

Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP)

Eco Working Group – meeting minutes

The Eco Working Group is a stakeholder engagement group that provides input on policy development as part of an open policy design process. These discussions do not reflect agreed government policy.

Date: 23 February 2026

Time: 10:00am to 12:30pm

Venue: Caxton House (UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) offices) and Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Co-chairs:

- Judith Batchelar OBE, Non-Executive Director, Trustee and Advisor for Food Matters International Ltd
- Karen Lepper, Deputy Director for Environmental Sustainability, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Members:

- 22 Eco Working Group members
- officials from Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)

1. Co-chairs' welcome and updates

The co-chairs welcomed members and thanked UKRI for hosting.

Departing Defra policy team members were thanked for their contributions. New Defra policy team members were welcomed.

Members were reminded that meetings operate under Chatham House Rules and in a competition-compliant manner.

1.1 Updates from Defra

Since the previous meeting, the Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 and the Farming Profitability Review 2025 (led by Baroness Batters) were published.

The Farming and Food Partnership Board (FFPB) was formally announced at the Oxford Farming Conference.

The FDTP policy team outlined the need for alignment with these developments, as well as international considerations including the EU reset.

The team is preparing a 2026 forward look, incorporating member feedback from the November meeting. This will be shared ahead of the May session.

Members were invited to join new Task and Finish-style groups on:

- international alignment
- infrastructure and governance (to feed into Food Infrastructure and Governance (FIG) work)

2. FDTP research project presentations

2.1 Food Infrastructure and Governance (FIG) project

The FIG consortium (Arup, Open Data Institute (ODI), Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)) provided an overview of purpose, delivery approach, and timeline.

The project aims to establish a cross-sector, standardised data-sharing infrastructure with common governance.

Question and answer themes included:

- data trust and response bias
- scope queries, including land management data

2.2 Farm Data Exchange (FDE) project – AHDB

The project aims to improve reuse of existing agri-food data while prioritising trust, transparency, and control.

Early work includes qualitative interviews and a large-scale quantitative survey across beef and dairy sectors.

Key issues raised:

- farmers desire clearer data-use controls and visual summaries and inclusivity requirements (such as accessibility for neurodiverse farmers)
- feed and fertiliser data: relevance acknowledged but outside current scope owing to focus on data exchange infrastructure
- related work underway via HESTIA and carbon calculator development

3. Artificial intelligence (AI) in the agri-food chain

3.1 Session 1 – YAGRO presentation

YAGRO outlined how AI is currently deployed across farm-level tools for data ingestion, modelling and visualisation.

AI has accelerated carbon footprinting, reduced costs and improved interoperability.

Emerging opportunities include imaging, diagnostics, risk modelling, automation and robotics.

Key challenges: data rights; interoperability; bias; and regulatory lag.

3.2 Session 2 – Food Standards Agency (FSA) presentation

The FSA described AI's regulatory-level applications including hazard classification, structured data extraction for local authorities and risk modelling.

Case studies demonstrated gains in efficiency, data quality and 24/7 analytical capability.

Emphasis was placed on governance, bias reduction and maintaining public trust.

3.3 Session 3 – AI whole group discussion

Themes raised included:

- the growing number of AI-enabled tools available to farmers and the need to incorporate existing outputs and datasets
- the importance of reference datasets and sector-wide interoperability
- ensuring FIG and FDE work remains aligned with farmer needs and small-business realities
- the need for continued engagement through subgroups and opportunities to contribute on international alignment and infrastructure design

4. Summary and close

The co-chairs shared their reflections from the meeting and thanked attendees.

The next Eco Working Group meeting is 12 May 2026.