

NFU Horticulture and Potatoes activity update

19th December 2017



The NFU Horticulture and Potatoes board and the NFU Potato Forum work tirelessly to make a difference for growers of fresh produce, plants and flowers. This document is a snapshot of recent successes and an overview of the current work activities in key policy areas.

Top stories

[That was the year that was](#)

NFU horticulture and potatoes board chairman, Ali Capper, reflects on the highs and lows from one of the most challenging years for the horticulture and potatoes sector in recent memory. [Read more...](#)

[Greater transparency needed for potato growers, NFU report shows](#)

Potato packers and processors can drive the sector forward by providing greater levels of information on crop quality to growers, according to a new report by the NFU, which sets out goals for increasing transparency, productivity and profitability. [Read more...](#)

[Your chance to join influential NFU Hort and Potatoes board](#)

NFU seeks nominations from dynamic and forward thinking members to join the Horticulture and Potatoes board and influence the key policies that impact on growers' businesses. [Read more...](#)

[Red Tractor fresh produce standards to be recognised by Tesco and GLOBAL G.A.P.](#)

Tesco has announced that from April 2018 it will recognise Red Tractor's standards as equivalent to its Nurture scheme. In a similar move, GLOBAL G.A.P. also confirmed that, following internal benchmarking, the requirement for a further farm assessment has been removed. [Read more...](#)

Read more news at www.NFUonline.com

Successes

[Tesco signs NFU Fruit and Veg Pledge](#)

Tesco became the fourth major retailer to sign up to the NFU's Fruit and Veg Pledge, committing to supporting British horticulture and ensuring fairness for growers and the supply chain. The pledge is a charter of best business practice that calls on retailers to back British growers and offer suppliers a fairer share of risk and reward.

[NFU welcomes Glyphosate re-approval](#)

The uncertainty surrounding the future of glyphosate finally ended after EU member states voted to reauthorise its use for five years. Following extensive NFU activity, the UK was among 18 member states that voted in favour of reauthorisation.

[NFU secures business rates change for nursery growers](#)

The NFU secured confirmation from DCLG Minister, Marcus Jones MP, that the agricultural exemption from business rates will continue to apply to nursery growers and that the law will be amended as appropriate to ensure no further ambiguity. This follows the NFU's long-running battle to address a wording issue that would have resulted in damaging and widespread implications for nursery growers and the wider horticultural industry. Read more [here](#).

[NFU reports on potato payment deductions](#)

Following a series of meetings with the industry, a new report by the NFU Potato Forum sets out goals for growers, packers and processors to deliver greater transparency in the potato supply chain and realise the potential for increasing productivity and profitability.

[Popular NFU Audit Pack gets an overhaul](#)

The NFU's Audit Pack has been helping hundreds of members prepare for their Red Tractor Fresh Produce audit over the last decade and has been updated once more to cover the latest standards. The Pack is totally free for members and can be requested by calling NFU CallFirst on 0370 845 8458.

[Fit for the Future gets retail backing](#)

Since its launch in spring 2016, the NFU's Fit for the Future initiative has gained lots of traction, resulting in some positive steps being taken by major retailers. The latest move was made by Tesco which introduced 'fun shaped' fresh veg to appeal to children. Fit for the Future had presented evidence showing this could increase consumption in children by as much as 85%.

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Policy updates – in brief

Access to labour: The NFU has been providing evidence to government throughout 2017 to highlight the challenges members are having in securing enough labour to pick and pack their crops. It has consistently shown significant levels of shortages across the season and increases in turnover rates, non-arrivals and workers leaving before the end of their contract period. In early December, a new 'End of Season Labour Survey' was launched and has already attracted around 150 responses from members who have identified the scale of the problem, the impacts on farm and the measures they have taken to mitigate the risks. The results of this survey will be shared with the Immigration Minister in support of the NFU's call for a seasonal labour scheme to be introduced in 2018 to prevent an industry crisis. Members can continue to support the NFU's work by completing the End of Season Labour Survey and writing to their MP, with the help of an [NFU template letter](#).

Potato payment deductions: The NFU Potato Forum has launched a brand new report, '[Bridging the Gap](#),' which sets out 10 clear actions for growers and packers/processors to deliver in order to build greater transparency in the sector. The report, which focusses on sharing crop quality data in order to minimise deductions and rejections, calls for more accurate and timely data from packers and processors, and asks that growers get closer to their customers by sharing quality information and visiting the factory at least annually.

Crop Protection: The NFU is lobbying for greater flexibility for CRD to make decisions on product approvals, including an improved attitude to Mutual Recognition, post-Brexit.

NFU seeks Horticulture and potatoes board appointees: The NFU is seeking nominations to join the Horticulture and Potatoes board for the period commencing March 2018 – February 2020. The NFU Horticulture & Potatoes Board consists of 12 nominated members, including an elected chairman (plus up to three additional co-options). The board has a rolling process of annual appointments and members serve a two-year term of office and can then stand for re-appointment. In 2018 there are six board members whose two-year term has come to an end and who now have the opportunity to seek re-appointment to the NFU Horticulture & Potatoes Board for another two years. Details of the application process are available on the NFU website.

Increasing productivity: The NFU is exploring potential measures that could improve productivity for UK horticulture and potatoes. These include the development of the Producer Organisation (PO) scheme that has delivered real benefits to certain sectors of horticulture in the UK. The British Growers Association has published a [report on PO's](#) to demonstrate the benefits it has provided to UK businesses and the UK economy.

Red Tractor Fresh Produce Standards: An updated [NFU audit pack](#) is available to order now. Printed copies will take approximately 2 weeks to deliver; an online version is available for members to download immediately.

Fruit and Veg Pledge: The Fruit and Veg Pledge is a charter for best business practice in the fresh produce supply chain. It was created in 2012 as part of the NFU's Catalyst for Change initiative and four retailers have signed up (Tesco, Aldi, Lidl and Co-op). Further discussions are progressing with a view to obtaining more signatories in the coming weeks. Members should contact the NFU if their customers are not dealing with suppliers in the spirit of the Pledge and we will raise issues anonymously on their behalf.

Plant Health fees and charges: The NFU has responded to a Defra consultation on plant health services fees. Proposals to increase fees and restructure how they are calculated have been presented across plant health, seed potatoes and exports.

Increasing consumption of F&V: The NFU is part of a stakeholder group that is looking to launch a brand new promotional campaign for fruit and veg in the New Year. Sitting alongside Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the Food Foundation and other influential bodies, the NFU is backing a new advertising programme which aims to increase consumption of fruit and veg across the UK.

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Recent board and team activities

Horticulture and Potatoes board chairman, Ali Capper, joined a meeting via skype with the Food Foundation and a number of other stakeholders, including Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, to discuss the development of a new promotional campaign to encourage children to eat more fruit and veg. The campaign is expected to be launched by spring 2018. Ali also met with Rob Burns (AHDB) to discuss export issues and opportunities; attended NFU Policy Board to represent the horticulture and potatoes sector; and discussed labour issues with the Home Office Minister at a meeting in Norfolk. Ali also filmed for Sky News on the horticultural labour shortages (due to be aired in January) and dialled into a conference call with Harper Adams on robotic fruit picking.

Horticulture and Potatoes board member and Potato Forum Chairman, Alex Godfrey, chaired a meeting of the East Midlands Horticulture & Potatoes Board. Alex has also been working with the NFU hort team and communications team on the launch of the NFU Potato Forum report, Bridging the Gap.

Horticulture and Potatoes board member, Tim Papworth, attended the CUPGRA conference in Cambridge (Cambridge University Potato Growers Research Association). Tim also attended the Broadland Agricultural Water Abstraction Group (BAWAG) meeting with Ian Pearson from the EA, and an irrigation meeting at Newmarket with Steve Moncaster from Anglia Water, Jerry Knox from Cranfield, Guy Smith, John Addams-Williams, Paul Hammett from the NFU.

Horticulture and Potatoes board member, Andrew Burgess, spoke at the local NFU branch AGM and dinner. Growers were very engaged in discussions around post-Brexit scenarios for trade, labour, agriculture policy and plant protection.

Chief Horticulture and Potatoes Adviser, Hayley Campbell-Gibbons, spoke at an all party parliamentary group (APPG) meeting setting out the seasonal labour challenges for the horticulture and potatoes sector. Amongst the attendees was George Eustice MP.

Horticulture and Potatoes Adviser, Lee Abbey, spoke at a North West potato grower meeting, covering a range of NFU updates on Brexit, potato deductions, Fruit and Veg pledge and more. Lee also joined a teleconference with Defra and other industry stakeholders to discuss post-Brexit rules on plant variety rights and seed registrations.

Horticulture Adviser, Amy Gray, attended an all party parliamentary group (APPG) meeting setting out the seasonal labour challenges for the horticulture and potatoes sector. Amy sat on a steering group to shape a fellowship programme for the horticultural industry in 2018 (LSA CT Fellowship). Amy also spoke at a member briefing on Xylella for ornamental growers in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire to update them on the latest policy and ways in which they implement best practice measures to try and prevent this disease reaching the UK.