

Outcomes from the UK Farm to Fork summit

Today the Prime Minister and DEFRA Secretary met representatives from across the whole UK supply chain, from farm to fork, for a Summit on how government and industry can work together to support a thriving UK food industry.

In June 2022 we published the Government Food Strategy, which set out our vision for a prosperous agri-food sector that ensures a secure food supply. We recognise that the year since it was published has been particularly challenging for our farmers and growers. The UK Farm to Fork Summit is the next step in growing a thriving British food and drink sector, which will put more British produce on supermarket shelves in the UK and around the world. This will also help us to deliver our clear ambition in the strategy to maintain production at current levels, where we produce domestically 60% by value of all the food we need.

1: INNOVATION IN THE FARMING AND FOOD SECTORS

Our future food and farming sector will be more productive and resilient thanks to British science and innovation. Three farming innovation competitions have launched since January this year providing a total of £21.5 million of funding.

We have invested £8m in research through our crop Genetic Improvement Networks over the last 5 years to improve UK food security and environmental outcomes. We will build upon this through substantial additional investment to unlock the potential of precision breeding, following royal assent for the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act.

We will continue to work closely with the Food and Drink Sector Council, which brings together leaders across the whole of the agri-food chain and across government, on the issues that it plans to focus on for the next year including: the future of food; sustainability; workforce challenges; and supply resilience.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced:

- A further **£12.5 million is being made available in May to support research projects** that will support environmental sustainability and resilience on farms.
- Additional **investment of up to around £30m to unlock the potential of precision breeding.**
- **A working group to bring plant breeders, food manufacturers and retailers together** to agree an approach that enables these products to reach our shelves.

2: SKILLS AND SUFFICIENT LABOUR

We recognise the importance of ensuring the industry can access the labour it needs, on farm and through the supply chain. With this year's expansion of the Seasonal Workers Visa route came a commitment to improve the welfare of migrant workers, and government welcomes the steps the sector is taking to take ownership of welfare issues and to address them head-on.

We want to encourage more people to take up farming and food sector roles and invest in the technology of the future. The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture will be officially launched later this year, strengthening support for skills and careers across the agriculture and horticulture sectors. We want to make farming an attractive career choice and we are currently concluding the pilot phase of new ways to support new entrants and those looking to scale up their farming businesses to develop the skills needed to be a successful farming entrepreneur.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we confirmed:

- The **number of seasonal workers for horticulture available in 2024 will again be 45,000 (plus 2,000 for poultry)**, an uplift of 15,000 compared to what was available to businesses at the start of 2022, with the potential for a further 10,000 visas should the demand be proven.
- That **we will respond to the Independent Review of Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain in autumn 2023**.
- At the same time **the government will set out how it will support the sector to access the labour it needs** alongside actions to reduce the sector's reliance on migrant labour including via our work on automation and promoting domestic labour procurement and training. This will also be informed by the Review of Automation in Horticulture published last July and build on ongoing support for R&D and innovation in robots and autonomous vehicles.

3: NEW FARMING SCHEMES

We are moving away from the EU's bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy which did little for food production, farming or the environment, towards a new system of rural payments. We have already seen the number of agreements in Countryside Stewardship increase by 94% since 2020 and now almost one third of farm holdings are in an agri-environmental scheme. Landscape Recovery was also hugely oversubscribed, with all projects involving farmers including tenants, and we will shortly open applications to the next round of farmers and land managers. The Sustainable Farming Incentive will open with a new and improved, expanded offer later in summer 2023. Many farmers have also already applied for £168m of grant funding available this year to support investments in productivity, animal health and welfare and the environment.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced:

- As part of our new farming schemes we will replace the **Fruit & Vegetables Aid Scheme for England from 2026**, expanding the scheme to ensure that more growers, including those involved in Controlled Environment Horticulture such as glasshouses, can access investment.

4: FAIRER SUPPLY CHAINS

Farmers should be paid a fair price for their produce. We introduced new powers through the Agriculture Act 2020 to support the sector and have made great progress in our reviews of the pig and dairy supply chains.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced:

- **New reviews beginning in the Autumn in the eggs and horticulture sectors.**
- **The dairy sector regulations will be laid in Parliament this year and, having committed to taking similar action in the pig sector**, we are starting work on developing these regulations.
- We have listened to feedback from the sector and **we will not be merging the Groceries Code Adjudicator with the CMA**, in recognition of the importance of the Code and the Adjudicator in ensuring fairness in the UK food supply chain. The CMA has agreed to work with the GCA to recruit staff, improve access to professional expertise and explore what other support it might make available.

5: BOOSTING EXPORTS

Trade is a fundamental aspect of food security, enabling us to stock seasonal produce from around the world. Our food and drink exports bring £24bn to the British economy, and we have had great success stories in recent years including securing access for British lamb to the US. The Department

for Business and Trade is leading work across Government to tackle the global barriers to exports, starting with the top 100, nearly half of which are in food and drink.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced:

- **We will publish a regular snapshot of priority market access barriers**
- We will **increase by five posts the number of agricultural attaches** to reach new markets (building on the 11 we currently have in Japan, China, Vietnam, Thailand, India, UAE, Kenya, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and USA). We will work with industry to optimise the partnerships model which is fundamental to our success in maximising market access and driving growth.
- We will **invest £2m to boost our programme of global trade shows and missions**, which we will deliver in partnership with industry and the Food and Drink Export Council as well as providing **£1.6m for the GREAT food and drink campaign**
- We will **extend the hugely successful and well received Seafood Exports Package**, with an additional £1m funding for 2025-2028.
- We will also build on this model by **introducing a new £1m bespoke export support fund for the dairy sector**, with a particular focus on support for SMEs.
- We **have set out our trade commitments** [Prime Minister's open letter to British Farmers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-sets-out-trade-commitments) which will ensure British farming is at the heart of British trade. As we pursue an ambitious programme to secure new free trade agreements that boost our prosperity and grows our economy, UK trade deals will deliver new export opportunities to sell more of our world class produce to growing markets around the world, and balanced outcomes to support a thriving UK agricultural sector.

6: WATER SECURITY

Farmers need steady access to water to be productive. In a changing climate, we must plan ahead to build resilience to more intense dry or wet weather events. As we announced in our Plan for Water last month, we will accelerate around £1.6 billion of new water infrastructure delivery, including those with agricultural benefits including an £10 million water management grant for on-farm irrigation and water storage.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced that:

- We will **make abstraction licence decisions more flexible** to support changing needs of farmers, the economy and the environment in the context of climate change.
- We will **create national and regional Water Resource Management Plans** for agriculture, that will help farmers plan their water resources and ensure better resilience to drought.
- We will **support farmer-led groups to identify local water resource schemes**, building on the success of projects like Felixstowe hydrocycle.

7: ENERGY SECURITY

Energy security is linked to food security. We have already provided approximately £7bn in energy support for all businesses through the Energy Bills Relief Scheme, recognising the rise in global energy prices has impacted many food and farming businesses. This is particularly the case for glasshouses, where energy is a larger proportion of their input costs.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced that:

- Given the important **role that Controlled Environment Horticulture (CEH) plays in UK food production, the government will investigate what more can be done to support the sector.**

This will include assessing where sectors such as CEH struggle to provide the necessary data to qualify for the energy intensive industries exemption scheme.

- **We will also work with ONS to investigate the classification of controlled environment horticulture** within the UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (UK SIC), which is commonly used to make assessments for support schemes.
- To further increase domestic horticulture production and extend the growing season, **government will consider the unique needs of controlled environment horticulture**, which includes glasshouses, in their development of industrial energy policies to allow this sector to benefit from decarbonisation and better access to renewables, including in the upcoming consultation on Phase 3 of the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund in June.
- **We will explore how we can increase the resource efficiency of the sector**, and help to create a circular economy, by utilising industrial and power sector waste heat as a thermal source of energy for glasshouses and looking at options for co-location to improve energy efficiencies.

We also want to see more farmers investing in barn top solar, and the food sector utilising their vast warehouses rooftops. To support this the UK Farm to Fork Summit also announced that:

- This year we will open up investment in barn top solar through our new farming scheme grants.

8: CUTTING RED TAPE

The government is committed to providing greater planning certainty and flexibility to support the rural economy - in particular, ensuring that the planning system responds to the immediate challenges facing farmers. We want to give farmers greater freedoms to make the best use of their existing agricultural buildings and support the wider rural economy.

At the UK Farm to Fork Summit we announced that:

- We will **launch a review of planning barriers to farm diversification, including any necessary changes to permitted development later this year**. The consultation will support rural growth through diversification by allowing farmers greater freedom in how they use their buildings. For example, subject to consultation, farmers will be free to convert their buildings to process foods to sell in farm shops, without a planning application to their local authority – allowing them to diversify their income streams.
- To complement the consultation **we will launch a call for evidence to understand the best way to address barriers that farmers and land managers can face to delivering projects on their land which will improve sustainable food production, nature and biodiversity and support their businesses**.
- We will **look to revise national planning policy to ensure it fully seizes all opportunities to support levelling up of economic opportunity across rural areas** – specifically, making the approval of new controlled environment horticulture businesses a priority for councils.

At the Summit we had representation from 70 businesses, experts and representative organisations from farming, production, manufacturing, wholesale, retail and hospitality. Discussions focused on bringing great British food to the world; building resilience and transparency; strengthening sustainability and productivity across the supply chain; and growing an innovative, skilled food and farming sector. Engagement with the entire supply chain will continue as we deliver the commitments set out above.

