



# Back British Farming: BREXIT AND BEYOND

The NFU 2019 Manifesto

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# Farming matters to Britain



The outcome of this General Election will determine the future direction of this country – in terms of how we trade with the world, to what level we invest in our public services and key industries, and whether we remain an attractive location for a skilled and competent global workforce. All of these issues are systemic for British farming. That is why this Election is critical for our industry, for our members and for the future of farming in this country.

But why should you care? Survey after survey shows that British people care about the food they eat, the environment it is grown in and the standards it is produced to. British farmers and growers are custodians of our iconic countryside, as well as growing and producing the high quality, healthy food that we all eat and enjoy. We are leaders in promoting animal welfare standards, and champions of renewable energy. British farming underpins the food and drink industry, the largest UK manufacturing sector making a fundamental contribution of £122 billion to our economy, providing more than 4 million jobs and supporting rural and urban communities up and down the country.

And we believe with the right political environment, we can deliver more in the future:

- For the environment – we have set out an ambitious vision for ‘net zero’ agriculture by 2040
- For the consumer – with the right policy environment we can produce more at home and abroad of what we eat for every budget
- For the economy – we set out plans to export more, increase our productivity and create more jobs.

However, it would be remiss not to highlight the very real threat which we currently face as an industry. Whilst we want to work with the future Government to deliver all of the above, if we crash out of the European Union without a deal, we will not be able to do so.

We have therefore set out three tests for any future Government. In order to support farming over the coming Parliament, we need at the very minimum to see action in these areas:

1. A commitment to protect our standards of production in trade policy
2. A long-term investment programme to support British farming
3. Guaranteed access to a skilled and competent workforce.

In our manifesto, we are setting out five key policy challenges – Navigating Brexit for British farming, Developing a framework for a more competitive and sustainable farming sector, Building a thriving countryside and rural communities, Securing a long-term Government food strategy and Placing science at the heart of policy making – which British food and farming, working alongside Government, must address over the next Parliament.

<b>Minette Batters</b>	<b>Guy Smith</b>	<b>Stuart Roberts</b>	<b>John Davies</b>
NFU President	NFU Deputy President	NFU Vice President	NFU Cymru President



A blue combine harvester is shown in the background, harvesting a field of golden wheat. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with a soft glow over the entire field. The harvester is moving away from the viewer, leaving a trail of harvested grain behind it.

# **1. Navigating Brexit for British farming**



### Avoiding a 'no deal' outcome

The NFU has consistently called on the Government and parliament to ensure that our exit from the European Union is an orderly one. One which enables British farmers to continue supplying the nation with safe, traceable and affordable food produced to world-leading animal welfare, environmental and food safety standards. We remain determined to avoid costly and disruptive customs checks, processes and procedures.



### Free and frictionless trade with the EU market, ambitious new deals and protecting our standards

Given the size and proximity of European markets, UK trade in food and drink is dominated by trade with the EU, with 62% of our exports going into the single market. Maintaining market access to the EU that is as free and frictionless as possible is a fundamental priority. Given the complexities involved in securing such a relationship, the Government must ensure sufficient time is provided for the negotiations to ensure a smooth transition to this new partnership.

Government must seize opportunities in global trade and match fund investment from industry to open and leverage new markets around the world. The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board should be reformed to include an emboldened Bord Bia (Irish Food Board) style market development function with this match-funded investment to exploit key global opportunities and trade prospects while developing our market at home.

We are also calling for plans to ensure our international trade respects domestic production standards. Put simply, a commitment that after Brexit the food Britain imports will be produced to the same standards which is legally required of British farmers. The NFU believes the establishment of a trade and standards commission is necessary to achieve this.



### Access to a skilled and competent workforce

We are calling on the next Government to maintain access to the seasonal and permanent workforce required by the UK food chain. We would like to see an immediate expansion of the Seasonal Workers Pilot scheme to enable recruitment this winter and rapid action to reach a full scheme of 70,000 seasonal workers as soon as practically possible.

In terms of permanent labour, we would like to work with the next Government to ensure any future immigration system facilitates farming's access to the labour market in the future.





## **2. Framework for a more competitive and sustainable farming sector**



## A future Domestic Agriculture Policy with food producers at its heart

The NFU has proposed a framework for our future domestic agricultural policy formed of three distinct but inter-connected parts: firstly, a comprehensive productivity programme that improves agricultural efficiency and helps farmers produce more from less; secondly, assistance for farmers in managing risk and volatility and in maintaining stability in domestic food production; and thirdly, a system for rewarding and incentivising farmers in undertaking environmental protection and improvement, in delivering public goods and in maintaining the high levels of animal welfare in our production systems. Importantly, the emphasis of government investment across each of these areas will depend on the wider impact of Brexit – in particular, if Brexit is implemented in a way that damages the commercial viability of our farming industry, the government must ensure that support measures to help farm businesses manage the associated financial loss and volatility are in place and adequately funded, including by way of maintaining a system of direct payments as long as necessary.



## A commitment to invest in and support British farming over the long-term

To deliver the three cornerstones of our future agriculture policy, the government must commit to a sufficient multi-annual farm budget, providing certainty for farm businesses to invest in their future. Government must maintain existing levels of investment in farming over the next Parliament at the current cash levels currently delivered under both pillars of the CAP. Farm businesses invest long-term, so an abrupt cliff-edge to long established policies and income streams must be avoided with Government providing sufficient time for new policies to be agreed and implemented. This will provide the certainty and continuity for our farmers to produce more of the food the British public eats and to continue to look after our cherished countryside to the high standards the British public expects. This budgetary commitment must be accompanied by a fiscal framework which encourages investment and assists businesses navigate a new trading and support environment outside the EU, including a capital allowances regime which offers incentives for that investment.



## Supply chain fairness

In order to ensure the principles of fair trading are inherent across the groceries market, we wish to extend the remit of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP) to include more retailers (such as online) and food service businesses, with ornamental crops included within the definition of “groceries”. By making the principles of the agri-voluntary codes mandatory and subject to oversight by an independent adjudicator this will give farmers the same levels of protection that apply to the food processing and manufacturing industry which sells direct to retailers.



A scenic view of a rural countryside with rolling green hills, a wooden fence in the foreground, and a white text box containing the title. The landscape is lush and green, with a mix of fields and trees. The sky is clear and blue. The text is in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

### **3. Building a thriving countryside and rural communities**





## Broadband

Rural areas are crying out for accelerated rollout of high-speed broadband and reliable mobile coverage, with universal coverage equivalent to urban areas. Only 17% of NFU members surveyed receive a reliable mobile signal in all locations on farm, whilst 45% still do not have access to sufficient broadband speeds. Better coverage is required to support farmers to maximise the opportunities that digital technology can provide for their businesses, to improve productivity and workers' health and safety.



## A promise to combat increasing levels of rural crime

We want to work with Government to address the major rural crime issues, such as fly-tipping, livestock worrying, theft and hare coursing, which are having a huge impact on farming communities and agricultural businesses. We believe we can do this through:

- A cross-departmental rural crime task force
- Increased funding for rural policing
- Simple changes to legislation where appropriate to aid the police and criminal justice system when dealing with rural crimes.



## Securing farming's access to water

In order for farmers and growers to care for livestock, and grow high value, high quality crops, including ornamental flowers, fruit and vegetables, it is vital there is a comprehensive and integrated water management strategy. This should improve our resilience to water scarcity and flooding events for citizens, nature and food supply.

A clean, reliable source of water is vital to all farms, so we must have a fair and secure supply of water for our livestock in order to grow crops, including high value, high quality ornamental flowers, fruit and vegetables. Alongside a fair share of water, farming should have a statutory right of access in periods of drought for animal welfare and critical food production. We would like Government to:

- Promote farming's resilience to drought and flood with incentives to store surplus winter water, and reward seasonal washlands (farmland used seasonally to hold flood water, protecting urban areas), and soil management, that reduces flood risk to neighbouring properties
- Ensure agriculture plays a full part in the Environment Agency's strategic catchment and flood risk planning.



## **4. Securing a long-term Government food strategy**





## National Food Strategy

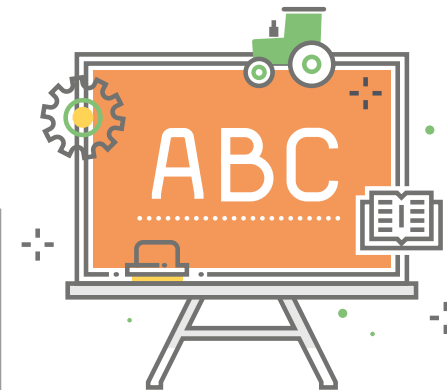
Delivery of a comprehensive food strategy should remain a strategic priority for Government. This must be a policy that delivers for everyone – from a fair deal for food producers to families and consumers across the country, whatever their income. Safe, traceable, affordable food that is produced to high standards of animal welfare and environmental protection is a right for all of us and the UK's farmers should be the number one supplier.

UK consumers expect their food to be safe and produced with integrity, but these characteristics are not universally available around the world. A National Food Strategy should establish a food commission to protect the food we consume and our high production and food safety standards.



## Public procurement

As we leave the EU, Government should ensure that it is supporting our farmers by buying British in all its public procurement. Our schools, hospitals and local authorities should be sourcing food produced to British quality standards, such as Red Tractor, as a first resort, ensuring public funds are invested in supporting the regulatory and production standards farmers and growers deliver. The next Government can achieve this by making buying British a mandatory element of all Crown commercial service contracts for food.



## An education system which embeds farming and food production

The NFU's Education programme has demonstrated that farming and food production is an effective way of teaching STEM subjects with positive outcomes for both pupils and teachers. Embedding farming into the national curriculum would deliver further learning outcomes for schools as well as enabling the next generation to have the opportunity to learn about the British environment, our food provenance and the science of food production and preparation. We also want to work to develop skills in our sector through technical education. We support work placements in the farming and food sector, working in collaboration with organisations such as the National Land Based College and the Agri-Skills Forum.

A close-up photograph of a silver robotic arm in a greenhouse. The arm is holding a ripe red strawberry. In the background, there are green strawberry plants with white plastic mulch. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

## **5. Placing science at the heart of policy making**





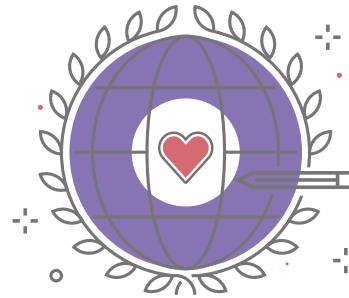
## Support the NFU's Net Zero ambition

Achieving our ambition of British farming being Net Zero in greenhouse gases by 2040 is an ambitious challenge in both timescale and technology, but it is the right thing for us to do morally. It also offers huge opportunities for the sector's competitiveness and environmental profile. It requires a transformation of farm businesses by improving every farm's productive efficiency (producing more but with fewer inputs), managing farmland to retain and capture more atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> in our soils, woods, hedges and trees, and combining renewable energy with novel ways of carbon capture and storage. These measures all require farms to invest and make significant management changes, but it also requires Government to create the climate in which these steps are the best business decision – with appropriate research and development, advice, grants and fiscal incentives.



## A commitment to continue with the 25-year TB eradication strategy in England

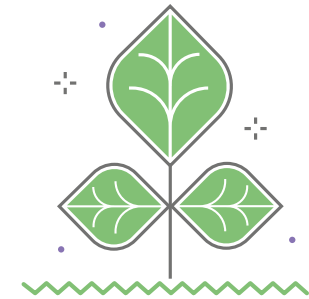
Bovine TB is a pernicious and costly disease, with 32,925 cattle slaughtered in 2018 in England as a result. Working with Government, farmers are trying everything to control it, including improving biosecurity measures as well as culling of badgers. This "joint toolbox" strategy is proven to be working, with peer-reviewed, scientific evidence showing a 66% reduction in new TB breakdowns in cattle in Gloucestershire and a 37% reduction in Somerset, areas where the cull has been going for more than four years. We call on the next Government to commit to Defra's TB eradication strategy for England, including continuing to roll out culling to help prevent the spread of this terrible disease and developing and testing a cost-effective cattle vaccine.



## Ensure Britain's world-leading animal health and welfare standards are recognised and promoted in line with farm businesses

UK farming offers consumers fantastic choice and world-leading standards of animal welfare. Across the farmed species, consumers can rely on Red Tractor Farm Assurance to deliver a robust welfare baseline compared to many imported products. Future welfare policy must be based on science and evidence, focusing on meaningful welfare outcomes for farmed animals and supported by trade policy.

Livestock transport regulation must remain broadly in line with current EU requirements in order to safeguard domestic transport standards that recognise the structure and diverse nature of the UK livestock sectors. The NFU has developed a live export assurance scheme standard for slaughter and further feeding as this remains an important trade for farmers. Future animal health and welfare policy must be based on science and evidence, focusing on meaningful welfare outcomes for farmed animals that help achieve net zero, improve productivity and are supported by trade policy.



## A policy framework that aids development of sustainable plant health solutions

Many UK farmers and growers, and most food production needs continued access to a range of plant protection products. We want Government to work with industry to develop a sustainable regulatory framework for pesticide use and approvals post EU-exit, balancing the needs of UK farmers and growers with interests of consumers and the environment. Fundamental to this will be robust scientific evidence that is based on a risk-based approach to managing environmental impacts. This framework should use research and development that delivers safer, more effective and lower risk pesticides in the context of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) activity and other approaches.









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