Farming and food leaders unite to drive growth in British agriculture

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Ministers and industry leaders convene first Farming & Food Board to drive profitability and put farm productivity at the heart of government.

Senior leaders from farming, food and retail met today (Wednesday 25 March) for the inaugural Farming & Food Partnership Board, marking a major moment and a clear shift in how British agriculture is led and supported.

Chaired by Environment Secretary Emma Reynolds with Farming Minister Dame Angela Eagle as Deputy Chair, the Board brings government and industry together to drive a more productive, profitable, and resilient food system.

Building on Baroness Batters' Farm Profitability Review, the Board will put farm productivity and profitability at the centre of decision-making, champion homegrown produce and strengthen the nation's supply chain.

Representatives from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, Agricultural Industries Confederation, British Retail Consortium, Food & Drink Federation, Institute of Grocery Distribution, National Farmers' Union, and UK Hospitality met for the first time to shape the Board's mission, ways of working and Sector Growth Plans. Their input will inform its future membership and priorities.

Environment Secretary Emma Reynolds said:

> The first Farming and Food Partnership Board meeting marks a major moment for British farming, bringing the whole food chain together to deliver real change for farm and food businesses.
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> We are working with industry to boost productivity and profitability, support innovation, drive growth and make it easier for the whole supply chain – from farm to fork – to succeed.

The Board will complement the Food Strategy Advisory Board (FSAB), supporting wider work to drive change across the food system.

Early work will focus on targeted Sector Growth Plans, led by industry and co-designed with government, to tackle barriers to growth, unlock investment, accelerate technology uptake, and boost farm returns.

Horticulture and poultry will be the first sectors in focus, reflecting their potential to drive growth and increase domestic production. Work on the horticulture plan will begin immediately, with poultry to follow this summer.

Subgroups may be established to bring together experts from across government and industry to tackle key challenges and deliver tangible improvements in farm profitability.

The government is working closely with industry to support farmers facing rising diesel and fertiliser costs linked to the Iran war, with the Environment Secretary having attended COBR on Monday to coordinate the response. Ministers have raised concerns about price gouging with the Competition and Markets Authority and are clear that profiteering will not be tolerated.

Members in attendance at Wednesday's meeting included:

- Tom Bradshaw, National Farmers' Union (NFU)
- Robert Sheasby, Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)
- Sarah Bradbury, Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD)
- Kate Nicholls, UKHospitality (UKH)
- Emily Norton, Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)
- Balwinder Dhoot, Food and Drink Federation (FDF)
- Andrew Opie, British Retail Consortium (BRC)

Statements from Board members:

National Farmers Union (NFU) President, Tom Bradshaw, said:

> The first Farming & Food Partnership Board could not come at a more opportune time. As the geopolitical outlook becomes more uncertain with the conflict in the Middle East and ongoing war in Ukraine, it is essential that we build a resilient domestic food and farming industry.
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> We look forward to working with the Board to ensure profitability and productivity are at the heart of farming and growing businesses, as this is key to building a stable, homegrown sector that is resilient for the long term."

Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) Chief Executive, Robert Sheasby, said:

> The Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) is pleased to have been invited by Ministers to join the new Farming & Food Partnership Board. Bringing Government and

the full supply chain together is essential if profitable and sustainable agriculture is to sit at the heart of the Government's long-term vision.

This Board provides an important opportunity to create a structure where all sectors of UK agriculture can invest, innovate and plan for growth with confidence. It is vital that the Board delivers clear and identifiable outcomes, and AIC will work constructively to support this.

UKHospitality Chair, Kate Nicholls, said:

A resilient and sustainable food supply chain is absolutely critical to support the thousands of hospitality businesses serving millions of people each and every week.

This is an important farm to fork coalition that can look holistically across the supply chain and deliver positive change to make food businesses more profitable, with less regulation and more able to drive economic growth.

Food and Sustainability Director at the British Retail Consortium (BRC), Andrew Opie, said:

This is a great opportunity for British farmers and producers. Retailers want even more great British food to sell to customers, and the new Board will help boost production and remove blockers, supporting farmers to meet increasing demand for quality, sustainable produce.

Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Chief Executive, Karen Betts, said:

The new Farming & Food Partnership Board is an important step towards a more robust and resilient food system. From farm to manufacturer to consumer, we need a joined-up approach that supports growth and strengthens food security, right across the supply chain.

The Board has a significant job to do, and we look forward to working closely with government and industry partners to turn this ambition into practical, long-term progress.

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Chair, Emily Norton, said:

I am delighted to be on the Board representing AHDB and its levy paying farmers and

processors across the Beef and Lamb, Cereals and Oilseeds, Dairy and Pork sectors.

Collaboration with the wider industry is key to driving profitability and growth.

We look forward to working with senior leaders from farming, food production, retail, finance and government to find solutions that can benefit British agriculture."

Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) CEO, Sarah Bradbury, said:

This new Board is an opportunity for Government to take a strategic approach to supporting every part of the food industry from farm to fork to contribute towards economic growth, to boost domestic production and improve our food security. IGD is looking forward to playing our part in supporting our sector to thrive.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/farming-and-food-leaders-unite-to-drive-growth-in-british-agriculture