet pay nothing”

Livestock farmer, England-West Midlands

Respondents suggested that **not all those who are supposed to pay the levy currently do so**. Some of those respondents are of the opinion that more needs to be done to improve the enforcement of levy payment to ensure that all those who should be paying do so. The vast majority of respondents who hold this opinion were responding from the horticulture sector.

“Too many growers are not paying the levy making it more expensive for the rest of us”

Tree fruit grower, England-South East

A few responses suggested that **levy should be paid by those who deal with farming produce at other stages of on-farm production**. Suggestions included that levy should be paid by those who produce animal feed for their own animals, those who sell livestock, and a levy on all stages of animal production before finishing. The vast majority of respondents who hold this opinion were responding from the beef sector.

“I find it surprising the levy isn't paid for farmers who feed their own grains to stock as they also benefit from the benefits of the levy money paid by others”

Arable farmer, England-East Midlands

Some respondents agreed that currently the correct businesses are paying the levy, it is a fair system and should remain as it is. The NPA sees the current method as working well with the right business paying for AHDB services.

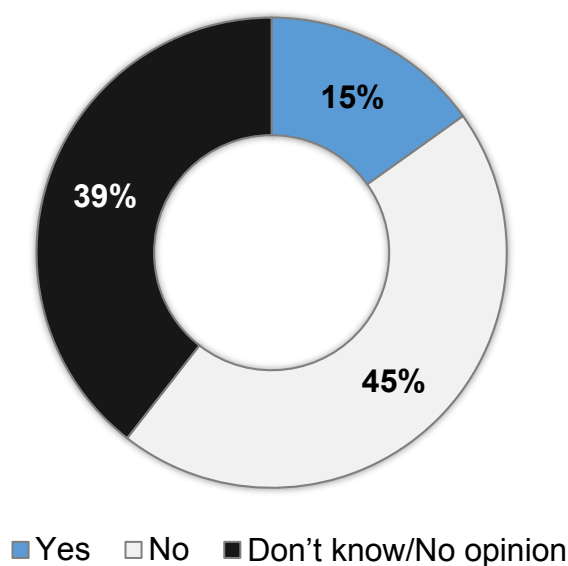
“The levy is paid by all producers and so the cost is fairly distributed”

National Beef Association

Very few respondents mentioned that the levy should apply to other farming sectors. Suggestions included extending the levy to all animal producers, all fruit growers, the poultry sector and the viticulture sector.

Question 14: AHDB currently represents six sectors: Pork, Beef and Lamb in England; Dairy, Potatoes and Horticulture in GB; and Cereals and oilseeds in the UK. Do you think that any other sector(s) or sub-sector(s) should be supported by AHDB through a statutory levy mechanism?

Proportion of participants who selected an option on whether any other sector(s) or sub-sector(s) should be supported by AHDB through a statutory levy mechanism



98% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Overall, only 15% of respondents think that any other sectors should be supported, with 45% selecting 'No' and 39% selecting 'Don't know' or 'No opinion'. Similar levels of agreement were seen across most sectors, with those responding about the pork sector selecting 'Yes' a little more frequently (25%).

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

20% of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, and of those approximately two-thirds (66%) gave comments relating to the question itself. Overall the response rate to the question was quite low. Several themes were identified from the free-text responses, which are set out below.

The most frequent suggestion was that **the poultry sector should be supported by AHDB through a statutory levy mechanism**. The vast majority of respondents who held this view selected 'Yes' to question 10. Most responses were from those commenting on the red meat sectors (beef, lamb and pork).

“The poultry sector has similar demands for market access to the livestock sectors. Without a levy they are unable to benefit from a partnership working approach”

British Pig Association

As equally frequent in number were responses giving **support for other arable crops being supported by AHDB**. Of those, most would like to see pulses such as peas and beans joined into the AHDB levy. Some respondents suggested that AHDB should incorporate or collaborate with the Processors and Growers Research Organisation (PGRO) and some respondents are of the opinion that energy crops should be subject to the levy. The vast majority of respondents who were keen for other arable crops being supported selected 'Yes' to question 10. The majority of these were responding about the cereals sector, with many from the oilseeds sector but much fewer from the horticulture sector.

“Pulses are currently covered by PGRO. There is an overlap of activities and there could be significant benefits for closer cooperation between PGRO and AHDB in terms of cost savings, KE activities and better coordination of research funding”

Seed merchant, England-East Midlands

Respondents showed **support for other produce and innovative sectors being supported by the AHDB levy**. There was a diverse range of suggestions including fish farming, renewable energy, calls to increase the diversity of produce, agri-tourism and for AHDB to cover all of agriculture and horticulture. The vast majority of respondents who had this view selected 'Yes' to question 10, with this opinion shared evenly across each sector.

“If other currently non supported sectors feel that they would benefit from AHDB support and were prepared to contribute financially, they should be given the opportunity to do so”

Mixed-sector farmer, Northern Ireland

There were respondents who were **unsupportive of additional sectors/sub-sectors being supported by AHDB**. Some respondents said they would prefer fewer sectors in the current AHDB structure. Overall, comments were shared evenly by respondents answering about each sector.

“AHDB are already far too big and not doing what the levy payers want them to, this would be much worse with more sectors”

Lamb producer, England-South West

Respondents would like to see **other horticulture sub-sectors being supported by AHDB through a statutory levy mechanism**. Suggestions included viticulture, cider apples, and ornamental horticulture and landscape, with some respondents requesting a greater coverage of horticulture sub-sectors more generally. Respondents who shared these views selected ‘Yes’ to question 10 and there was a higher proportion of comments from those responding about the horticulture sector than other sectors.

“UK Vines and Cider Apples. They would benefit tremendously by joining the levy board!”

Soft fruit grower, England-East of England

Of approximately equal frequency, respondents wanted **other livestock sectors and sub-sectors to be supported by the AHDB levy**. Those most frequently suggested were venison and game, and goat. Respondents mostly selected ‘Yes’ to question 10 and there was a higher proportion of comments from those responding about the meat and dairy sectors.

“All the major farmed livestock species (and all their constituent breeds and other distinctive non-breed and within-breed populations) should be supported through a statutory levy mechanism”

Rare Breeds Survival Trust

Although it does not directly answer the question, a few respondents expressed that they would like AHDB to **extend its sector activities to more parts of the UK**. Of these, some suggested a more UK-wide approach and some specified that Northern Ireland should be incorporated more. Respondents who held this view mostly selected ‘Yes’ to question 10.

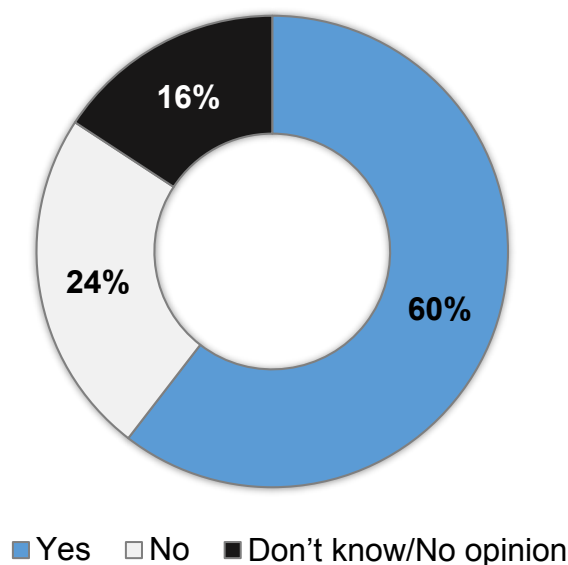
“There could be merit in developing a central funding pot to support UK-wide trade and marketing efforts underpin all 4 UK devolved nation promotional activities. This would help to avoid duplication and unnecessary internal competition”

National Sheep Association

Section 4: Levy collection

Question 15: Are you content with the current point of collection for the levy in your sector(s)?

Proportion of participants who selected an option on whether they are content with the current point of collection for the levy in their sector(s)



99% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Overall, 60% of respondents were content with the current point of levy collection in their sector(s). 69% of those responding about the oilseeds sector selected 'Yes' to being content. Those responding on the cereals and lamb sectors selected 'Yes' with a similarly high frequency, with those answering about the beef sector doing so just under two-thirds (63%) of the time.

The least content were respondents who answered about the potato sector, selecting 'Yes' 43% of the time (respondents from that sector selected 'No' the most frequently at 35%). Between 50% and 55% of those responding about the dairy, pork and horticulture sectors were content.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

Fewer than 20% of the total number of respondents to the survey responded to this free-text question, and of those just over half (52%) gave comments relating to the question

itself. Overall the response rate to the question was quite low. Several themes were identified in the free-text responses, which are described below.

Most respondents commented that **the current point of levy collection in their sector is effective and works well**. Responses were received from those answering about each and every sector, although there were more from the beef, cereals, lamb and dairy sectors. A few respondents stated that the current point of collection for the levy should remain the same, with a smaller number suggesting that the current point of levy collection is fair. Nearly all respondents who had this view selected 'Yes' to question 15. Dairy UK remarked that the existing levy collection system in the Dairy sector is cost effective and does not need to change.

“The current point of collection is established, understood and works, and consequently we see no reason for change”

National Sheep Association

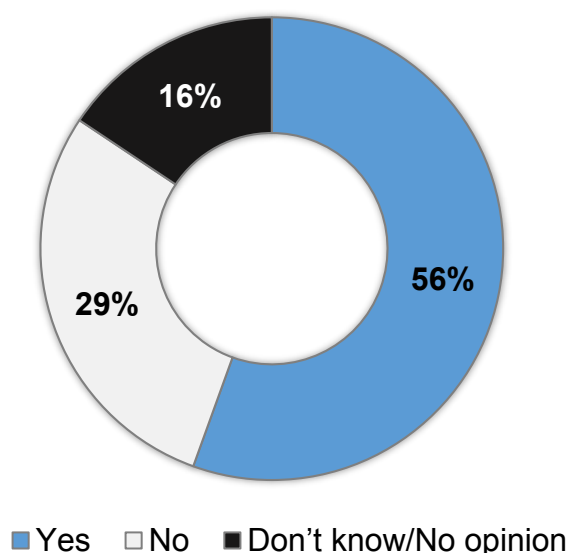
With nearly half the frequency of comments to the previous viewpoint, some respondents indicated that **the current point of collection needs to be fairer and needs to change**. Respondents were answering about the horticulture, lamb, beef and pork sectors. The majority of respondents who had these views selected 'Yes' to question 10.

“It is unfair that we have to pay based on the point of sale cost rather than the overall net business profit/loss”

Tree fruit grower, England-South West

Question 16: Are you content with the current basis of calculation of the levy for your sector(s) (for example per head slaughtered, per tonne sold/bought, per hectare planted, percentage of turnover, per litre)?

Proportion of participants who selected an option on whether they are content with the current basis of calculation of the levy in their sector(s).



99% of respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select a single option.

Overall, 56% of respondents were content with the current basis of levy calculation, with 29% being dissatisfied. Of those who responded about the lamb, cereals and oilseeds sectors, 63%, 64%, and 66% respectively selected 'Yes', compared with only 37% and 38% of those who were responding about the potatoes and horticulture sectors.

43% of those who responded as part of the potato and horticulture sectors were dissatisfied with the current method of calculation, the highest of all sectors.

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail, including whether you have different views for different sectors.

Free-text responses to this question were provided by only 14% of the total number of respondents to the survey, however only 10% of those who gave these responses answered whether they were content with the current basis of levy calculation. Overall the response rate to the question was low.

Most of the comments provided explanations about the level of satisfaction with the current calculation basis for the levy or suggested alternative methods.

Of the 10% who responded to this free-text question, a significant proportion indicated **dissatisfaction with the turnover basis of calculation of the levy**. Some of these respondents commented that the deductions are not suitable for businesses or the levy calculation needs to be fairer, whilst others mentioned that they would prefer to base the calculation on profitability. Other comments included that levy should be based on physical, and not financial, output with some stating that it is unfair to base levy on packed produce value. The majority of comments against a turnover based calculation were from those responding about the horticulture sector. A few from the pork and cereals sectors commented that they did not support a turnover based calculation and they were content with how their levy was calculated.

“The current per head approach remains the most sensible...Using other methods such as percentage of turnover or herd size could be a risk given the fluctuations in market prices and therefore producer incomes which would affect the AHDB budget year on year”

National Pig Association

Support for the current basis of levy calculation was voiced with a similar frequency to the previous theme (dissatisfaction with the turnover basis of calculation of the levy). Comments included that the calculation of the levy is acceptable, it works or is fair, and that the calculation method should remain the same. The vast majority of respondents providing these comments had also selected that they were content with the current basis of calculation. A few respondents who were answering about the cereals sector who were content with the basis of the levy calculation stated it should also include home-grown feed. Comments included “Practical and uncomplicated, works well” (a respondent answering about the beef sector) and “It is simple and works” (a respondent answering about both the cereals and oilseed sectors).

“The levy if it has to continue must be per litre produced or handled”

Scottish Dairy Cattle Association

Some respondents to this question suggested that the levy should be calculated either as a percentage of the sale value or to follow market/farm gate prices. Respondents who held this view had also answered that they were not content with the levy calculation and this included respondents from all the sectors.

A few respondents commented that the levy should be treated the same across all sectors and made suggestions of how this should be applied, including per hectare or as a percentage of turnover. Most comments, however, did not specify a method of calculation.

Others stated that the basis of the calculation should be per tonne of crop. Most of these comments came from those responding about the potato sector.

Regional events – Summary of discussion

Three stakeholder discussion events were held alongside the request for views on the AHDB.

Discussions were based around two questions:

1. What are the key attributes of a successful levy-funded support mechanism for the agriculture and horticulture industries?
2. What does AHDB do well? How could they do better?

Discussions amongst groups dominantly revolved around the second question. A range of themes emerged from the discussions with many related to the questions in the request for views survey and some additional comments that did not relate directly to the questions.

A summary of the themes that emerged from the events is presented here. These themes were the most frequently repeated comments amongst individuals during the discussions.

The main themes that emerged from these discussions were:

- **AHDB Research activity including:**
 - it is valuable but not value for money
 - AHDB needs to find out what industry wants and needs
 - research needs to be independent
 - a need to focus on long-term issues rather than the easier to prove short-term ones
 - AHDB should prioritise topics that have benefits on farm. Research needs to be relevant to all farms and at all scales
 - some research does not deliver actual innovation and the information is already known. AHDB is behind the curve
 - research needs to be led by industry and farmers
 - research does not benefit the top performing farmers and concentrates on helping lower performing farmers to average performance level
 - AHDB needs to be aware of similar research being done outside the UK
 - research is not well communicated
 - spending on research needs to be accountable

- AHDB should be imaginative and try to promote research that helps across sectors
 - AHDB needs to have a 5 or 10 year review of the aims and requirements from each sector
 - AHDB's research delivery style is aimed at larger-scale farmers who can understand the content but smaller-scale farmers cannot understand the information (and/or it can be patronising to those larger farmers)
- **AHDB Knowledge Exchange activity including:**
 - participants were positive about monitor farms - there were suggestions that these could be expanded further
 - monitor farms need a better platform to share insights - delivery and communication is not good enough at the moment
 - horizon reports are very useful and well thought of but accessing them is ineffective
 - web-based approach is good (including the subscriber email service)
 - knowledge transfer events are poorly attended
 - monitor farms do not involve enough farmers
 - AHDB should deliver knowledge via a 'knowledge hub' that farmers can access rather than 'telling' farmers the information
 - AHDB duplicates information that is already widely available for free
 - AHDB should facilitate, rather than deliver, training
 - **AHDB Market Development activity including:**
 - there is too much generic marketing - there needs to be more focus on promoting distinctive products and diversification of products
 - levy payers are unaware of how effective marketing activities have been (with the dairy sector being the exception) - AHDB needs to be better at assessing whether promotional activities work and inform levy payers of their impact
 - there were mixed reviews across sectors on the need for (and the value of) marketing
 - this activity is really good in some sectors and very beneficial but not much money is spent on it

- there is a need for an overall strategy so that industry can have a holistic approach to marketing
- **AHDB Export Development activity including:**
 - market access could be undertaken by government rather than AHDB
 - export development should be a core focus and AHDB have a key role in it
 - market access is a big concern post-EU Exit
 - AHDB are good at this activity for the red meat sectors
 - opening new markets works for some sectors but not all (for example not for cereals and arable where competing globally is not a priority)
 - AHDB are under-resourced to undertake this activity
 - AHDB needs to demonstrate the impact of this activity over time
 - AHDB needs to have a joined-up approach
- **AHDB Communications including:**
 - AHDB are doing well overall but there is some concern over the lack of impact (especially from ornamental growers in the horticulture sector) - pork marketing appears to have had an impact but this is not clear
 - a particular activity might be valuable but if it is not visible it cannot be appreciated
 - it is difficult for levy payers to influence spending and priorities - there is a need for better communication for each sector
 - the communication strategy needs to be better for levy payers (more articles, newsletters, direct correspondence, etc.)
 - AHDB's website is poorly thought of
 - better communication is needed more generally
 - communications from AHDB are one-way
- **AHDB boards including:**
 - sector boards have less influence on the overall organisation - it is felt that sector boards just 'rubber stamp' ideas
 - there is a lack of transparency and accountability from the main board

- it is felt that board structures and decisions are made from top to bottom - there is a lack of consultation with levy payers
- the board is too separated and specialised by sector - it would be better if board members had cross-sector skills (e.g. finance, technology)
- there are too many sector boards in the same space trying to influence the activities for the whole of AHDB
- the relationship with levy payers has deteriorated and the board is perceived as being remote from levy payers
- AHDB boards are filled with individuals who are not necessarily prominent or known by levy payers
- board appointments are not transparent and sector board membership is not known to the sectors they represent

- **AHDB Governance including**

- levy payers do not have enough say in how AHDB operates - they would like more control and more say on AHDB priorities
- levy payers want greater accountability
- there is a sense of disillusionment with AHDB boards
- there is a lack of trust in governance
- levy payer representation is insufficient
- the current governance structure is silo based by sector
- there was a suggestion of an annual survey on AHDB activities, its spending, the research agenda and possibly other items
- AHDB seems remote and inaccessible to many levy payers

- **Funding and levy collection including**

- the compulsory levy is necessary and works
- if the levy was not statutory people would not pay - this would impact the funding that is necessary
- the levy should be paid by all who benefit from AHDB activities (e.g. retailers benefit hugely without paying the levy)
- the statutory levy is only justifiable if AHDB delivers enough to levy payers

- AHDB is too relaxed as a consequence of its funding being through a statutory levy

- **Data including:**

- there were concerns over the accessibility to survey data, the robustness of analysis and transparency
- quality of analysis related to cereal/grain/ornamental has decreased over time
- some positive examples of data were cited - payment data from pork producers/processors and the Electronic Medicines Book (pork antibiotics)- the approach used on the successful pork antibiotics data collection hub should expand into other initiatives
- data must be a priority
- AHDB is well placed to provide current and reliable data for all sectors that is centralised for easier access and use

- **Sustainability including:**

- lots of money is spent on this
- to some farmers the suggestions are too obvious (e.g. farmers already know how to protect soil)
- money needs to be given to farmers who wish to undertake large sustainable operations
- environmental sustainability is important but AHDB are seen as under-resourced to play a large role in it

- **The option to have a five year vote on the continuation of the levy including:**

- the wish to have a 5 year vote

Additional comments including:

- **General comments:**

- a need for AHDB to demonstrate value for money
- AHDB is too influenced by government
- it is too bureaucratic
- AHDB need to measure the impact of its activities

- AHDB is perceived as being too focused on England
 - there are doubts about the benefits of a cross-sector approach
 - AHDB should be farmer and industry led
- **On scope:**
 - AHDB needs to see the bigger picture – they are perceived to be too productivity focused and are not meeting their sustainability mission/purpose
 - AHDB tries to do too much - it cannot do everything
 - much of what AHDB does is not applicable to real farming
 - AHDB may have a role in delivering higher skills (need to get lower performing farmers up to the top) for example the core skills required for running a business
- **On Engagement:**
 - AHDB needs to be more engaging with processors and retail, and other parts of the wider industry
 - AHDB must get better at listening to farmers - it does not seem to listen to the broad farming community, especially those at the grass roots level
 - AHDB does not connect with the bottom 20% of farmers - currently AHDB does not engage with the farmers who need the information the most
 - AHDB needs to speak the farmers' language – it comes across as too removed and patronising
 - industry needs to be aware of AHDB's direction of travel
- **On spending:**
 - there is a need for AHDB to demonstrate value for money
 - levy payers want more say in how levy money is spent
 - retain sectoral control and spending

Annex 1: About the analysis

It is important to keep in mind that public consultations are not necessarily representative of the wider population. Since anyone can submit their views, individuals and organisations who are more able and willing to respond are more likely to participate.

Because of this likelihood for self-selection, the approach of this analysis has not only been to count how many respondents held a certain view but also to include qualitative analysis of the additional comments provided to understand the range of key issues raised by respondents, and the reasons for them holding their views. This includes reflecting on the areas of agreement and disagreement between different groups of respondents.

In presenting the results, we have aimed to provide a broad picture of all views and comments. Therefore, a range of qualitative terms are used, including 'most' 'many' 'some', and 'a few'. 'Most' refers to a significant majority, 'many' refers to when a substantial number of respondents have a similar view, 'some' refers to when there is a reasonable number of respondents with a similar view and 'a few' refers to a small number of respondents. Interpretation of the balance of opinion must be taken in the context of the question asked, as not every respondent answered all the questions, and not every respondent who provided an answer to a closed question provided additional detail.

In this respect, qualitative terms are only indicative of relative opinions to questions based on who responded. Therefore, they cannot be assumed to relate numerically back to the total number of people and organisations.

Annex 2: Types of response

Online survey

Respondents were encouraged to submit an online response by completing an online survey hosted on Defra's consultation website, Citizen Space¹.

The online survey followed the questions asked in the consultation paper, featuring both closed (for example, tick box questions), and open questions (asking for respondents to detail their views or provide further evidence or examples).

Respondents could answer as many or as few questions as they chose. Additionally, respondents could select which main sectors they were responding about and had the opportunity to select more than one sector.

For the closed questions statistics are provided on the responses to each proposal. For open questions, a summary of the main themes emerging from the responses is provided.

Email and post

In addition to completion of the online survey, responses could be submitted directly by email or post. Some, but not all, of these responses answered the consultation questions directly – some related to issues not covered by the consultation document or provided additional information and more general views on topics relevant to the consultation proposals.

Where responses answered specific consultation questions, these have been included in the analysis of each proposal. Where responses provided additional information or general views on related topics, we have reflected these in the summary of key themes that emerged from additional comments in the most relevant section.

Organisational responses

Organisations and stakeholder groups were able to submit responses to the consultation on behalf of their members. The key arguments raised in these organisational responses are included alongside individual responses in each of the relevant sections. A list of organisations which submitted a response is included in Annex 3.

¹ <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/farming/views-on-ahdb/>

Events

Defra, in collaboration with the Scottish and Welsh governments and DAERA, facilitated three regional stakeholder events during the consultation period. A range of people attended these events, including farmers and growers representing various farming sectors, industry and membership body executives, and others. The events were held in the London, York and Bristol.

The events included facilitated group discussions enabling participants to share their views on AHDB. They were not intended for participants to discuss in detail, or respond to, the questions set out in the request for views on the AHDB survey, but to expand the discussion more broadly into other topics. Detailed notes were taken by officials on each of the group discussions and have been analysed and summarised separately in the relevant sections of this document.

Annex 3: List of responding organisations

This list of responding organisations is not exhaustive. Rather, it is based on those where the respondents declared their organisation. This may include responses from individuals who are members of specific organisations but does not necessarily reflect that organisation's views.

These named organisations responded either to the online survey, by email or post, or had a representative at the regional stakeholder events. The list does not include those organisations where the respondents requested that their responses be treated as confidential.

Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)	The British Society of Plant Breeders Ltd (BSPB)
Agrimetrix	The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV)
Agri-Tech East	Centre for Crop Health and Protection (CHAP)
Animal Health and Welfare Board England	CLA
Askham Bryan College	County Crops Ltd (a division of Procam CP)
Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS) incorporating the National Association of Catering Butchers	Dairy UK
BASE UK-Biodiversity, Agriculture, Soil and Environment	Duchy and Bicton Colleges (The Cornwall College Group)
British Meat Processors Association (BMPA)	Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW)
British Oat and Barley Millers Association (BOBMA)	Farming Connect
British Potato Trade Association (BPTA)	Fresh Potato Suppliers Association (FPSA)
British Protected Ornamentals Association (BPOA)	Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC)
British Tomato Growers' Association	Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
British Pig Association (BPA)	Grain and Feed Trade Association (GAFTA)
	Harper Adams University

Hybu Cig Cymru (Meat Promotion Wales) (HCC)

Innovation for Agriculture (IFA)

Innovative Farmers (partnership between Soil Association, LEAF, Innovation for Agriculture, Organic Research Centre)

The International Meat Trade Association (IMTA)

Landworkers Alliance

LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming)

The Livestock Auctioneers Association Limited (LAA)

The Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC)

Maltsters' Association of Great Britain

National Association of British and Irish Millers (NABIM)

The National Association of Cider Makers (NACM)

National Beef Association (NBA)

National Craft Butchers (NCM)

National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC)

National Pig Association (NPA)

National Sheep Association (NSA)

NFU

NFU Cymru

NFU Scotland

NFU Watercress Association

Organic Research Centre (on behalf of English Organic Forum, including Organic Arable)

Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)

Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST)

Red Tractor

Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RABDF)

Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)

Scotch Whisky Association

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW)

Scottish Dairy Cattle Association (SDCA)

Scottish Land and Estates

Senior Skills Leadership Group (coalition of leading industry bodies and organisations)

Sustainable Food Trust

Tenant Farmers Association (TFA)

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group

Ulster Farmers Union

Welsh Organic Forum

The Wye and Usk Foundation