

Farming and Food Partnership Board Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference govern the membership and operation of the Farming and Food Partnership Board ('the Board'). The Terms of Reference and the role of the Board and its members will be reviewed as required.

Mission

The Board's mission is to:

- **Increase farming profitability**
- **Improve farming productivity**
- **Strengthen the contribution of domestically produced food to national food security.**

The Board will be the government's primary, Secretary of State-chaired, national, strategic, direction-setting and action-oriented forum focussed on farming profitability and productivity, operating in partnership with the farming and food industry.

The Board will explore how to unlock enduring good growth in the farming industry by considering risks, barriers and solutions to farm productivity and profitability, and increasing resilience and self-sufficiency in food and food production. This will include ways and means to increase market share of farm produce through the food production system and in both domestic as well as new and existing export markets.

Purpose

The core purpose of the Board is to work in partnership with the government to deliver a profitable, productive, sustainable farming sector in England. In doing so, it will:

- a. **inform and advise government** (not direct) on its decision making and offer advice to other key bodies who significantly influence and support farming.
- b. **help deliver a shared vision for the future of farming in England**, building on government policy direction for sustainability, resilience and food security, sectoral ambitions and market opportunities.
- c. **manage risks, resolve issues, monitor data and build enduring confidence** in farming as a vibrant, profitable and resilient sector.
- d. **leverage the resources and influence** of members to drive the strategic shifts needed across the supply chain.

- e. **provide strategic advice to shape a portfolio of sector growth plans** to optimise market opportunities and drive near, medium, and long-term improvements in farm productivity, profitability and food security.

Scope

The activity of the Board will be focused on:

- a. **English farmers and growers.** However, the Board should foster close working with government and sectoral leads across the four nations, reflecting the interconnection of the UK food system and the potential for shared benefits e.g. in opening new export markets.
- b. **All markets farmers and growers can sell into,** including both food and non-food farmed outputs. e.g. animal feed, wool, malting barley and timber as well as nature service markets, waste for circular and bio-economies.
- c. **Farmers' and growers' medium - long term economic, financial and environmental resilience** as central to securing and enhancing the competitiveness of our farming sector.

Through its focus on these areas the Board will also assist with the resilience and growth potential of the wider food supply chain and bolster our national food security. To deliver its mission, the primary focus of the Board will be on the farming sector. This growth depends on driving growth in the wider supply chain and where appropriate the Board will seek to pursue opportunities that benefit the whole farming and food sector in England and across the UK.

The Board will not focus directly on environmental outcomes, to avoid duplication with other boards and Defra initiatives, such as the work to deliver the Environmental Improvement Plan. However, environmental sustainability underpins farm resilience to ensure good growth, and the Board may consider how actions to improve these outcomes can reduce costs and improve productivity for farmers. Consistent environmental standards, measurement and reporting, and private sector investment into environmental outcomes, may also be key to unlocking additional demand for domestic produce as well as ensuring farms stay in step and remain competitive in changing global markets. The Board will also ensure that its recommendations are aligned with these wider environmental objectives.

On matters of government policy, the Board is advisory and members will hold no policy or decision-making powers. All policy recommendations of the Board will be subject to standard ministerial clearance and approval processes, which will include legal advice on statutory duties such as Public Sector Equality Duty and those under the Environment Act 2021, including where there is consideration of the delivery levers to achieve the targets set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan. Board advice will be fed into such ministerial approval considerations routinely.

Term

The FFPB is intended to be an enduring group. Membership duration is not set but will be kept under ongoing review.

Composition

The Board will be chaired by Defra Secretary of State, with the Farming Minister acting as deputy chair.

The full membership of the Board is set out in Annex 1. The Board will have a small and senior-level membership representing the whole supply chain, including government and industry. Other experts or representatives may be invited to attend the Board from time to time, as appropriate to Board priorities and meeting agendas.

Membership for the Board uses a 'seat' structure, using categories of representation to form the Board's composition.

To ensure the Board collectively reflects the drivers of productivity, profitability and market performance, seats reflect:

- **Primary farming interests.**
- **Farm inputs**, including feed, fertiliser, seed and agronomy services.
- **Primary processing and manufacturing.**
- **Markets**, including retail, out-of-home, public procurement and exports.

The membership of the Board will be made public on the [Farming and Food Partnership Board](#) on GOV.UK and will be kept under ongoing review.

Wider governance and engagement

The Board will use subgroups and relationships with a wider network of existing structures in government and outside government to help deliver on its remit. Board members are expected to proactively engage with their sectors and wider industry networks to advocate for the Board's work and agreed Board positions.

The Board is expected to complement the Food Strategy Advisory Board and other existing groups such as the Agricultural Productivity Group and Exports Taskforce.

Role and responsibilities

Members will provide input and expertise to enable the Board to deliver on its Mission. The Board membership role is unremunerated.

Board members will be asked to:

- Attend meetings at least quarterly, and more frequently where this is agreed between Board members.
- Represent their sector as well as their individual businesses, providing expertise from a commercial perspective.
- Proactively engage with their sectors and wider industry networks on the Board's work, though respecting the confidentiality of Board papers where appropriate.
- Leverage their influence and authority to advocate for change within their businesses and sectors and to drive forward actions.
- Take an equal partners approach. This means collaborating between business competitors for medium to long term mutually beneficial results across the whole food system, with all partners agreeing to act for the strategic objective of growing the farming sector.
- Share and use the best available data from government and industry.
- Agree to the publication of joint statements where the Board comes to agreed positions.

Members are expected to:

- Observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice and recommendations they provide.
- Act in accordance with Government policy on openness and comply fully with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information and any relevant legislation on disclosure of information, such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Act in accordance with UK competition law, including the Competition Act 1998 and related guidance issued by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), and shall avoid any discussion, coordination, or exchange of commercially sensitive information that could prevent, restrict, or distort competition.
- Not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their and/or their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations.
- Non-governmental members should not hold any paid or high-profile posts in a political party and not engage in specific political activities on behalf of any party on matters directly affecting the work of the Board.

Sector Growth Plans

Sector-led expert groups will take forward the more detailed work on sector growth plans. With the Board, secretariat and wider Defra working in partnership to ensure a good development process.

The distinct roles of the Board, Defra, and Sector Expert Groups are:

- **Sector Expert Groups:** Responsible for developing the sector's vision, evidence base, barriers and recommendations. Sector expert groups are responsible for working with government and FFPB to attempt to achieve a co-designed plan. Sector expert groups may establish sub-groups and draw on additional expertise from across industry, government, academia and the wider supply chain, as required, to inform discussions and recommendations.
- **The Board:** Provide strategic advice and challenge on the development of the sector growth plans, including consideration of key trade-offs, priorities and opportunities to support sustainable growth. Offer supply-chain insight throughout the process.
- **Defra:** Support the sector growth plan development process by facilitating engagement and setting out government ambitions, priorities, evidence and constraints. Defra sector teams will directly manage sector growth plan development.

Meetings

The Board shall meet at least quarterly. Members are asked to attend in person, but hybrid/online attendance will be accommodated.

Members can claim travel and subsistence allowances following the Defra travel and subsistence policy.

The length of Board meetings will be determined by the size of the agenda. The agenda shall be agreed by the board's chair.

The use of deputies is not normally permitted. However, if a member is unable to join a Board meeting, they should give as much notice as possible and may nominate a deputy, but the deputy will need to be agreed in advance with the Chair.

Additional meetings of the Board may be called by the chair at any time to consider any matters falling within the Terms of Reference. These will be by exception.

Secretariat

Defra will provide a secretariat to support the Board, the chair and its members, to enable the Board to conduct its business.

Secretariat functions will include (but are not limited to):

- Provide liaison with Ministers' office on meeting dates, agendas and logistics.
- Liaise with Board members.
- Provide advance notice of meetings.
- Provide meeting location and associated logistics.
- Set the agenda.
- Draft and provide relevant papers in advance of the meetings.

- Take minutes of each meeting and securely file them.
- Draft and provide summary notes from meetings, recording and monitoring of actions.
- Liaison with Defra comms and digital to support promotion and advocacy of Board activities.

Defra will also:

- Convene task and finish groups requested by the Board.
- Liaise with policy and analysis teams across Defra and with other government departments.
- Collate data, using industry and government sources.
- Convene relevant experts to support the development of Sector Growth Plans.
- Ensure regular updates to the Board (e.g. through standing items on the agenda) on the development of Sector Growth Plans.
- Provide challenge and quality assurance to draft Sector Growth Plans, supporting the Board's assurance and advisory role as plans are developed and implemented.
- Provide communications support for the Board, including hosting the Board page on GOV.UK, publishing the Board's joint statements, and additional comms products where appropriate.

Data and confidentiality

Members may be provided with material that is material non-public information (MNPI). It is expected that members will take due care and consideration, not share it publicly, and ensure it remains within the confines of the meeting.

Documents will be shared with board members by email. Members will be able to share non-sensitive information to enable them to gather wider stakeholder views on appropriate topics. Documents including sensitive information will be clearly marked as "OFFICIAL SENSITIVE – DO NOT SHARE". Members must take care to protect all materials marked OFFICIAL which are shared with them because of their membership of the Board.

Should OFFICIAL or "OFFICIAL SENSITIVE" information be unintentionally disclosed outside of the Board, this should be reported to the Chair and Secretariat. Where information marked "OFFICIAL" or "OFFICIAL SENSITIVE" is intentionally disclosed outside the Board, Defra maintains the right to remove those responsible from membership of the Board with immediate effect. In which case the Board will agree a process for appointing a suitable replacement.

No personal information, or information which could confer a commercial or competitive advantage to board members, or anything which raises issues of market abuse, will be shared with the Board. The role does not relate to the awarding of government contracts or grants or otherwise directing public resources.

Annex 1: Membership

- Dame Angela Eagle, Defra Secretary of State (Chair)
- Defra Farming Minister (Deputy Chair)
- Paul Kissack, Defra Permanent Secretary
- 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, Chief Executive of UK Hospitality (UKH)
- Emily Norton, Chair of the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)
- Jim Bligh, Corporate Affairs Director at the British Retail Consortium (BRC)
- Karen Betts, Chief Executive of the Food & Drink Federation (FDF)