Joint Statement by the Farming and Food Partnership Board 3rd Meeting, Monday 13 July 2026

The Farming and Food Partnership Board held its third meeting on Monday 13 July 2026. Stephen Morgan MP attended the board meeting for the first time as deputy chair, in his role as Farming Minister.

Members focussed on shaping the progress of the Horticulture Sector Growth Plan (SGP), and heard presentations from guest experts developing the three distinct components of the Plan:

- Horticulture Expert Growers Group (large scale intensive edible growers)
- Environmental Horticulture Group (ornamental representatives)
- UK Fruit and Vegetable Coalition (agroecological and SME growers)

Discussions on the Horticulture SGP included:

- the importance of increasing competitiveness
- demand as a driver for growth
- energy, water, labour and skills as barriers to productivity

Members considered areas where their supply chain expertise could best shape ambition and support growth in the sector. The board also endorsed that the Horticulture SGP could focus on a small number of key issues and crops with greatest impact and opportunity for growth and identify common issues and proposals across the varied horticulture farming and food production system.

The board also explored scope for strengthening support for farming and food development within the planning system and considered where planning constraints are having the greatest impact on growth, including in the poultry sector, and the concurrent need to access grid connections.

Members also raised concerns about water resilience and the need to unlock reservoir development more quickly and welcomed further discussions between Defra and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on planning for above ground on-farm reservoirs.

They noted the government's existing planning reform agenda and endorsed a spatially targeted approach to identifying and resolving existing and pipeline of infrastructure developments for farming, primary processing and manufacture.

Issued on behalf of the Farming and Food Partnership Board:

- The Right Honourable Emma Reynolds, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Stephen Morgan (SM), Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs
- Tom Bradshaw, National Farmers' Union (NFU) President
- Robert Sheasby, Chief Executive of the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)
- Sarah Bradbury, Chief Executive of the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD)
- Kate Nicholls, Chair of Hospitality UK (UKH)

- Emily Norton, Chair of the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)
- Andrew Opie, Director of Food & Sustainability at the British Retail Consortium (BRC)
- Karen Betts, Chief Executive of the Food & Drink Federation (FDF)