



BRITISH FARMING

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE



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INTRODUCTION



A BLUEPRINT FOR SHOWCASING BRITISH FOOD



British food and farming is at the dawn of a new era. The creation of a new domestic agricultural policy means we will see the most significant changes in food production for a generation.

This document is our blueprint for the future of British farming – a clear plan for a resilient, sustainable and productive agricultural sector that makes the best use of our most productive agricultural land and offers an ambitious and exciting future for the sector that is good for shoppers, good for the environment and good for British farmers.

It follows a major food summit where the NFU brought together organisations from across the food supply chain and called for the government to set out a food and farming policy that creates a resilient and sustainable supply chain – one that puts quality British food at the forefront and drives domestic food security.

Central to our blueprint is the production of sustainable, climate-friendly British food and ensuring the right policies are in place to allow farmers and growers to lead the way in utilising new technologies that will enable them to produce this food while working hand-in-hand with nature.

We know the British public is hugely supportive of British food and farming. A survey¹ last year showed:

88%

of the public feel that it is important that Britain has a productive farming industry.

73%

of the public often or always look specifically for British food when shopping.

84%

of respondents support clearer labelling of British food.

75%

of respondents said they trust British food more than food from the rest of the world.

Maximising the markets that food can be sold into, both at home and abroad, is also a core part of this blueprint. It is crucial our farmers are in the best position to export food around the world.

An ambitious strategy for growing exports is vital, with the deployment of agri-food attachés to promote British food around the world, alongside the creation of the new Food and Drink Export Council, crucial parts of this. Alongside this, championing great British food at home will have economic benefits, while reconnecting people with where the raw ingredients of their food come from could also have a positive impact on their diet.

A sustainable, reliable workforce is also vital for the success of British farming. Training, and the promotion of agriculture as a dynamic sector at the forefront of the adoption of new technology and offering exciting career opportunities, will be key in the recruitment and retention of a domestic workforce, but this will not happen overnight so practical solutions need to be found in the interim.

The development and availability of new technologies will help the sector become more productive. Having access to all these developments will also have positive environmental and economic impacts, as well as reinforcing our ambition to be a global leader in climate-friendly food. But to maximise these opportunities we will also need the necessary infrastructure to be in place, including high-speed broadband and reliable mobile network coverage.

Funding for research and development of new technology, and practical on-farm trials to show how it will work, will also be vital in ensuring farmers have the confidence to employ new methods because they know they will bring the desired results.

This blueprint provides long-term environmental and economic benefits and helps position Britain as a global leader in climate-friendly food production. It also shows how – with the right plan in place – British farming can be an ambitious and exciting sector providing a range of solutions to other challenges too, from the production of green energy, to the provision of natural forms of insulation and compostable packaging.

British food and farming has a great story to tell when it comes to sustainable, climate-friendly food production and we need to work together to make sure this story is heard at home and abroad. British agriculture can be the number one supplier of choice to shoppers in the UK and across the globe, spearheading the promotion of 'Brand Britain' and showcasing our food production as a world-leading model of sustainable, climate-friendly farming.

We are at the start of a new age for British food. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a success of the UK's new domestic agricultural policy and ensure that everyone recognises the importance and value of British food, and the huge benefits farming contributes to the whole country – its economy and its treasured landscapes – through our world-leading environmental and animal welfare standards.

A new domestic agricultural policy, together with the government's commitment to shape a new national food strategy, should present British farming with new opportunities to better serve Britain. We want to work with government to develop a commitment to maintain, and ideally increase, our current food production self-sufficiency of 60%, as well as be ambitious to increase sustainable production for markets abroad. Providing the right environment for farmers and growers to increase our food security will not only make our own food supply more secure,

it will help us take a leading role in the challenge of food security for a growing population on a global scale.

To achieve this, it is crucial we have a viable British farming industry that is sustainable in the long term. As a country, we must avoid simply displacing our domestic food production with imports from countries which do not adhere to the same values or environmental and animal welfare standards that our farmers and growers do.

Working together we can take steps that would ensure British farmers put more British food on more British plates, reconnecting people with where their food comes from, as well as opening up new markets for British food overseas.

These include:

- an overhaul of government procurement practices to increase the provision of British food in our schools, hospitals and other public services;
- greater transparency in the out-of-home market on the provenance, standards and origin of food;
- support for an improved way for customers to choose the origin of product when shopping online – such as a "Buy British" button or filter for online food purchases.

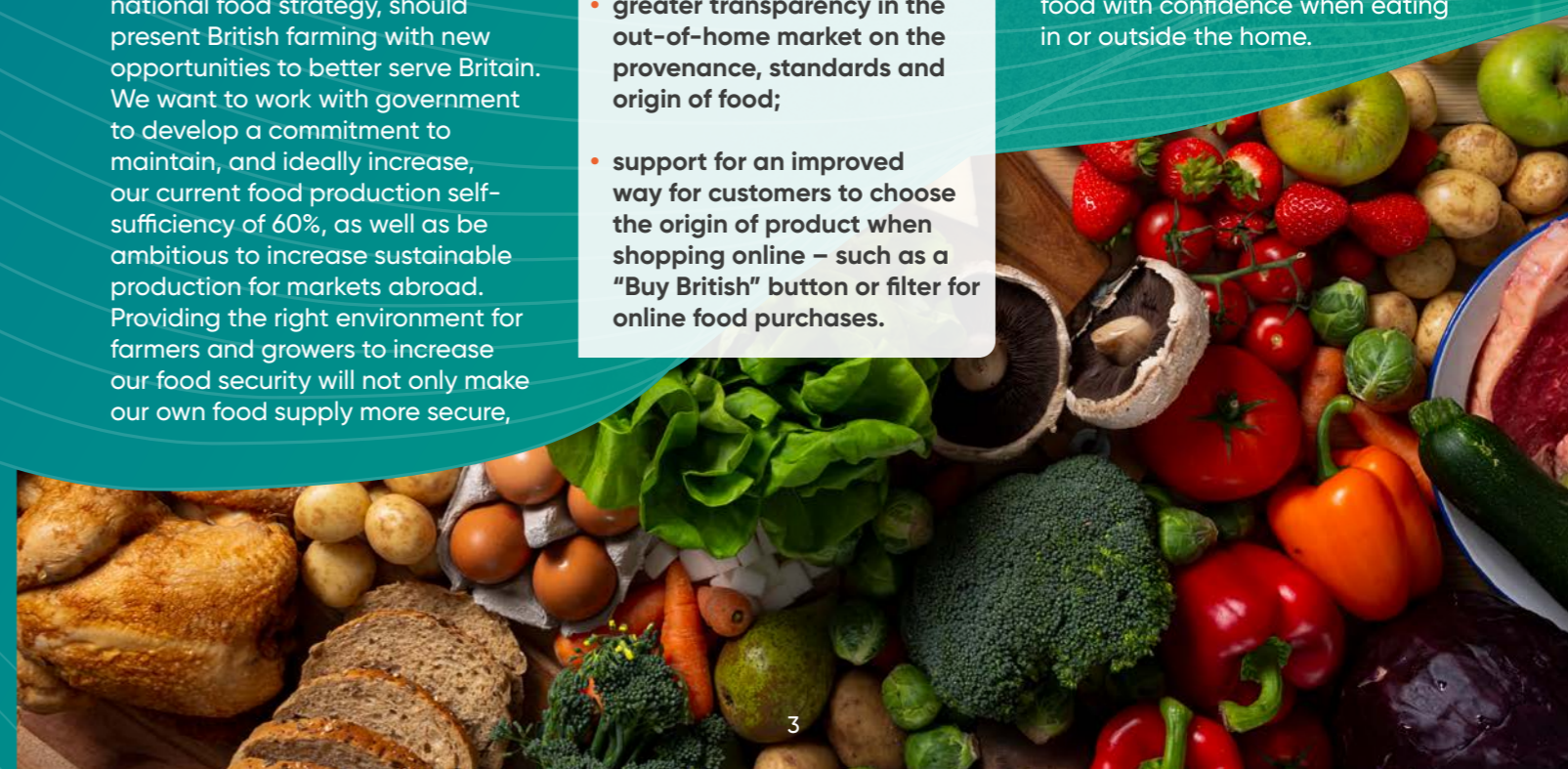
A government ambitious in its commitment to sourcing from the UK food and drink sector by promoting and driving local and seasonal food purchasing, not just by public bodies but by the general public as well, will help deliver these steps, in turn benefiting the British public because of their economic and environmental benefits.

Increasing the volume of British food in public sector food procurement not only provides an opportunity for people to eat more environmentally sustainable food produced by British producers and suppliers, it can also help ensure all users of those public services can be confident that public money is being spent upholding our food values.

Supporting, and promoting, the Red Tractor Assurance scheme – a widely recognised scheme that shoppers know stands for high quality, safe, traceable food produced with care and to high environmental and animal welfare standards – can also play a central role in helping people buy British food with confidence when eating in or outside the home.

Minette Batters
NFU President

1. Research was carried out by OnePoll, on behalf of NFU, between 17-22 June 2021. 2,000 adults in England and Wales completed the survey.





A BLUEPRINT FOR CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FARMING



Climate change is the largest global challenge of our generation and poses one of the biggest threats to food production across the world. British farming is almost uniquely placed to be part of the solution to the problems we face, as both an emissions source and a carbon sink.

As one of the first global farming organisations to publish a comprehensive and achievable roadmap to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, we have already set out our clear ambition to be world leaders in climate-friendly food production, but we want to do so much more.

Modifying farm practices to improve our efficient use of resources, more nature-based solutions through the management of hedgerows and farmland trees, and enhancing and actively maintaining the carbon reserves in our soils, will all have benefits for the whole country. In addition to these climate solutions, farming can also help to capture more carbon by growing the raw materials for bioenergy and the bioeconomy alongside food production. This will help the country further reduce its carbon footprint.

Locally produced food gives people confidence in standards and provenance. With our work to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, shoppers can be increasingly confident that by sourcing food from nearer home they are playing their part in helping to achieve this national ambition while enjoying high quality British food.

Our farmers and growers run dynamic, forward-looking businesses that are at the forefront of adopting new technology to become more productive while reducing environmental impact and working towards net zero. These technological advances include things like new breeding techniques, which have the potential to play an important role in improving, for example, the efficient use of nutrients and better disease resistance.

Innovations like this could help improve productivity and competitiveness while driving green growth in the rural economy and beyond.

By maintaining its progressive approach to the adoption of new technologies, and continuing to be led by science, the government can help to ensure we can take full advantage of these advances and enhance our position as a world leader in climate-friendly farming.

British red meat and dairy has a great story to tell when it comes to animal welfare and environmental sustainability, with the government's Committee on Climate Change noting that greenhouse gas emissions from beef production in the UK are about half the global average.

When buying British beef, lamb and dairy, shoppers can be confident they are buying food produced to some of the highest standards in the world. Around 65%² of farmland in the UK is naturally suited to growing grass rather than other crops. So, our farmers turn sustainable but inedible grass into high quality, nutrient-rich beef, lamb and dairy as well as maintaining some of our most iconic landscapes. Farmland is the destination of 48%³ of visits to the natural environment in England – around 4.1 billion visits every year – which boost rural and local economies.

Our grazed pastures do so much. They can provide a home for wildlife, while actively grazed pastures can be a really good store of carbon. If this land was put to other uses, and the soil was disturbed, there is a risk that much of that carbon would be lost to the atmosphere as CO₂. Well-managed grazing also keeps the soil covered with vegetation, helping to prevent erosion, improve nutrient migration, increase water retention and, consequently, improve water quality in our rivers.

The UK homegrown sugar sector is among the most efficient in the world, with impressive yield, productivity and efficiency gains – including a 25% yield improvement in the last ten years. The sector works hard across the whole supply chain to reduce its impact on the environment. On average, sugar beet only travels 28 miles from farm to factory. Sugar beet acts as an important break crop in arable farming, providing diversity in arable rotations and helping reduce disease, pest and weed levels and improve soil health.

But this British business success story, and with it homegrown sugar production, is now under threat. Imports of sugar produced in countries to standards that would be illegal in the UK risk undermining and undercutting British growers.

- Technological advances like new breeding techniques, electric vehicles and agri-robotics can all help reduce emissions, provided the digital and energy infrastructure is improved in rural areas.
- Modifying farm practices and improving management of hedgerows and farmland trees can protect and enhance the carbon reserves already in our soils and vegetation.
- Farming can displace and capture more carbon emissions by supplying renewable and raw materials for the bioeconomy alongside food production.

2. Farming statistics: provisional arable crop areas, yields and livestock populations at 1 June 2021 – United Kingdom, Defra/ONS, October 2021

3. The future farming and environment evidence compendium, Defra, September 2019



"I'm very proud of the work we do to support and enhance the environment and local eco-systems for generations to come.

"To ensure the food I produce is as climate-friendly as possible, I really focus on grazing and pasture management. I optimise the grazing periods of my sheep and beef, allowing for long periods of rest which helps the soil health and quantity of forage produced.

"I also try to improve pastures by seeding a diverse range of herbs and legumes which provide animals with a nutritious food supply full of minerals and allows me to graze more stock at the same time. Hedgerow management is also an important tool we use on farm to support the environment.

"In the future, we're looking at how genetics could play a role in helping us reach the NFU's net zero target. For example, reducing the time it takes to rear a lamb to finishing weight would reduce its lifetime emissions. Coupled with improved production efficiency in breeding stock, these productivity gains would enable a decrease in emissions per kg of meat produced."

James Drummond
beef and sheep farmer
North Northumberland





A BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE FARM POLICY



British farmers are proud to produce climate-friendly food while maintaining and protecting the great British countryside, its air, water, soils and its wildlife.

Farming has played, and continues to play, a role in the creation and maintenance of habitats like lowland meadows, upland hills, arable field margins, trees and hedgerows. Farmers and growers continue to adopt practices like planting cover crops and using low impact machinery to maintain and enhance soil health, improve water quality and mitigate against flooding, as well as using inputs more efficiently and changing animal diets to reduce emissions. These techniques help to ensure sustainable farming systems as well as environmental benefits.

Food production and the delivery of environmental benefits can and must go hand-in-hand. Our diverse landscapes and food producing businesses – from the upland moors to our productive lowlands – demonstrate that the underpinning policies put in place to achieve this must be adaptable to the various farming systems in operation. Under the Agriculture Act, schemes like the new Sustainable Farming Incentive need to first support food production and environmental

delivery by being easy for farmers to access, practical to implement, and making environmental delivery commercially viable for farm businesses to deliver. It is also vital that these schemes are designed to enable tenant farmers to access them, as 48% of British farms are either partly or wholly tenanted and 39% of the farmed area of England is tenanted land⁴. The government's new environmental schemes need to be designed to ensure those actively managing the land are their principal target.

Delivering environmental and broader public goods is potentially one of the biggest diversification opportunities on offer to British farmers, helping to ensure our food producing businesses are better able to manage cash flow, which is vulnerable to short and medium-term volatility in agri-food and input markets.

These new approaches may also tap into the leveraging effect, whereby a proportion of public funding encourages greater levels of private sector engagement, unlocking further investment. This can, in turn, provide farmers with a much-needed new stream of largely stable income that can be used to reinvest in their food producing businesses, to improve productivity and to manage wider market volatility.

- **New policies to ensure food production and environmental delivery go hand-in-hand must be adaptable to the various farming systems in operation.**
- **To ensure widespread take-up, schemes like the new Sustainable Farming Incentive must be easy for farmers to access, practical to implement, and make environmental delivery commercially viable for farm businesses to deliver.**
- **Delivering environmental and broader public goods is potentially one of the biggest diversification opportunities on offer to British farmers.**

Such new market approaches, whether farmers are paid for tree planting, other environmental services, or carbon storage, may increasingly complement government environment schemes for farmers and, in some cases, provide a higher financial reward for meeting environmental objectives. While these new markets may offer new opportunities, it will be important that they work alongside domestic production of food, fuel and fibre.

A BLUEPRINT FOR INVESTMENT



Worth more than £120 billion, our food and farming sector is the biggest manufacturing industry we have in this country. British farmers are at the heart of its success producing the high-quality raw ingredients that are at its core, while the agri-food sector in the UK employs around four million people and underpins local economies in every region and every area of the country.

However, in a tough and increasingly globalised trading environment, there is a significant risk that companies will look to invest in other countries outside the UK that offer them better opportunities. Our ambition must be to make the UK the go-to place for investment in agriculture and food production. By creating the right environment that makes the UK a natural home for food processing companies to invest in, we can create and support more jobs and help with the levelling up of rural economies and communities.

We can do this through a new partnership between UK farming, our food businesses and government – one that can provide economic benefits for the whole country, creating jobs and growing businesses throughout the supply chain. At its heart is an ambition to grow UK food production in a sustainable way, increasing British farming's share of markets both at home and abroad, supported by a clear commitment from government

to create the right environment giving businesses the confidence to invest in UK food and farming. This environment can be created by:

- **regulatory reform to ensure an enabling regulatory system that protects consumers and our environment while incentivising innovation and investment.**
- **support, through planning and fiscal policy, for on-farm diversification activities that can provide new income streams, opportunities for new businesses, and help with the levelling up of rural economies and communities.**
- **targeted productivity grants that allow farmers to secure the "win-win" of more profitable and more sustainable food production that uses resources more efficiently.**
- **investment in R&D and agri-tech, involving effective, two-way knowledge exchange, so that British farmers and growers have access to the best tools and technologies.**
- **the right fiscal, labour and planning policies across the economy to create the pro-enterprise environment that will attract investment in UK food production and UK-based food processing.**

- **reducing trade barriers to overseas markets, both through improving the operation of the UK/EU trade deal that governs our trading relationships with our largest markets in Europe, and by opening up new markets in countries outside the EU that we know are keen to buy more great British food.**
- **implementing the range of domestic policies described elsewhere in this report to improve our self-sufficiency and increase the proportion of food consumed in the UK sourced from domestic producers.**

With the confidence to invest in their businesses to ensure they are sustainable and profitable, farmers and growers can continue to be part of a thriving economy, both locally and nationally, creating jobs and providing sustainable food for the UK and beyond well into the future.



4. The future farming and environment evidence compendium, Defra, September 2019

A BLUEPRINT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

With the UK now negotiating trade agreements with countries around the world, farming can be at the forefront of promoting 'Brand Britain' abroad as we access exciting new markets for the high-quality food and agriculture products we produce. But as more new trade deals come into force, we are also likely to see an increase in the level of highly competitively priced imports putting pressure on domestic producers.

British farmers want to remain the number one supplier of choice to the British public, who demand the highest standards of environmental protection and animal welfare in the way we farm. But our farmers risk being undermined by imports of food that would be illegal to produce here. Importing those foods simply because they can be produced at lower cost elsewhere would see us offshoring our environmental footprint to other places at precisely the time we are trying to halt the degradation of important habitats across the world.

Farmers want to embrace the UK's new independent trade policy and the opportunities it presents. But

if it is handled badly – focusing on sourcing the cheapest goods regardless of how they have been produced – there is a real risk that we erode our domestic food production, leaving us increasingly reliant on other countries. Instead, we should be looking to maintain, and increase, our food production capacity to feed growing populations sustainably at home and globally. This requires the careful calibration of our import policy, and the establishment of a set of core standards relating to environmental protection and animal welfare, to which UK farmers already produce and to which imports should be expected to adhere.

International markets are highly competitive, and others already have strong footholds in the growing markets being targeted by the UK government. Progress will require a huge collaborative effort from across the industry and the government to seize the opportunities.

We can learn from what countries like Ireland, New Zealand and the USA have done to create partnership platforms that seek to identify export opportunities

and maximise growth. The announcements by our government that agri-food exports will be at the heart of its new export strategy; that a further eight agri-food attaché posts will be established overseas to help promote UK food; and the creation of the Food and Drink Export Council, are all positive steps.

We need to take every chance to promote our food around the world and to ensure we maximise the potential opportunities that lie ahead. For this to happen, alongside striking high-profile trade deals that support British food and farming, there should be greater focus on the "nuts and bolts" of doing trade: how to unblock barriers and to maximise brand awareness abroad; how to make processes more streamlined and digitised; how to ensure that UK businesses can tap into global shipping routes; and how to differentiate our products in the target markets through new forms of labelling, including in relation to environmental, ethical and climate-friendly methods of production. All of this, and more, is needed if we are to capitalise on the new opportunities of our independent trade policy.

Over the past decade, the UK's agri-food industry has grown by 30% to 40%. While the last couple of years have been challenging, there is overwhelming support to see that level of growth continue

and to be exceeded over the next decade. The entire supply chain should work together, in partnership with government, to implement the ambition set out in its "Made in the UK, Sold to the World" export strategy. Farmers are keen to play their part, to continue to produce world-leading products that are in high demand and to ensure that the reputation of Britain's high quality food is upheld.

- Importing foods produced to lower standards will simply off-shore our environmental footprint and support the degradation of important habitats across the world.
- Creating collaborative industry/government platforms can help identify export opportunities and maximise growth.
- Taking every chance to promote our food around the world and to ensure we maximise the potential opportunities that lie ahead will provide economic benefits for the whole country.



"I'm massively proud of the quality of the products we produce on farm."

"When I visit my lambing sheds, I'm greeted with happy and healthy lambs and sheep that get all the care they need. I think I can speak for all British farmers when I say we want to do the best by our animals. I'm also very proud of the work we're doing to benefit the environment, which in turn I hope makes our quality produce more sustainable and appealing to the consumer."

"I'm really concerned about the possibility of lower standard products being imported into the UK. Understandably, free trade is important, but we want to make sure everyone, regardless of income, has access to quality British food and we know they don't want to see food imported from other countries that could have been grown using methods that are banned in the UK."

"Imports like these would have a huge impact on us as farmers. British farmers produce to some of the highest standards in the world but being undercut like this would be massively harmful and many businesses won't be able to weather a storm of cheaper imports."

Rebecca Wilson
sheep farmer
North Yorkshire



"I'm hugely proud of our produce and think going organic over 24 years ago is one of the best things we've done. Being an organic farmer has allowed me to farm the way I want to, in harmony with the environment, and supply dairy co-op OMSCo with high welfare British milk."

"Around 10 years ago, we got the opportunity to produce our organic dairy for the US premium market. Through our co-operative, the dairy I produce on farm has been exported all over the world, including cheese whey going to Europe."

"Going forward it would be great to see the government supporting farmers to access global markets. The exporting process is still paper-based and incredibly complicated. To ensure international exports are smoother this process has to be simplified."

Adam Westaway
organic dairy farmer
Devon



"We have a huge variety of roles in our business as we farm combinable crops, cattle, sheep, field vegetables and we do some contracting work too. We've got everything from tree planters, vegetable pickers and shepherds to silage wrappers, animal handlers and stone wallers. With this many roles to manage, I spend a lot of the day on the phone making sure everyone is where they need to be!

"People outside the farming industry are always surprised by how wide-ranging the job roles within my business are and how important they are for our farm and the rural community. They're amazed by how many different elements of farming there are and how knowledgeable these workers are.

"The use of technology and science is increasingly becoming a part of these varied roles. For example, just recently we started using a new livestock tracking software to ensure our produce is of the highest standard possible. It's often tricky to get used to this type of new technology, but I'm encouraging our workers to engage with it and learn."

Cathy Case
mixed farmer
Devon



"Even before Brexit and Covid-19 I was having difficulty attracting people to work in the industry. I pay well and look after our staff, but around 40% of our roles were filled with European labour and now this has gone. I advertise our job roles in various ways, but only receive a small number of applications.

"Roles are multi-skilled. People need to be able to care for the animals to the highest welfare standards, run complicated computer systems, but also be willing to get their hands dirty in more manual jobs. This is holding the business back, making it hard to progress and leaving a reliance on expensive relief labour to fill the gaps.

"I've tried mechanising the business, but in the pig sector manual roles are still really important and it is difficult to mechanise further as profit margins are so small. Working with the younger generation is key to solving the issue. I've recently partnered with a recruitment agency to bring on apprentices. We'll train them in the sector, send them on relevant courses, and we hope this helps with job retention going forward."

Tom Allen
pig farmer
Oxfordshire



A BLUEPRINT FOR A FUTURE WORKFORCE



A reliable, trained, skilled workforce is a key part of the future success of British farming. UK farmers and growers are proud to produce world-class food. But to ensure this food can reach markets at home and abroad, farms need people to produce it and – beyond the farm gate – a workforce is needed to process, pack, manufacture and deliver it.

By the very nature of the work involved, many businesses are located in rural areas and, with unemployment remaining low, they have been unable to attract enough domestic workers to fill vacancies. While businesses understand the need to develop a domestic workforce, it is going to take time for people to develop the skills necessary, and to develop those skills in the areas of the country where they are needed.

Agriculture and horticulture are high-tech industries that offer a wide range of jobs. Key to presenting them as a progressive, dynamic career choice is ensuring the innovative nature of the industry is presented at school and college level. While many businesses are working with schools and colleges to support learning, which will help attract higher skilled workers, it does not plug the gaps for operator level jobs.

The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture, which the NFU has played a central role in creating with other industry bodies, will have a role in professionalising the training offer within the industry so that vacancies are not just seen as jobs, but as

careers. It is being set up with the ambition to position agriculture and horticulture as a dynamic industry, attracting and retaining talent from a wide range of backgrounds, and investing in people in order to improve productivity, staff engagement and retention.

Farm businesses with only a handful of employees, and the consequent financial constraints on investing in accommodation and facilities, face a specific challenge. The NFU is exploring whether expansion of schemes like the Farming Investment Fund to support investment in worker facilities could offer potential significant benefit, helping to raise standards and boost domestic recruitment.

Following campaigning by the NFU and other organisations, the Home Office announced the Seasonal Workers visa route has been extended until the end of 2024, to allow foreign workers to come to the UK for up to six months to pick both edible and ornamental crops. There will initially be 30,000 visas available in 2022 and there is potential to expand to 40,000 visas if there is evidence of demand. The NFU will keep the situation under close review to ensure the scheme meets the industry's needs.

This welcome, temporary solution needs to become a permanent and expanded Seasonal Workers scheme for horticulture, alongside an independent review of the impacts of the ending of freedom of movement in the food industry, with

a view to making long-term changes that underpin this vital industry.

As well as ensuring investment in automation and robotics to improve productivity and being the employers of choice for domestic workers, British industries and government need to work together to:

- secure the additional 10,000 visas in the Seasonal Workers visa scheme for 2022 and seek a commitment for a permanent scheme beyond 2024.
- guarantee a Seasonal Workers scheme suitable for poultry businesses is made available well ahead of the required recruitment period for seasonal production.
- commission the Migration Advisory Committee to undertake a detailed review of the impacts of the ending of freedom of movement on the food and farming sector.
- extend the Youth Mobility Scheme to cover European and other relevant countries, such as the Ukraine, which would enable some flexibility in the labour market.
- review and expand the Kickstart scheme to make it accessible to a wider pool of under 25-year-olds with less criteria and restrictions.
- provide greater flexibility in how the Apprenticeship Levy can be utilised, enabling businesses to train and improve the skills of more staff to fit the evolving needs of businesses.

A BLUEPRINT FOR EDUCATION



Education has a dual role to play in ensuring a sustainable farming industry for the future – the provision of the necessary training and skills to ensure the next generation of farmers are equipped to maximise their potential, and sparking an interest in the sector in young children while reconnecting them with where their food comes from and how it is produced.

Agriculture has a unique ability to engage children in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) learning outside the classroom and inspire children who prefer a more hands-on approach to learning. Science, technology, engineering and maths are all subjects deeply embedded in the sector. From soil science to plant breeding techniques and cutting-edge precision engineering, agriculture is in a great position to provide real-life examples of STEM in action and help children learn these subjects in an inspiring and engaging environment.

By engaging children with agriculture at an early age, and showing them that science, technology, engineering and maths play crucial roles in the sector, we can inspire future generations of STEM professionals. This will have benefits for other industries and the wider economy, as well as inspiring interest in working in Britain's all-important food industry.

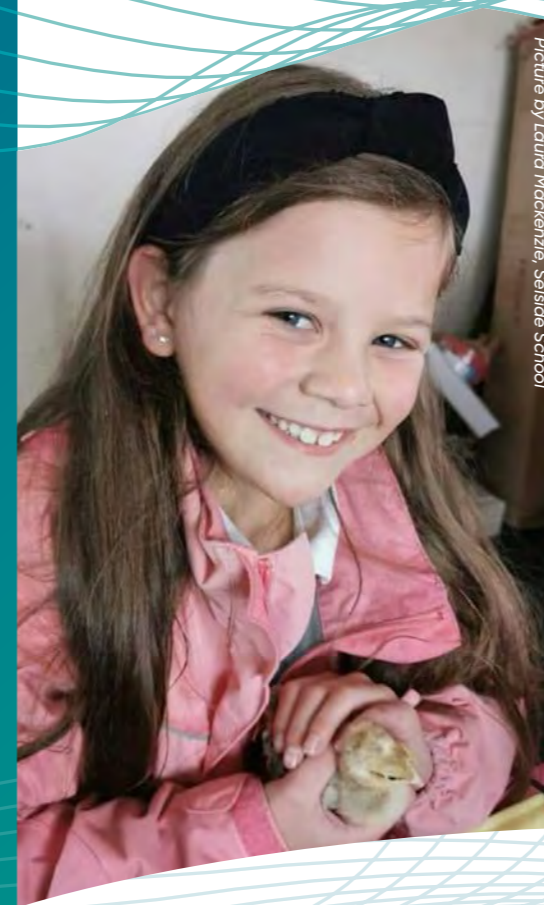
The government has the opportunity to recognise and promote the role that farming can play in teaching vital STEM subjects for the benefit of the next generation and also in inspiring future generations of scientists, engineers and mathematicians. We are working with several organisations to gain additional funding from the government for education, as well as campaigning for STEM Learning through Agriculture to be part of the Prime Minister's Levelling Up strategy.

As part of this ongoing work, we have published a report on 'Inspiring STEM Learning through Agriculture' which showed the value of using agriculture as a context for teaching these subjects.

- Agriculture is in a great position to provide real-life examples of STEM in action and help children learn these subjects in an inspiring and engaging environment.
- Showing children that science, technology, engineering and maths play crucial roles in agriculture can inspire future generations of STEM professionals.
- Inspiring these future generations will have benefits for other industries and the wider economy.

We held a roundtable meeting on 'how agriculture can plug the STEM skills gap' where a range of organisations pledged their support for our work, which has also been supported by a number of MPs, and we have more roundtable meetings planned, where we will agree a plan of action on how to further promote agriculture as a valuable tool for science and maths education.

Agricultural colleges also play a crucial role in developing the farmers of tomorrow. Focused funding and facilities will enable farming and food production to develop and grow.



Picture by Laura Mockenzie, Selside School



"All farmers have a story to tell and being part of the NFU's Farmers for Schools initiative has been an excellent opportunity for me to be able to share mine. It's extremely rewarding. You really start to establish a relationship with a class, and as it develops it's surprising how much the children interact, asking more and more questions, some often quite challenging! Feedback from staff and parents is really positive as well. I have found my confidence has improved, being able to adapt topics to different age groups more easily and it's a great way of hopefully inspiring some young minds to join the industry one day. We all understand the importance of educating the next generation about where their food comes from, but we can't expect people to support our industry without actively endorsing what we do. This is a great way of going above and beyond the common ways of promoting British farming".

Charlotte Hudson
arable manager
Hugh Lowe Farms, Kent

"As a subject leader, it can be challenging to encourage staff to share in your passion for your subject when they have so many other things to fit in as well, but the staff found the NFU resources really easy to use and well-structured and they liked how they could use them flexibly to meet the needs of their children. This meant that while the whole school was striving for our shared goal of growing our own vegetables,

understanding farming and setting up our own businesses, we've generated a lovely range of outcomes. The children love having that real-life experience and the links that they can then make across the curriculum are so much more meaningful and allow much deeper learning to occur. Agriculture is the perfect context for STEM teaching because you have so many different areas to draw on."

Claire Hofer
Science coordinator
Brompton Westbrook Primary School, Kent



"In the modern world we live in, it is vital to have good connectivity in the countryside.

"I call my mobile phone my first aid kit because when I'm working on my own in a remote location, I need to be able to contact someone if something goes wrong. The problem is that coverage just isn't there.

"Broadband too is just as important. Almost everything is now done online and with the wi-fi I have on farm it is an incredibly slow process. I was most affected during lockdown – online meetings were almost impossible, and trying to attend the valuable remote seminars organised by the NFU was difficult due to the connection we have, which can be affected by something as small as a rainy day.

"The government speak about 'levelling up' but we need to see farmers and rural communities, who are often in some of the most remote locations, prioritised for connectivity infrastructure so they can continue to produce climate-friendly food for the British public and develop thriving farming businesses."

James Cox
arable farmer
Gloucestershire



A BLUEPRINT FOR CONNECTIVITY

Improving digital connectivity in rural areas will boost rural economies by opening up opportunities for food producing businesses, ensuring they can play their full part in the government's green growth ambition.

The coronavirus pandemic has fundamentally changed the way many people work. The ability to be able to do business wherever you are, no matter what business you are in, has only served to highlight the importance of quality broadband and mobile phone coverage across the whole country.

Good connectivity is so important for a whole range of tasks on farm – everything from banking to managing suppliers and logistics. Furthermore, farm businesses are increasingly being required to carry out aspects of their businesses online, for instance payroll and tax returns. Inadequate broadband and mobile makes it very difficult to run a modern-day farming business and puts a huge drain on time and efficiency.

Investment in rural Britain not only brings about obvious benefits to food production but can have massive benefits for the whole country and help level up rural economies and communities. If farmers can run modern businesses, they are then able to deliver back to the wider rural economy by creating jobs and boosting economic growth.

A high standard of rural connectivity is essential to take full advantage of new technologies. For instance, advances in precision farming which can improve productivity and use resources more sustainably will often require stable and reliable connectivity. It is also critical if farmers are to take advantage of the full range of on-farm diversification opportunities, such as providing space for other rural businesses or expanding into retail or leisure. The capital investment this requires will simply not be forthcoming if there is a lack of reliable broadband and mobile connectivity.

Almost every respondent to the 2020 NFU Digital Technology Survey said access to reliable broadband and a mobile signal was essential for their business, yet less than half felt their mobile signal was sufficient for their business needs, and only 40% of farmers felt their broadband speeds were sufficient.

To help rural communities get access to broadband, we want the Shared Rural Network to remain a priority and to be completed by 2025. This would mean all communities can have access to good mobile signal, which can also be used for mobile broadband while communities wait for fibre broadband.

We will continue working with stakeholders within the Agricultural Productivity Task Force and others to campaign for investment in the country's digital infrastructure so that farm businesses can meet their huge potential; not only by increasing their productivity as food producers but in helping to tackle climate change and delivering on our net zero ambitions.

• Improving digital connectivity will boost rural economies by helping rural businesses and opening up opportunities for food producing businesses.

• Improving connectivity means farmers can deliver back to the wider rural economy by creating jobs and boosting economic growth.

• A high standard of rural connectivity is essential to take full advantage of new technologies and attract capital investment.



A BLUEPRINT TO TACKLE RURAL CRIME



One of the biggest challenges facing farmers is the scourge of rural crime. Farms, and wider rural communities, have increasingly become the targets of criminals, with rural crime costing the UK an estimated £43.3 million in 2020⁵. At the same time, rural areas get police funding of just £167 per person while urban areas get more than £200 per person. And more than 1,000 rural police stations were closed between 2000 and 2012.

Crimes like hare coursing, fly-tipping on farmland, dog attacks on livestock and theft of large and small machinery have left farmers feeling vulnerable and can have a significant impact on farm businesses.

We continue to call for rural crime to be treated as a priority issue for rural communities. A cross-departmental rural crime task force would support a coordinated government approach to ensure coordination between government departments, government agencies, Police & Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables and local authorities to address the failures in dealing with rural crime. Prioritising this issue would also fit with the government's agenda for levelling up rural communities.

Following sustained campaigning by the NFU and other rural organisations about the devastation caused to rural communities by illegal hare coursing, the government included a series of amendments in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to give police and courts greater powers to deal with this problem and the impacts it has on rural communities. They enable police forces to seize more dogs, and courts to ban convicted offenders from keeping dogs and to strengthen penalties by lifting the existing limit on fines.

Our campaigning work has also resulted in amendments being made to the Kept Animals Bill as it makes its way through Parliament to strengthen laws around dogs being kept under control. Improved police powers should enable them to respond to livestock worrying incidents more effectively. This can make it easier for them to collect evidence and in the most serious cases seize and detain dogs to reduce the risk of further incidents.

Fly-tipping on farmland continues to be a huge problem, with Defra's latest statistics for 2020/21 showing that local authorities dealt with just under 1.13 million⁶ fly-tipping incidents during the year, an increase of 16% from the 980,000 incidents reported in 2019/20. We continue to campaign for stronger punishments for the illegal dumping of waste.

So far, 170 councils have banned the release of sky lanterns on their land, and we want to make sure this becomes a nationwide ban. We continue to call on members of the public to join our campaign, email their local councils and encourage them to implement a voluntary ban.

5. The impact on our communities: rural crime report 2021, NFU Mutual

6. Fly-tipping statistics for England, 2020 to 2021, Defra, December 2021

2020 RURAL CRIME COSTS

£2.9m
GPS thefts
almost twice 2019 figure

£9.1m
agricultural vehicle theft

£2.5m
quad and ATV theft

£2.3m
livestock theft

Source: The impact on our communities: rural crime report 2021, NFU Mutual



"Like many farmers, I have been affected by rural crime. Just three days before the end of harvest, in August 2021, we had three vehicles broken into. They were trashed and the valuable GPS systems were stolen. It meant harvest was pushed back by eight days, and it really had a negative effect on the business and my morale as the police couldn't find any leads.

"Farmers are affected by so many other types of rural crime as well. I had colleagues in north Hertfordshire that have experienced hare coursing daily and some were even physically confronted because they tried to stop these criminals trespassing on their land.

"I'd say the biggest impact of rural crime on farm business is the time and money farmers spend addressing it. Going forward, it would be great to see rural police forces coming down onto farm to get an understanding of the impact crimes have on farming businesses, so we can work together to come up with solutions."

Eveey Hunter
arable farmer
Hertfordshire





A BLUEPRINT FOR ACCESS



The coronavirus pandemic brought a sharp focus to the importance of access to the countryside for people's mental health as well as their physical wellbeing.

A survey carried out last year revealed how visiting the British countryside had improved the physical and mental health of people living in towns and cities across Britain during the previous year.

The survey, conducted by Censuwide, spoke to more than 2,000 British people outside of rural areas across England and Wales in June 2021⁷.

It showed:

- **87%** of respondents who visit the British countryside and farmland said visits to Britain's farmed landscape had improved their wellbeing;
- **47%** valued the British countryside and farmland more since the pandemic began;
- Of those, **84%** agreed their visits had made them appreciate the role farmers play creating our iconic rural landscapes.

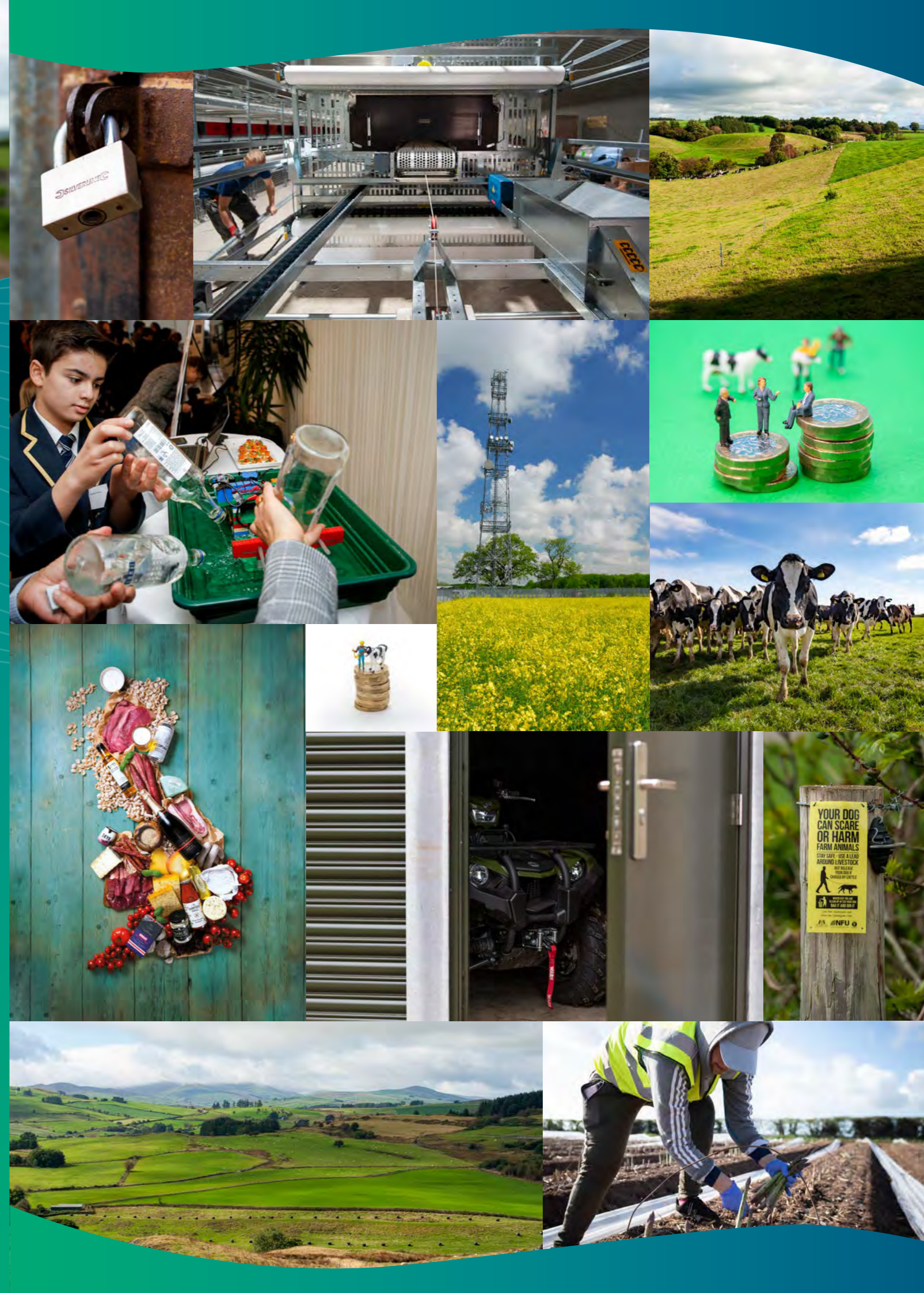
At the same time, a separate survey by Savanta ComRes for Farmers Guardian, as part of its '#FarmingCAN' campaign, showed 71% of people felt fortunate to be able to access the British countryside and over half of people (53%) were now more likely to seek out leisure and tourism in the UK countryside than travelling abroad.

It is important to remember that many of these popular rural tourist spots are working farmland, an iconic patchwork of food and farming landscapes with many farmers working hard to maintain footpaths and public rights of way so visitors can enjoy our beautiful, iconic countryside.

Farmland is the destination of 48% of visits to the natural environment in England⁸ – around 4.1 billion visits every year boosting rural and local economies. At a time when many people have no first-hand experience of how their food is produced, instructive visits to farms and engaging with farmers is a vital way of improving their understanding of where the food they eat comes from and helping them to make informed choices as consumers.

Farmers want people to engage with where their food comes from. It remains of huge importance that this access and engagement is achieved in a responsible way and the fact that much of this land is a working environment is recognised, and respected, by the public and decision-makers alike.

The contribution green access makes to the physical and mental wellbeing of the nation means farmers' efforts to maintain, create or enhance public rights of way as part of a modern network should be rewarded as part of new government farm funding schemes, provided they recognise the value, and preserve the integrity, of land used for food production.



7. The NFU commissioned the Wellbeing and Access survey to Censuwide who surveyed 2,009 adults living outside of rural areas in England and Wales between 10-15 June 2021
 8. The future farming and environment evidence compendium, Defra, September 2019

BRITISH
FARMING

**A BLUEPRINT
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