



# Farmers Weekly QuestionTime

A series of LIVE debates  
on key agricultural topics  
and current affairs.



# Previous events



**CLICK LINKS** to view the **FWi write-ups**, listen to the **podcasts** or view the recordings on **YouTube**

-  **2 FEB 23: Harper Adams University**
-  **2 MARCH 23: SRUC Oatridge Campus**
-  **20 APR 23: John Innes Centre**
-  **11 MAY 23: Royal Agricultural University**
-  **19 OCT 23: Newcastle University**
-  **27 NOV 23: Welsh Winter Fair**
-  **11 JAN 24: The Great Yorkshire Showground**
-  **22 FEB 24: Rothamsted Research**

# Previous panellists



**THE RT HON  
MARK SPENCER**  
MP MINISTER OF  
STATE (MINISTER FOR  
FOOD, FARMING AND  
FISHERIES)



**DANIEL  
ZEICHNER**  
MEMBER OF  
PARLIAMENT FOR  
CAMBRIDGE -  
SHADOW MINISTER  
FOR FARMING, FOOD,  
FISHERIES & RURAL  
AFFAIRS



**VICTORIA  
VYYAN**  
PRESIDENT  
OF THE CLA



**ALED JONES**  
NFU CYMRU  
PRESIDENT



**MARTIN  
KENNEDY**  
PRESIDENT, NFUS



**ROB MUTIMER**  
PIG FARMER,  
NORFOLK AND  
CHAIRMAN OF  
THE NATIONAL PIG  
ASSOCIATION



**THE RT HON  
LORD BENYON**  
MINISTER OF STATE  
FOR ENVIRONMENT,  
FOOD & RURAL  
AFFAIRS



**SOPHIE  
THROUP**  
TECHNICAL AND  
SUSTAINABILITY  
DIRECTOR  
(MANUFACTURING)  
AT MORRISONS



**CHRISTINE  
TACON CBE**  
CHAIR OF ASSURED  
FOOD STANDARDS,  
RED TRACTOR



**CHARLIE  
IRELAND:**  
MANAGING PARTNER  
AT CERES RURAL



**ROBERT  
GOODWILL**  
MP FOR  
SCARBOROUGH  
AND WHITBY



**ROBBIE MOOR**  
PARLIAMENTARY  
UNDER SECRETARY  
OF STATE FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT FOR  
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD  
AND RURAL AFFAIRS

# Reach

Total live attendees

**704**

**Farmers Weekly** magazine  
(net average circulation  
**96,405**  
per issue)

**FWi.co.uk**  
(average  
**702,300**  
unique visitors  
per month)

Farmers Weekly social media



**301k**  
FOLLOWERS



**104k**  
FOLLOWERS



**184k**  
FOLLOWERS



**30k**  
FOLLOWERS

Total podcast downloads

across 8 episodes:

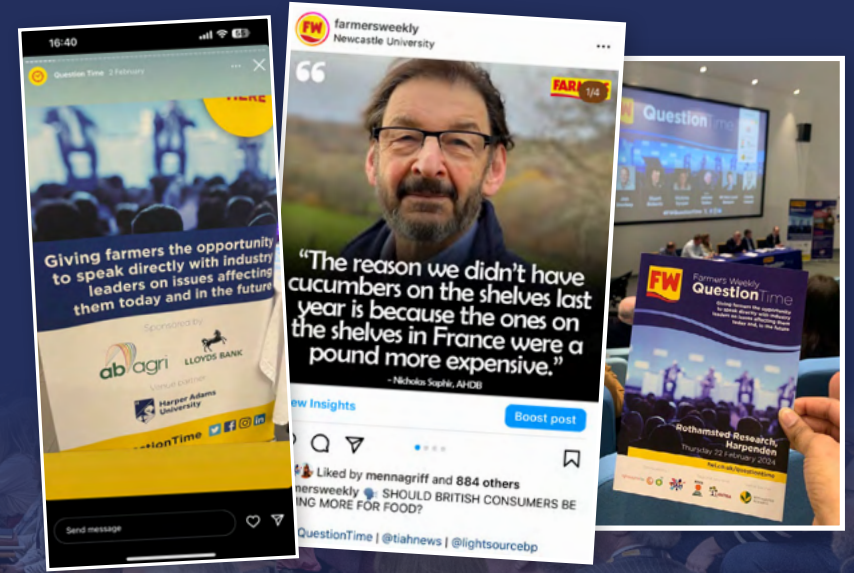
**26,871**

“Supermarkets need to understand, if they want good food on the shelves, they need to ensure everyone in the supply chain is making a profit.”

- **Sir Robert Goodwill**

“I worry that they don't care about food security and consider its importance when looking at trade deals”.

- **James Standen, Newcastle University**



# Each event written up in Farmers Weekly alongside partner ads

## Farmers Weekly Question Time

Industry leaders were quizzed at our latest Question Time event, hosted by Johann Tasker at Rothamsted Research in Hertfordshire

## Food security is top concern in the farming industry

### MEET THE PANEL

<p><b>Lord Benyon</b> Member of the Commons, Defra and Business Association Victoria is involved in the CLA at branch, regional and national level. She has attended the Royal Agricultural College and formerly ran a farming and forestry business.</p>	<p><b>Victoria Vyvyan</b> President, Country Land and Business Association Victoria is involved in the CLA at branch, regional and national level. She has attended the Royal Agricultural College and formerly ran a farming and forestry business.</p>	<p><b>Jon Storer</b> Principal research scientist, Rothamsted Research Jon's research aims to balance sustainable food production with public goods and services from farmland, such as an enhancing net zero and biodiversity.</p>	<p><b>Charlie Ireland</b> Managing partner, Ceres Rural Agricultural Charities has been providing farm management and consultancy advice to clients for 20 years. He is also a registered agricultural valuer.</p>	<p><b>Stuart Roberts</b> Lib Dem MP on food and farming A former full-time farmer, Stuart is a three-generation farmer. He has worked for Defra, The Food Standards Agency and within the most sustainably chain.</p>
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### FOOD SECURITY

**Q Are we sleepwalking our way to food insecurity or are we going to have the right incentives to produce food?**

Defra minister Lord Benyon denied this was happening, pointing to the 2020 Agriculture Act which states "It is the job of a government to make sure all the incentives for farmers are focused on the need for food production." The fact that government has now agreed to an annual food security report, rather than a three-yearly assessment, showed the importance it was now attaching to the matter, he said. "We want farmers to produce food."

Despite this, Lord Benyon insisted that food production and caring for the environment were not mutually exclusive. "We can feed a hungry world and we can restore our natural systems," he said. "That's what we're trying to do with Environmental Land Management and with a variety of other grant schemes to encourage innovation."

Hertfordshire farmer and Liberal Democrat agriculture adviser Stuart Roberts agreed that it was not a binary choice between food or environment – although a farmer's first job was "to produce food for an urban population that can't produce food for itself," but he was concerned by the imbalance within the sustainable farming incentive system. "We're incentivised to take more very good, productive areas of our soil, yet there is no incentive to support one that is producing food," he said.

Ceres Rural consultant Charlie Ireland hit doublets, suggesting that if the country was not incentivised to produce food, it might be "drifting" that way. Being input into many growers with "average-looking yields, and quite healthy margins from the tillage, and you're incentivised to produce," he said. "A lot of growers will be choosing options, so we need to focus on engagement in production," he said. "The Food Standards Agency and within the most sustainably chain."

### POLITICS

**Q Will the farming industry be better off with a change of government?**

According to Lord Benyon, what is really needed is stability – with or without a change of government. "We're farming a diverse, resilient environment to know," he said. "The threat of a new government is that we will have a new policy. We also need a level playing field –



## EVENT QUESTION TIME

**GENETICS**  
**Q What should seed breeders be focusing on to meet the needs of farmers and consumers?**  
Given the increasing challenge from pests, diseases and the weather, Jon Storer of Rothamsted Research said there was a growing emphasis on what he called "sustainability" in new varieties. "We're working to improve the efficiency of inputs, especially nitrogen, so that more of the mineral input we put in the ground actually ends up in the grain," he said. "We also need traits to make varieties more resistant to lodging stem die, aphid damage, and more weed suppression – especially blackgrass." "Genetic variability is a 'win-win', he said, that did not compromise yield potential but did make it more susceptible to the weather early in the season. "We're interested in yield, but the emphasis is on what we are putting in." Mr Ireland also pointed to the challenge of a declining ancestry of active ingredients. "Taking older traits and developing multi-variety mixes, and working with the seeds so that they're happy to take multi-variety mixes, is something we should be looking at," he said. Mr Roberts agreed that resilience was essential. "It's not just about the nutritional profile of future products for consumers. We often talk about food in simple terms around calories, but the main emphasis on what we're going to produce is on what's important." Lord Benyon considered drought tolerance to be crucial – especially given that his farm in England, the benefits were further than that – for example, in relation to human migration, as developing drought-tolerant varieties might allow people to survive in the most climate-stressed parts of the world rather than face agricultural collapse.

**FLOODING**  
**Q Should farmers be offered grants for water storage and flood defences?**  
According to Mr Roberts, water management presents a massive opportunity for farmers. "We should recognise that there are not many lands to be used to store water to save food, to save lives and save houses," he said. "That public good has a value, and we should be paid for that. But we also need to be sure that we have the infrastructure and investment to place to get the water off the land in a way that is the problem. It is the fact it can be set aside for long periods of time." Mr Roberts also called for an integrated water strategy. "We have got to get better at investing, storing and moving water because it's a huge opportunity for us. We also need to be able to store water in the winter, let's be aggressive to have it in the winter, let's be aggressive to have it in the summer." Lord Benyon agreed that farmers should be paid to create water storage on their farms, pointing out that there were already grants.

**Audience comment: Phil Jarvis** stressed the importance of farmers and researchers working together, something that organisations such as the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and UK Innovate had tried. "If you ask farmers what they want, you'll get a whole lot of research on blackgrass than sheep, while the industry would be more interested in rain, Latin names and funding. There is more work to do, but UK Innovate has been in that space."

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## Farmer's Questions

*Will the farming industry be better off under a Labour government?*

*What is being done to connect the urban population to farming?*

*How could AI benefit agriculture?*

*Can technology fill the gaps in the workforce from an aging population?*

*The big supermarkets have gained too much control of agricultural commodity pricing. How do we rectify the position?*

*What training programmes would be available for a start-up farm business?*

## Sponsor Testimonials

*This year's Question Time Series provided an excellent springboard to launch TIAH membership in January. The well thought out panels attracted quality farmer audiences and helped increase TIAH's profile with potential members.*

**- TIAH**

*I highly recommend participating, whether as a sponsor or an attendee. The event offers a wealth of engaging conversations with a diverse group of individuals eager to address various topics in agriculture.*

**- KWS UK**

## What attendees said

*“Loved it, learned a lot and sparked some good debate. Great time for networking afterwards as well!”*

*“An opportunity to listen and contribute to discussions on agricultural matters of interest.”*

*“A fantastic evening hearing from industry experts networking with like minded people. Would love FW to host a similar event in the future.”*



*“Really open answers and interesting to see the actual perspective of the panelists. I was able to network and speak to loads of new people within agriculture and I have made several connections from this.”*

*“Provided the opportunity to ask questions and listen to answers from people you wouldn’t normally have to opportunity to hear from (decision makers)”*

# Series 3 coming later this year!


After two series of thoughtful debates,  
Farmers Weekly Question Time will return later in 2024.



Series 3 will be filmed in front of a live audience at the following locations:




**29**  
AUG 24  
Glenavon Hotel,  
Northern Ireland



**14**  
NOV 24  
Harper Adams  
University



**8**  
JAN 25  
Oxford Farming  
Conference



**20**  
FEB 25  
Plumpton  
College



# Sponsorship opportunities

**SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES:** Coverage will include:



## OPTION 1: SERIES SPONSORSHIP

- Sponsor branding on all promotional marketing in print, digital and social
- Logo & 'sponsor message' panel (50 words) included in each eight-page special in Farmers Weekly & dedicated web content pages on FWi
- Four half page advertisements to feature alongside each of the eight-page specials
- Digital assets to run across the Question Time content on FWi on a share of voice basis
- Sponsor area at the four live events to include branding and the opportunity to network
- Opportunity to guide the topic theme and put forward ideas
- Opt-in data share for registrants happy to be contacted by sponsor
- 30 second advert on each of the FWQT podcasts

**Price: £10,000 + VAT per sponsor**

## OPTION 2: REGIONAL SPONSORSHIP

- Sponsor branding on all promotional marketing in print, digital and social
- Logo & 'sponsor message' panel (50 words) included in the eight-page special in Farmers Weekly & dedicated web content pages on FWi
- One half page advertisement to feature alongside the eight-page special
- Sponsor area at the event to include branding and the opportunity to network
- Opportunity to guide the topic theme and put forward ideas
- Opt-in data share for registrants happy to be contacted by sponsor
- 30 second advert on the FWQT podcast

**PRICE: £3,000 + VAT per sponsor**