

# Farming and Food Partnership Board - summary meeting minutes

**Date:** 25 March 2026

**Format:** Hybrid

**Chair:** Secretary of State

**Deputy Chair:** Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs

## Attendees

- Sarah Bradbury, CEO, Institute of Grocery Distribution
- Tom Bradshaw, President, National Farmers Union
- Bal Dhoot, Director of Sustainability and Growth, Food and Drink Federation
- Kate Nicholls, Chair, UK Hospitality
- Emily Norton, Chair, Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board
- Andrew Opie, Director of Food and Sustainability, British Retail Consortium [online]
- Robert Sheasby, CEO, Agricultural Industries Confederation

## Defra

- Secretary of State Emma Reynolds
- Minister Angela Eagle
- Paul Kissack, Permanent Secretary
- Emily Miles, Director General, Farming, Food and Biosecurity
- Mike Rowe, Director, Farming Directorate
- Adnan Obaidullah, Deputy Director, Farming Partnership and Growth
- Farming and Partnership Board Secretariat [online]

## Introduction

The Farming and Food Partnership Board met for the first time, bringing together an initial group of representatives from across the farming and food supply chain as part of a phased approach to establishing full membership. The Board has been created in response to the Farming Profitability Review, which highlighted the need for a stronger partnership between government and industry to support more productive, profitable and resilient farm businesses.

## Overview of current global context

The Board discussed the wider geopolitical situation, with particular focus on recent developments in the Middle East and their potential implications for the UK food and farming system.

Members noted that current pressures across the food and farming system stem primarily from rising energy and distribution costs, with impacts expected to unfold over time rather than immediately. While no significant short-term risks to food availability were identified, it was noted that some farming sectors were experiencing increased fuel costs and uncertainty around key inputs, including fertiliser, should disruption persist. It was recognised that

different categories of the food system will feel these effects at different points, reflecting the time lag built into supply chains and market pricing.

Broader economic impacts were also highlighted, including reduced investment confidence among producers, ongoing logistics challenges, and pressure on the hospitality sector, which is facing both higher operating costs and a decline in inbound tourism. Members agreed that these combined factors could, if prolonged, contribute to upward pressure on consumer food prices, though this too would materialise gradually due to existing contractual and operational lags.

## Mission, scope and purpose of the board

The Chair set out a vision for a whole-system, farm-to-fork Board, focusing on productivity, profitability and resilience, across the agri-food system. The Board discussed:

- the importance of aligning sector priorities into a coherent strategic framework for the health and growth of farming in the round
- the value of establishing clear joint positions that strengthen industry–government cooperation
- the balance between supporting domestic farm productivity and profitability and enabling growth opportunities through the supply chain
- the role of sector plans as key delivery tools within a broader strategic context

Members reflected on areas where early, collective impact may be possible. Resolving planning blockers (both policy and practice) was widely supported as having the greatest potential for system-wide benefit in the near term. There was strong support for ensuring that sustainability, market confidence, and data transparency were embedded throughout the Board's work.

The Board confirmed its mission to:

- drive medium to long term improvements in farm productivity
- increases in farm profitability
- strengthen the contribution of domestically produced food to national food security

## Structure and ways of working

The Board reviewed possible structures for subgroups and how these could accelerate progress. Discussions covered:

- the benefits of maintaining a small core Board, noting that a compact group supports more focused discussion, clearer decision-making and faster progress
- the need for task-and-finish subgroups bringing together right mix of government, non-government, trade and industry experts to work at pace on specific issues, drawing on relevant expertise across government and industry
- the importance of data and establishing a shared evidence base (of both markets and consumers) to ensure consistent decision-making and effective communication
- the role of wider industry engagement, including how to involve organisations and businesses beyond core membership without compromising the Board's strategic remit

It was agreed that the approach should enable close collaboration across government while ensuring insights from the wider supply chain inform discussions. The Board concluded that it should remain a small, strategic group, with further consideration of only a very small number of additional members if needed to ensure the right breadth and balance of perspectives.

## Sector Growth Plans

The Board briefly discussed the approach to developing **Sector Growth Plans (SGPs)** where:

- members considered how SGPs could be designed to reflect the distinct needs and opportunities of each sector while operating within a consistent overarching framework
- there was interest in progressing additional sectors where conditions support early action, with poultry endorsed as a potential area for work in parallel to the horticulture SGP

The Board agreed to formally commission the horticulture Sector Growth Plan, to be developed through existing expert groups with coordination from Defra.

## Closing remarks

The Chair summarised that the Board's early priorities include strengthening confidence across the sector, improving cross-government coordination, and establishing a clear programme of work that reflects the full farm-to-fork system.

Members agreed to issue a joint statement (published on gov.uk) and that the next meeting should take place in May 2026 to maintain momentum.