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FARMERS WEEKLY

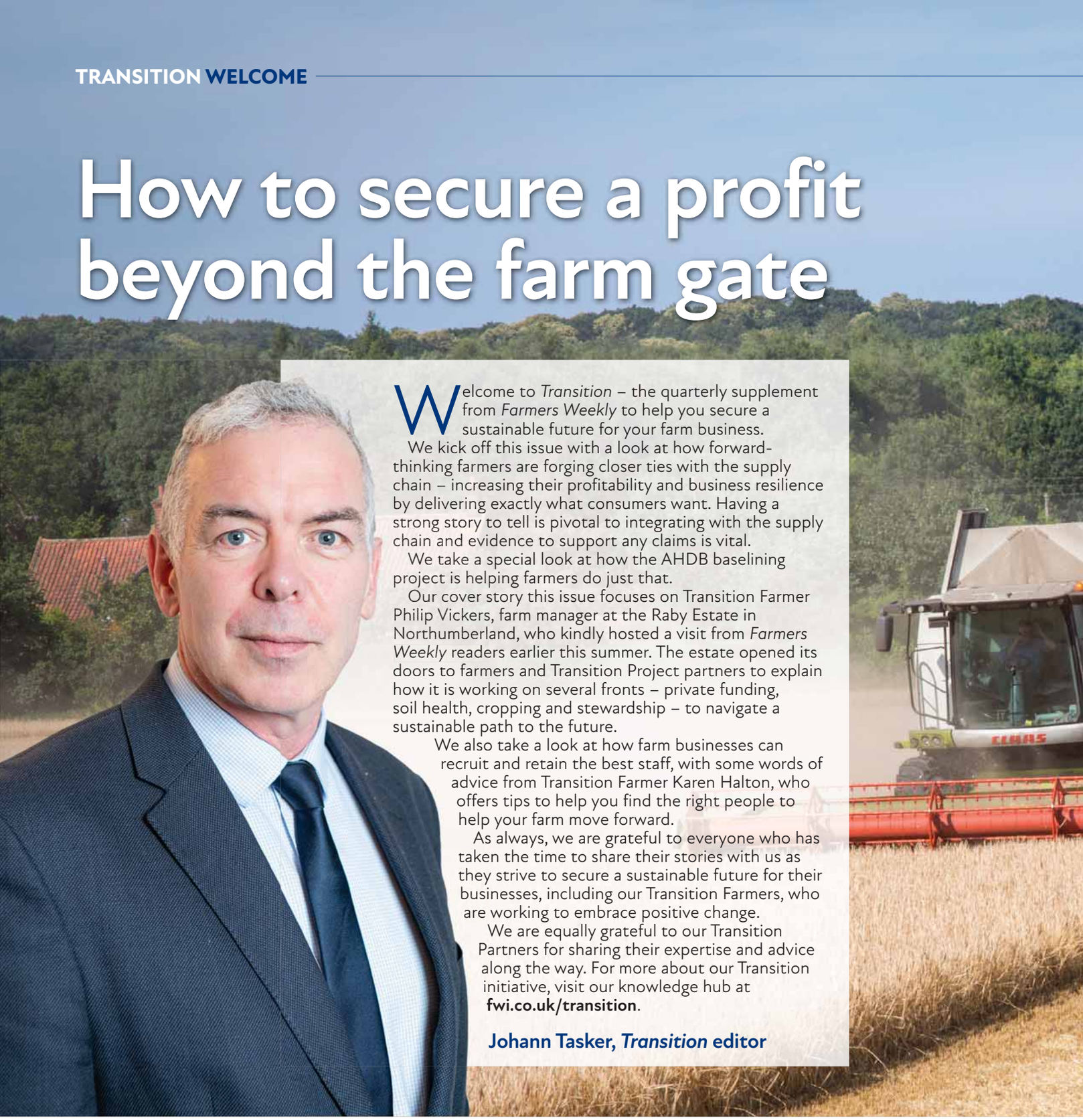
TRANSITION

Securing a sustainable future for your farm business

FUTURE READY

How Durham farmer has embraced change

How to secure a profit beyond the farm gate



Welcome to *Transition* – the quarterly supplement from *Farmers Weekly* to help you secure a sustainable future for your farm business.

We kick off this issue with a look at how forward-thinking farmers are forging closer ties with the supply chain – increasing their profitability and business resilience by delivering exactly what consumers want. Having a strong story to tell is pivotal to integrating with the supply chain and evidence to support any claims is vital.

We take a special look at how the AHDB baselining project is helping farmers do just that.

Our cover story this issue focuses on Transition Farmer Philip Vickers, farm manager at the Raby Estate in Northumberland, who kindly hosted a visit from *Farmers Weekly* readers earlier this summer. The estate opened its doors to farmers and Transition Project partners to explain how it is working on several fronts – private funding, soil health, cropping and stewardship – to navigate a sustainable path to the future.

We also take a look at how farm businesses can recruit and retain the best staff, with some words of advice from Transition Farmer Karen Halton, who offers tips to help you find the right people to help your farm move forward.

As always, we are grateful to everyone who has taken the time to share their stories with us as they strive to secure a sustainable future for their businesses, including our Transition Farmers, who are working to embrace positive change.

We are equally grateful to our Transition Partners for sharing their expertise and advice along the way. For more about our Transition initiative, visit our knowledge hub at **fwi.co.uk/transition**.

Johann Tasker, *Transition* editor

MAIN PHOTO: GNP

OUR PARTNERS

The *Farmers Weekly* Transition Partner Network is a UK-wide community of farmers, industry stakeholders and influencers working together to secure a sustainable future for UK agriculture. If you would like to join and want more information, contact Anna Eccleston at **anna.eccleston@markallengroup.com**

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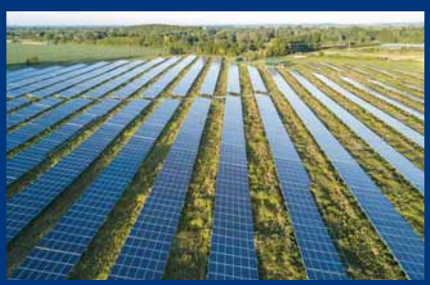
CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS



Tesco's low carbon concept farms get underway

Farms will trial new technologies and processes, reduce risk and share insights and learnings to drive sustainability across the wider industry.

A partnership approach to help the farming industry become more sustainable is central to both of Tesco's recently launched low carbon concept farms, one of which is based in Lincolnshire and is focusing on arable crop production.

Working across the farm's seven-year rotation, Tesco will work with four of its key suppliers to test and trial potential solutions for reducing emissions in the crops being grown: potatoes, peas, wheat and broccoli.

The aim is to take a whole farm approach, identifying the best farm rotations for minimising total emissions, while also looking at how they improve the outcomes for nature and soil health to provide actionable insights that can be mirrored on farms of all types

Innovative processes and new technology are being trialled on the farm, with the retailer taking on some of the risk associated with practice changes, which would otherwise land solely on farmers.

Ashwin Prasad, UK CEO of Tesco, explains that a fundamental part of the work is to ensure that farming businesses can achieve both economic and environmental sustainability.

"Innovation comes with costs attached," he says. "Making farm investment decisions is difficult in the current economic climate, so our focus is on developments that both drive efficiencies and make the business more environmentally-friendly."

"Our Greenprint for UK Farming report told us that over 70% of farmers want to make these changes but financial and political uncertainty is holding them back from implementing measures that future-proof their businesses."

A forum that showcases best practice in a realistic setting and shares learnings will accelerate progress, he believes. "The commercial farm setting is key; other producers will be able to see which innovations are working and what differences they are making."

In potatoes, Branston is looking at low input varieties, low carbon fertilisers and soil microbiology, as well as the potential role of advanced rock weathering and early disease detection.

Mark Willcox, Branston's agronomy director, points out that the progress already made with reducing the 85kg CO_2e per tonne in growing and storing potatoes has come from changing cultivations, using alternative fuels and switching fertiliser type.

Broccoli supplier T H Clements will be evaluating peat-free composts, the use of strip tillage to establish the crop, early disease detection using drones and alternative fuels.

Agronomist Adrian Drury reveals an anaerobic digester waste from the farm, mixed with coir and tree bark, has proved to be a good composting material, while strip tillage has given a 60% fuel saving.

"We are also testing auto planting, camera-guided inter-row cultivators and the use of drones for crop scouting, to see if they bring efficiencies. Robotic harvesting will be introduced this year – these are exciting times." In wheat, miller Heygates is keen to encourage innovation that supports grain quality and reduces the farming industry's exposure to risk. "We're already seeing cover crops, reduced tillage techniques and alternative fuels being used in the field with positive results," says Mervin Poole.

"We want to add to these and evaluate the place for more resistant varieties, better grain drying and the use of photocatalyst technology, such as R-Leaf, in a whole crop system."

The priorities for vining peas are to produce a greenhouse gas emissions calculator for the crop.

Stuart Ashton of Greenyard states that, "in addition, our focus will be on techniques for optimising plant populations, drill innovations, the use of low impact tyres, minimum tillage and existing tramlines to prevent soil compaction, as well as alternative fuels and improved field selection."

Tesco has also launched another low carbon concept farm in partnership with livestock producer APB and hopes that insights gained from these two farms will help drive sustainability throughout the supply chain.

A Greenprint for UK Farming: Working in partnership with UK farmers to deliver a more sustainable food system: https://tescoplc.com/Greenprint-Report

TESCO

Meet our Transition Farmers

These 16 farmers are sharing their journeys with us as they adapt their businesses

Karen Halton
Cheshire
p23


Farm size 240ha

Enterprises
530-cow dairy herd

Transition goals
- Recruit/retain staff
- Maintain animal health and welfare
- Increase direct sales

James MacCartney
Rutland
p25


Farm size 162ha

Enterprises
Beef and sheep

Transition goals
- Reduce disease in sheep
- Be better than net zero
- Establish herbal leys

Vaughan Hodgson
Cumbria


Farm size 244ha

Enterprises
Cereals, grassland, broilers

Transition goals
- Support the next generation
- Replace lost Basic Payment Scheme income
- Adapt to uncertain weather

Alan Steven
Fife
p8


Farm size 138ha

Enterprises
Potatoes, brussels sprouts, parsnips, malting barley

Transition goals
- Reduce cultivations
- Improve soil health
- More resilient rotations

Andrew McFadzean
Ayrshire
p25


Farm size 285ha

Enterprises
350 beef cattle, wheat, beans, barley, fodder beet

Transition goals
- Slash finishing time
- Reduce dependence on inputs using solar energy
- Improve grassland

Rachel & Richard Risdon
Devon


Farm size 161ha

Enterprises
300-cow dairy herd

Transition goals
- Secure adequate labour
- Better understanding of Environmental Land Management
- Reduce carbon footprint

Kit Speakman
Essex


Farm size 275ha

Enterprises
Mixed arable, beef and sheep

Transition goals
- Bridge income gap
- Fully diversified business
- Widen the rotation

Eddie Andrew
Sheffield
p8&13


Farm size 73ha

Enterprises
Dairy, milk delivery service, ice cream parlour and farm shop

Transition goals
- Co-operating to reduce costs
- Establish a new dairy
- Reduce carbon footprint

Irwel Jones
Carmarthenshire
p15


Farm size 375ha

Enterprises
1,500 ewes on owned and rented land, suckler cows and followers, root crops

Transition goals
- Manage natural woodland
- Plant hedgerows
- Rely less on volatile inputs

Andy Bason
Hampshire
p15


Farm size 800ha

Enterprises
Cereals, spring beans, oats, linseed and oilseed rape

Transition goals
- Cut carbon emissions by 30%
- Establish 10ha of agroforestry
- Establish 10ha of woodland

Duncan Blyth
Norfolk


Farm size 2,650ha

Enterprises
Cereals, oilseed rape, sugar beet, pulses, grassland, woodland, wetlands

Transition goals
- Improve soil health
- Develop natural capital revenues
- Achieve net zero by 2030

Fergal Watson
County Down


Farm size 285ha across three units

Enterprises
170-cow suckler herd, beans, wheat, spring barley, oats

Transition goals
- Recruit/retain farm staff
- Restructure suckler herd
- Improve business resilience

Philip Vickers
County Durham
p17


Farm size 1,250ha

Enterprises
Winter wheat, oilseed rape, spring barley, spring beans, lupins, rotational grass; share-farming agreement with tenant sheep farmer

Transition goals
- Maintain margins while changing approach
- Improve soil health and resilience
- Enhance natural environment

Kate and Vicky Morgan
East Yorkshire


Farm size 1,700 breeding sows

Enterprises
Weaning 1,000 pigs a week – finished on-site and through B&B arrangements with local farmers, 140ha rented out

Transition goals
- Facilitate structural change in supply chain
- Establish more influence over own destiny
- Diversify

Ed Shuldham
Wiltshire
p7


Farm size 1,800ha

Enterprises
Cereals, oilseed rape, oats, forage and grain maize, peas, solar, biomass, anaerobic digestion, events and property diversifications

Transition goals
- Help shape Sustainable Farming Incentive through participation in pilot
- Make more use of data
- Take natural capital

Matthew Williams
Shropshire
p9


Farm size 1,100ha

Enterprises
Cereals, oilseed rape, winter beans

Transition goals
- Improve profitability and margins
- Continue to improve soil health
- Control and optimise input use

PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

How to ease the process of succession planning

Succession planning can be one of the most difficult, but important, conversations a farming family will have. Here are some top tips on how to approach the process to secure your farm's future

Succession planning has become more important than ever following the changes to the inheritance tax regime, but conversations need to be focused on more than just tax and the transfer of assets.

"Successful succession planning is about making sure everyone within the family can move forward with clarity and confidence," says Jack Bull, farming consultant with Strutt & Parker. "It's a long-term, strategic process which is about ensuring business continuity, financial stability and avoiding family disputes."

Every family and business is different, so succession plans will need to be tailored – and the earlier you start the process, the better.

What matters most is being open and honest from the outset, managing expectations through clear, consistent communication.

The first step should be about establishing the facts of the business – even if you think they are obvious.

"This means confirming the exact ownership of assets, the status of tenancies and timescales, mortgages, overdrafts, pensions, investments and cash," says Jack.

"Then you can start the conversation about what everyone wants and how they see the future. People often have different ideas and opinions that may never have been voiced before."

There is always the risk that small differences of opinion can turn fractious. This is why having a third party facilitate a family meeting can help things to run more smoothly and ensure everyone has their voice heard.

"Dealing with your own family can be challenging, as personal relationships and business ones overlap. Having someone independent in the room can help you navigate any divisive situations and establish a clear path forward.

"Decisions about the future of the business are also likely to have legal and tax implications, so it is vital to discuss any proposals with your land agent, solicitor and accountant to make sure any changes are made as efficiently as possible."

Drilling into the detail of each family member's expectations is the key to long-term motivation and happiness.

For example, understanding what the next generation want from their working life can prevent issues down the line.

"In farming, there are naturally periods that are busy and the work must be done, but identifying when people can take time off and establishing a fair reward structure can go a long way in avoiding resentment or jealousy."

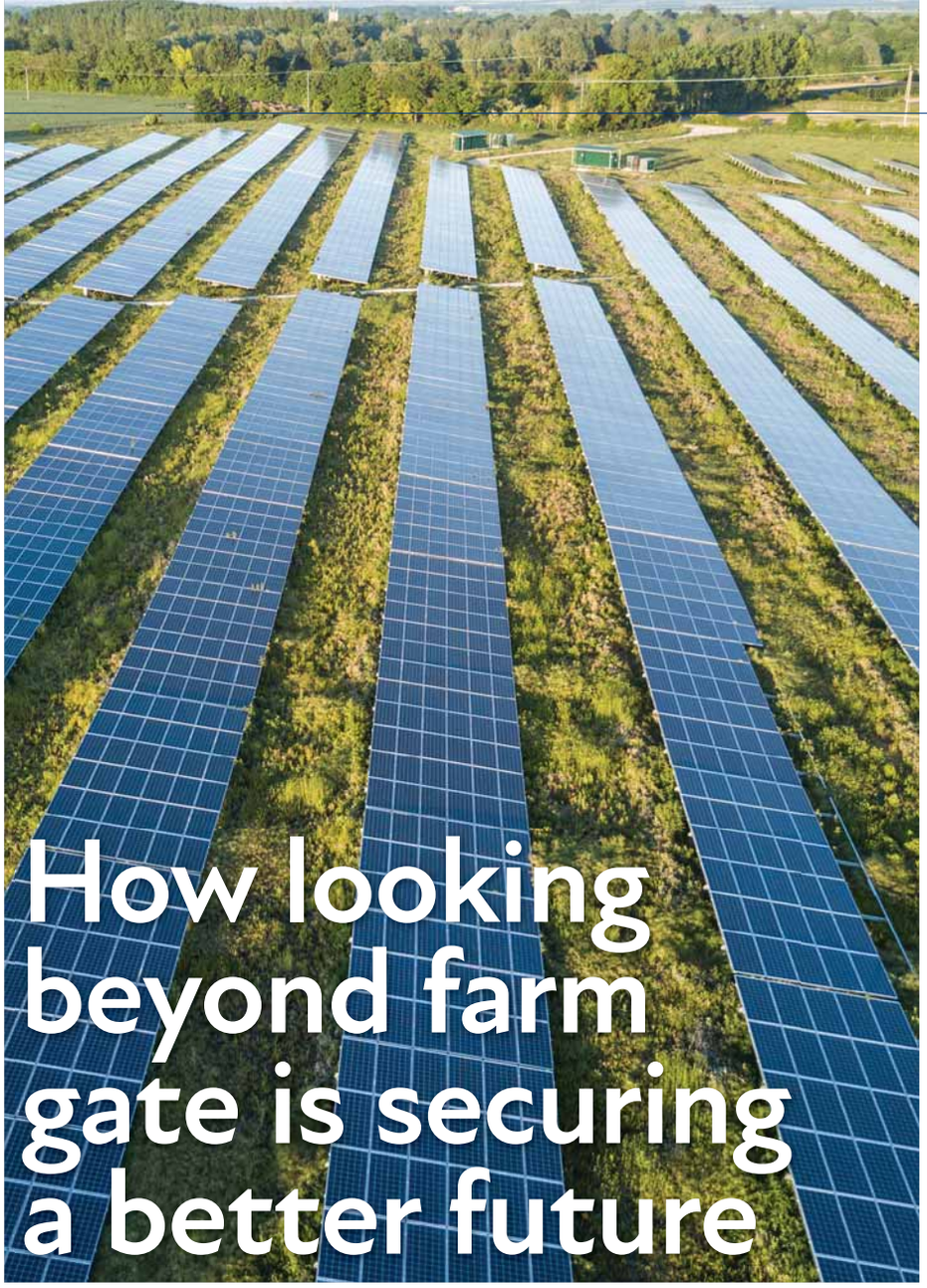
It is equally important to explore what the older generations think retirement looks like, as it often means different things to different people.

"This can then facilitate a discussion on how retirement can be managed – and financed. Will they stop work entirely, or phase out gradually? Will retirement be funded through the farm or personal pensions/investments? Can the business support any drawings?"

While those actively engaged in the farm are likely to be most involved in discussions, it is also important to include any 'off-farm' children and the partners of all interested parties.

"I have helped a number of farming businesses successfully navigate this process," says Jack. "For many people, this will be the most important decision they make. Every situation is different, but the key to success is honesty and openness. It may be uncomfortable in the short term, but it makes for smoother sailing when big decisions are made."

To find out more
Call 07384 821901
Email jack.bull@struttandparker.com
Visit rural.struttandparker.com



How looking beyond farm gate is securing a better future

As the Transition project enters its fifth year, it is clear farmers must consider other avenues to secure a sustainable future. **Jonathan Riley** and **Johann Tasker** examine the challenges

More farmers are thinking "beyond the farmgate" to ride out a series of challenges facing the sector and secure a future for their businesses. Growers and livestock producers say they are reaping the rewards from forging stronger relationships across the supply chain – to overcome rising input costs, labour shortages and market uncertainty.

Farmers working more closely with suppliers say they gain better access to technical advice, innovation and purchasing efficiencies. Meanwhile, closer ties with processors, retailers and end consumers are ensuring more stable returns. Producers say these partnerships are strengthening business resilience, enabling them to respond faster to market opportunities, and, ultimately, improving their profitability in a changing marketplace.

Potential solutions

Farmers able to meet additional criteria – including higher-level assurance schemes, regenerative farming practices or provenance storytelling – find themselves well-placed to access premium markets. This might involve targeting higher-income consumers through farm branding, regional identity, or direct sales. Others are finding success by adding value – processing their own produce, developing branded products or innovating with new offerings.

Building closer relationships with processors, retailers and suppliers is also proving a key way for farmers to secure more stable and transparent pricing, access to reliable markets, and early signals on changing consumer demand.

During the coming year, *Farmers Weekly Transition* will be focusing on this and more. The four key challenges facing producers are:

- Policy pressure
- Geopolitics
- The marketplace
- Environment.

Here, we take a closer look at these chal- >

TRANSITION FARMER ED SHULDHAM

JM Stratton, East Farm, Codford, Wiltshire

Collaboration with other farms is providing landscape scale to generate revenue streams and create a louder voice to influence UK policy, according to East Farm's business development manager, Ed Shuldham.

The farm is part of two collaborative initiatives with neighbouring producers. One is a farm cluster, Wylye Valley Farmers, which acts as a not-for-profit, social and community exercise to demonstrate and share ideas on environmental issues and sustainable farming.

The second initiative is the Environmental Farmers Group (EFG). It is also a collaboration and was set up with local farms to trade natural capital assets at a landscape scale. The group has 541 members covering more than 340,00ha, and this scale offers farmers more clout when negotiating and trading natural capital services.

"Private purchasers want to see the biggest benefits achieved for their input and this means working at landscape scale," says Ed. "We work together as a professional team to negotiate with buyers and set a price for our assets that accurately reflects their worth."

The aim is to become a trusted supplier of quality natural assets for public and private bodies such as the UK's water companies, developers and corporate organisations.

"Another benefit of the EFG's scale is we get a seat at the policymakers' tables. We have been involved at a high level of government, and our experience and opinions are being listened to by senior officials," he says.

< lenges, and suggest how they might be overcome through our farmer case studies.

1. Policy pressure

Labour's landslide victory in last year's general election heralded a marked change in Defra's policies and has become apparent that producers can no longer rely on government support for profitability.

For farmers in England, the past 12 months have seen:

- Rapid withdrawal of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)
- Inheritance tax (IHT) imposed on farm assets worth more than £1m
- Closure of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) to new applicants
- Withdrawal – and then reopening – of capital grants.

This reflects a broader fiscal and political context. With public finances under strain, agriculture must increasingly justify why it should be prioritised over other sectors. In this climate, support can no longer be taken for granted.

2. Geopolitics

At a broader level, political change across Europe, the US and further afield is posing further challenges for UK farmers. The geopolitical landscape is directly impacting trade, supply chains, regulation and investment in agriculture.

Donald Trump's second term as US president has already affected UK wheat growers reliant on domestic bioethanol production, by putting a floor in the cereal market, with tariff-free ethanol imports now heading for these shores.

UK trade deals with countries such as Australia threaten to have a similar impact on British beef producers, with less predictable trade policies affecting overseas market access for UK agricultural exports.

Ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East continues to unsettle global grain and oil markets, underlining UK farmers' exposure to geopolitical shocks. Meanwhile, the global consensus on environmental targets is weakening. Politicians and farm leaders are increasingly questioning the validity of net-zero policies, while the EU is easing corporate sustainability reporting through the "Omnibus Directive".

In the US, a more fossil fuel-friendly approach is gaining ground. However, for UK farmers, this raises key concerns – whether future regulations will remain aligned with net-zero ambitions, whether green farming schemes will stay funded, and how to respond to diverging consumer and investor expectations.

TRANSITION FARMER ALAN STEVEN

Hillhead Farm, Kingsbarns, Fife

Arable grower Alan Steven produces potatoes and malting barley with ever-closer ties to buyers far beyond the farmgate to maintain market value. Net zero is more immediate for maltsters who are processing barley for whisky that will be sold in 12 years' time. To compete with products on shelves in 2037, whisky must hit net-zero targets as soon as possible.

Alan sells his barley to Simpsons Malt, which is addressing carbon emissions with a switch to green nitrogen by means of a tie-up between Simpsons and fertiliser manufacturer Yara.

The energy-intensive processing of fertiliser has traditionally relied on fossil fuel. But Yara has switched to renewable energy, significantly cutting the carbon footprint at Hillhead, and so benefiting the whole supply chain.

Even closer customer ties have been established on the potato-growing enterprise. Alan supplies 400t of ware and 200t of seed mostly to processor McCain, which supports its 250 UK growers with agronomy, including recommendations on spray applications. It also promotes the use of cover crops and sustainable agriculture with lower nitrogen use to achieve its aim of having 100% of its growers using regen systems.

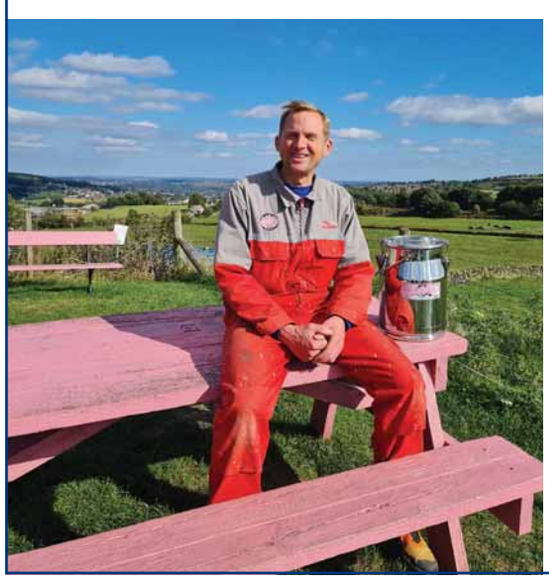
To support its growers financially, McCain operates an upfront payment system. The payment made in July is worth about 50-60% of the crop value to cover the growing costs for seed, fertiliser and pesticides. The remainder is paid once the harvest has been completed.

TRANSITION FARMER EDDIE ANDREW

Cliffe House Farm, Sheffield, South Yorkshire

The recent energy crisis was the catalyst for Eddie Andrew to rethink his reliance on retail power suppliers. Volatile energy prices, driven by global political upheaval and conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, saw Eddie's electricity bill rise by more than 15%.

The rise translated into an extra £4,000/



Environmental work benefits biodiversity and helps the supply chain meet rules

3. The marketplace

Market pressure continues to intensify as farmers are asked to produce more with fewer resources and tighter margins. Consumers remain highly price sensitive, particularly in the face of inflation and broader economic uncertainty. Yet expectations have not fallen.

Shoppers still demand high-quality food, but increasingly expect high standards of animal welfare, environmental care, and sustainability as standard. This presents a dilemma. While high standards can incur real on-farm costs – from changes in livestock housing, feed, inputs or record-keeping – many consumers are reluctant >

month added to the bottom line of his electricity bill. "We couldn't work with rises like that, so looked for a way to protect the business from this outside influence. We needed to isolate ourselves and move off-grid and to be free of fossil fuel use within five years," says Eddie.

The farm is moving into electricity generation using roof-mounted solar panels and two wind turbines. Combined, the output will be 3MW – more than double the farm's needs. The excess will power a unit that will change methane into green hydrogen, and be used to supply nearby Sheffield Council for its expanding bus fleet. The Our Sheffield Farm project is being delivered by Sheffield-based social enterprise SY Ecofit, which will design, install and operate the farm infrastructure.

A pioneering approach to funding the electricity-generating business has also been taken. The farm's 1,300 doorstep milk round customers have been approached to invest in the electricity generation equipment. "Customers of the milk delivery business will then become our energy suppliers rather than a mainstream retail, insulating us from the volatile prices on a global market," explains Eddie.

TRANSITION FARMER MATTHEW WILLIAMS

Criddon Hall, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Matthew started working with Wildfarmed low-input grain traders and campaigners for environmental farming practices in 2024. It also connects the entire supply chain – farmers, millers, bakers, and consumers – by marketing crops grown under its system.

Matthew drilled 52ha of spring wheat under a contract that stipulated tight limits on N through the season – no insecticide, no fungicide and no herbicide applications. As a result, input costs were only £50/ha and the crop proved to be as profitable as the conventionally grown wheat. This season, Matthew has extended the contracted area to cover 20% of his 1,250ha and has direct-drilled spring oats into beans.

He has also grown a trial area of winter wheat. The crop was treated with herbicides at an early stage. Testing has shown there were no residues left in the crop long before harvest, so Wildfarmed is considering permitting this approach. This close relationship will help farmers grow the crop by tackling an otherwise potentially unworkable ryegrass and brome burden and increase Wildfarmed's tonnage of wheat within its portfolio.

Matthew has attended meetings organised by Wildfarmed to introduce grain buyers to the farmers. "It is a new experience to put faces and names to the people who buy our produce," he says. "We are gaining a better understanding of what they want, but we are also able to discuss the important issues we face and we are all moving forward together."

ELLIE LOVELL

Tack Farm, Bromyard, Herefordshire

Dairy farmer Ellie Lovell is securing increased revenue by working closely with the supply chain. Milk from the 800-head dairy herd is sold to Arla, and Ellie has embraced the aims of the processor's FarmAhead rewards programme, which pays an extra 0.03 euro cents for every kilo of milk produced. "It sounds like a small amount, but there are 19 option areas and when they are multiplied by the milk output, it adds up to a significant incentive," says Ellie.

The main options for rewards points are those with the biggest benefits on reducing emissions and improving biodiversity: feed efficiency, fertiliser use, land management, protein efficiency and animal robustness. Ellie has chosen to remove soya from the ration as part of the feed efficiency option. Other options taken up include soil health measures, such as sampling, nutrient management through reduced artificial fertiliser use and continuous plant cover. She has also installed solar panels to achieve points for renewable energy use. Further points are added for attending knowledge exchange events and training throughout the year.

The impact of the work at Tack Farm goes far beyond the farmgate to Arla's retail and food service customers. Many of Arla's customers have to provide information of emissions caused by their supply base under new rules. It means Ellie's work to reduce the carbon output on a recognised scheme has become valuable information for the corporations, and that makes Tack Farm a crucial link in the supply chain.

ANDY GRAY

Elston Farm, Copplestone, Devon

Andy has cut out the middleman, not just for his own livestock business but for customer farmers around him, by creating two outlets: The Meat Box Company and MC Kelly. Andy direct-sells his beef and venison online through The Meat Box company, while MC Kelly supplies lamb, beef and pork to 450 hotels and restaurants across Devon and Cornwall.

To supply the growing customer base of both outlets, he takes in livestock from three selected farms nearby. He has developed an on-farm slaughter line for sheep, with a cattle line at the planning stage, while pigmeat is supplied from Cornish Farmhouse Bacon.

The short supply chains of all the initiatives mean more of a share of the margins for his own business and those of his local supplier base. It also keeps livestock transport to an absolute minimum, cutting the business's carbon footprint. Those elements give the business a strong selling point. Restaurants and retailers are able to say where meat has been grown and demand is growing for produce with traceability and a local story.

Andy says cutting out the middleman has put a higher degree of resilience into the business portfolio. MC Kelly is still expanding and business has already grown from 12 to 80 workers with a turnover of £7.5m/year.

Natural assets can unlock private funding streams

RICHARD BRAMLEY

Manor Farm, Kelfield, North Yorkshire

Arable grower Richard Bramley's family are in the 90th year at Manor Farm. But the past five years have arguably raised the biggest challenge across all of those decades, says Richard. It is now three years in succession where growing conditions have been difficult. The extreme climate has come in combination with turmoil in markets and global politics caused by the Covid pandemic, conflict and Brexit. "Climate resilience is largely about soil health, and we have been working on it for the past 20 years. We have been cover cropping since 2007, to protect the nutrient value of the soil and provide a temporary wildlife habitat over winter," Richard says.

The farm's environmental approach has been supported by government schemes. Richard was an early adopter of the environmental philosophy, joining the Entry Level Stewardship in 2005, taking part in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) pilot, and signing up to the full scheme from the outset. But the SFI payment income amounts to just 40% of the income from previous support schemes. No longer able to rely on the government, the business has forged links with private bodies.

One of the farm's customers, potato processor Walkers, subsidises the farm's cover crop seed and a CCm Technologies' fertiliser pellet derived from anaerobic digester waste. Both of these boost soil organic carbon and help the processor achieve its own environmental targets.

Another partner is Yorkshire Water, and Richard has taken part in its Sustainable Landscapes Programme to reduce pollution. Yorkshire Water works with farmers to help improve soil health and provides a proportion of Manor Farm's cover crop seed.

He is also part of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society's Farmer Scientist Network. The farm has hosted a three-year project on biocontrols for wheat crop pests and has just embarked on soil enhancement trial to build drought resilience and soil nutrients.

< to pay more for them. Instead, they view such attributes as non-negotiable. But that doesn't necessarily mean lower margins for farmers, with niche markets continuing to offer potential for those producers willing to differentiate.

4. Environment

At the same time as the market and political upheaval have hit farming, increasingly unpredictable and frequent extreme weather events are making it harder for farmers to remain profitable – eroding margins, increasing costs, and disrupting long-established rotations. The 2023-24 season saw one of the wettest winters on record, limiting arable cropping.

In contrast, the previous summer saw extended dry spells, reduced grass growth and poor forage yields. This season has been different again. All this poses business risks way beyond yields. Disrupted harvest windows impact labour efficiency, while delayed drilling compresses workloads. Meanwhile, livestock producers face feed shortages and higher input costs. Across the board, insurance, drainage, and infrastructure costs are rising – prompting forward-looking farmers to improve soil management, invest in better drainage, diversify their cropping and use weather modelling to build resilience.

Ultimately, environmental management is now a core part of running a viable farm business. Those who adapt strategically will be better placed to protect productivity and profitability in a more uncertain future. ■

NIC AND RENO RENISON

Cannerheugh Farm, Eden Valley, Cumbria

Nic and Reno Renison have farmed Cannerheugh since 2012 and promote regenerative farming through an annual conference "Carbon Calling". It was set up in partnership with independent livestock consultant Liz Genever. Now in its fifth year, the event has gained standing on the annual conference circuit with its high-calibre speakers. Also planned is the development of a meeting room, part-funded by Farming in Protected Landscapes. It will serve as a venue for the conference.

The couple have also set up a direct-selling business with a thriving customer base, and forged links with local outlets for their Aberdeen Angus beef and egg production enterprises. Initially, the unit produced lamb, but beef cattle better suited the grazing profile and cost structure. The free-range egg business has added pasture management and cashflow benefits.

The land has been farmed under a regenerative system since 2014 with cattle on rotational grazing. The free-range hens then follow cattle round and are secured at night in mobile housing units, says Nic.

Margins have been improved by selling cattle to local company Westmorland, which operates the nearby Tebay motorway services on the M6. Westmorland is also a farm business and takes almost all of the Renisons' beef as stores for finishing. The closeness of the business means its carbon footprint benefits from short transport times for the cattle. About one-third of the eggs are also bought by Westmorland.

The short supply chain helps create security for the farm, and fair prices are agreed with a known buyer. The remaining eggs are sold through a doorstep delivery service. "Margins here are better than selling to a mainstream packer, and a trusting relationship with the client-base has been formed over the years," says Nic.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ADOBE STOCK, GNP, TIM SCRIVENER, SUPPLIED BY RICHARD BRAMLEY, ANGUS FINLAY, EMILY FLEUR, KATHY HORNIBLOW, OUR COW MOLLY, RENISONS FARM, RICHARD STANTON,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FOR TODAY'S FARMING
CHALLENGES?
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AHDB baselining project hailed as game changer

Twelve months into the five-year programme, **Jonathan Riley** catches up with project leaders and participating farmers for an update on progress

British agriculture's environmental performance is frequently exposed to damaging criticism and misinformation. But the AHDB Environmental Baselining project has set out to change that. It aims to provide the industry with accurate information to counter its critics and to enable farmers to take a data-led approach towards a more sustainable future.

The project, supported by Quality Meat Scotland, was launched in the early summer of 2024. AHDB environment director Chris Gooderham explains why it was set up. "Agriculture is facing a challenge to explain that farming systems can have a beneficial impact on the environment."

According to the 2025 Climate Change Committee report, farming contributes a significant 11% of the UK's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This figure is frequently highlighted by anti-farming campaigners and has affected public opinion, particularly towards meat and dairy products. "But consistently overlooked is the fact that agriculture, unlike other sectors, has the capacity to capture, manage and store carbon," says Chris. "Countering the criticisms, though, is a difficult task due to a lack of accurate on-farm data," he says.

That lack of baseline environmental data is also making it harder for individual farmers to transition towards new markets and more sustainable management practices. Without a baseline there's no way of gauging progress and less incentive to make improvements, says Chris. "We hope to set that straight with the baselining project, which will equip individual farmers with the detailed data they need," he adds.

PHOTOGRAPHY: BLUESKY INTERNATIONAL, WAYNE HUTCHINSON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, OUR COW MOLLY, EMILY FLEUR, SUPPLIED BY ROB MEADLEY

Aims

The project aims to gain accurate data on inputs, outputs, emissions and the scale and potential capacity of carbon storage on UK farms. With this baseline established, the detailed data will then guide decision making to help farm businesses meet net-zero targets by 2050.

But, Chris stresses, the pilot project goes beyond those overarching aims. Underpinned by accurate on-farm data and evidence, the project will provide a detailed insight into how British agriculture affects the environment. It will also be looking at farming's role in boosting biodiversity and controlling pollution, he says. "By adding reliable fact to the often one-sided debate about British farming, the project will help to ensure farmers are recognised for delivering both food and environmental goods," says Chris.

"We hope this will bring the industry together, empower farmers to drive change and forge a fairer, more sustainable path towards net zero 2050. A big outcome we hope to see is a behavioural change, with the extra information helping farmers to make better decisions that lead to improved output on the participating farms."

Setup

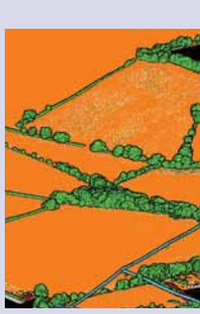
The project was launched at the start of summer 2024 and has since attracted more than 500 applicants. Of the 509 that applied, 322 grew cereals and oilseeds, 296 produced beef, 245 lamb, 149 dairy and 39 pork. All were subjected to the same rigorous selection process.

"We were very pleased with the number and cross-section of farm types and scales that came forward. It gave us great scope to ensure we could select the ideal farms," says Chris. The final 170 were chosen because they covered a range of sectors: production systems, land management uses and practices, mixed farms and soil types.

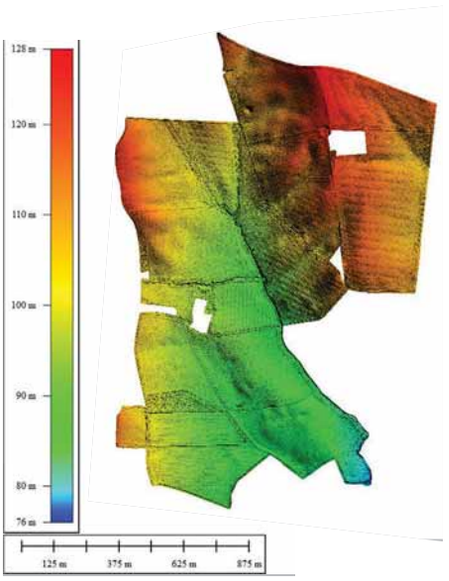
As well as committing to taking part for the whole five years of the trial, the farms also had to implement an action plan to drive improvements. In return, they are provided with fully funded carbon audits, landscape carbon measurements, run-off risk maps and soil carbon and nutrient analysis. They are also supported by an approved adviser and have access to secure data storage and anonymised data analysis.

Progress

Three phases of measurement and recording will take place during the project – light detection and ranging (Lidar) scanning, soil sampling and on-farm audits. These phases will establish the amount of carbon stored in soil, hedges and trees across the entire range of different land uses



Lidar scanning using light aircraft and drones can reveal above-ground carbon stores and terrain features



across all 170 farms. GHG emissions and carbon sequestration will also be assessed.

Lidar scanning

The first set of measurements were taken during a four-month period that began in December 2024. The scanning was carried out by aerial survey specialists Bluesky International using drone- or aeroplane-mounted Lidar equipment. All but two of the 170 farms were surveyed – the remaining two will be scanned this winter. Collation, interpretation and presentation of the scanning data is being carried out by Trinity AgTech.

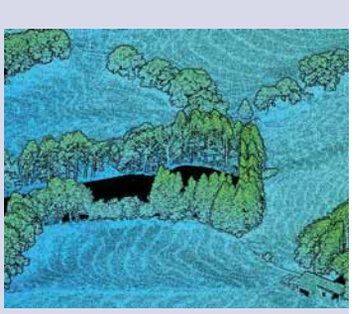
Dr Joe Oyesiku-Blakemore, a senior sustainability manager for Trinity AgTech, says Lidar uses a laser to measure the height of both the terrain and any above-ground features, such as hedges and trees, and that it is unparalleled in accuracy and resolution to any other airborne methods.

He adds that Lidar produces 1,000 data points per square metre and each one has a co-ordinate value and height, and that winter months are chosen because the laser penetrates better through sparse foliage. Software algorithms then interpret the millions of points captured to build a 3D model for each farm. The interactive image identifies specific objects such as buildings, field boundaries and woody biomass – giving precise heights, widths and densities of vegetation. When combined with information drawn from satellite imaging and species identification, the software can calculate the amount of carbon stored across the farm.

It can also highlight which areas are the key carbon stores. While Lidar scanning is used to establish above-ground carbon stocks, it also allows ground features and terrain to be mapped. "This is important because in addition to assessing carbon stocks, the Lidar system can highlight issues like water flows across individual fields," explains Joe.

When combined with data on vegetation, the terrain maps will point to higher run-off areas and guide management decisions on drainage plans or nutrient planning to cut pollution risks. The surveys also have potential benefits for wildlife. Areas can be more easily identified where gaps in hedgerows, scrub or tree cover could be connected to create wildlife corridors and larger habitats, greatly enhancing their value.

"Detailed results will be presented in PDF or web-based format. The 3D images provided will give the farmer or grower a new angle from which >



WHAT IS LIDAR SCANNING?

Light detection and ranging (Lidar) is a remote sensing technology that uses the light from a laser to collect measurements. These are used to create highly detailed 3D images of objects and maps that are more accurate and revealing than satellite scans.

TRANSITION FARMER EDDIE ANDREW

The baselining project is possibly the most important work ever carried out by the AHDB on behalf of British dairy farmers, says Eddie, who works closely with the University of Sheffield on a number of farming and environmental projects.

Eddie is also a major supplier of milk to the university's catering outlets which serve 30,000 students. Over the past few years, Eddie has seen the market share for cow's milk plummet by 50% at the university while sales of plant-based drinks have soared. "Students' demand information about the food they buy especially its environmental credentials; carbon emissions are foremost in their minds. I have had to compete with the slick campaigns of the plant-based brands, but their sales teams can claim low carbon footprints and point to data for products to back them up.

"I have had no data to make claims about cows' milk or counter the criticisms of the plant-based devotees – it's been like competing with one hand tied behind my back. Students have argued for an environmental charge for coffee made with cows' milk to offset emissions – It's felt like we have just been getting whacked," says Eddie.

Now, though, he sees the AHDB baselining project as an opportunity to fight back. "The reason I signed up to take part is simply that I see this project as a breakthrough. With the data collated, analysed and published, we will be able to look carefully at what we do," says Eddie.

"Any areas where we can improve will show up and we can act to improve our position. But I believe it will show how much carbon we are sequestering to balance out the emissions associated with dairy production. Once we start to get the baseline advice, we will see where we can improve on emissions and on our ability to capture and store carbon," Eddie says.

● See p5 for more on our Transition Farmers

< they can view their farm," says Joe.

A number of tabbed viewpoints will show different sets of features, such as hedgerows and trees, and display the calculated carbon store. A further benefit of the scanning is that it highlights the extent and types of a farm's natural capital assets, helping to demystify this area of the Transition process. Results will likely be presented this autumn, with Trinity AgTech presenting the findings to the baselining farmers. Early indications already point to a higher-than-expected level of non-farmed areas on holdings, with scrub, trees, banks or other vegetation. These previously unaccounted areas could be acting as valuable extra carbon stores and wildlife habitats.

Soil sampling

Meanwhile, the second phase of testing is now under way with soil carbon and nutrient sampling being carried out by Agricarbon, explains Chris. This phase will continue until late autumn 2025. Samples will be taken using vehicle-mounted core samplers down to bedrock. In less accessible areas such as woodland, marshes and dense vegetation, hand corers will be used to depths of about 1m.

Nutrient sampling will be carried out around the cores and results mapped to allow further comparative samples to be taken from the same point later in the project. The soil sampling is proving to be the most costly element of the project, accounting for about half of the total funding, says Chris.

But accurately identifying soil carbon stocks is hugely important. Previous studies have shown that soil holds about four times as much carbon as the above-ground vegetation. This suggests that while policy has focused on peat and trees in terms of carbon stocks and sequestration, soil could perhaps play a bigger role in future plans. "If we could increase soil carbon by just 10% we would make a huge increase in the total amount of carbon stored," says Chris. "We are also assessing the potential roles of other types of remote sensing like satellite imagery in identifying soil carbon stocks."

Audits

The third part of the measurement phase will focus on audits of the farm business to establish efficiency levels and emissions. Starting this summer, auditors are set to visit the 170 farms to assess production factors and performance to arrive at a certificated carbon footprint.

Next steps

The aim is to reach a net carbon figure for each farm that will offer an insight into a national picture. From there, the AHDB is hoping to extend the pilot to a project across a wider base of farmers and partners. Further ahead, Chris hopes this initial pilot could pave the way for a national Lidar dataset and even greater collaborations across other baselining and benchmarking initiatives. "A national rollout is a no-brainer because it would yield valuable information to feed into government farming policy decisions, support industry sustainability and counter greenwashing," Chris concludes. ■

CASE STUDY: LUCY NOAD

Dairy and beef farmer Lucy Noad reckons the AHDB baselining project is a game changer. She runs a 200-head, autumn block-calving dairy herd that keeps all of its followers – some as replacements and the rest to finish as beef. In total there are about 530 cattle on the farm.

Lucy underwent the stringent application process to join the project because she is keen to demonstrate the value of carbon sequestration and storage on British farms. "There is far too great a focus on emissions – our critics have emissions tunnel vision," says Lucy. "To date there has been nothing that has allowed us to say with confidence how much carbon sequestration and storage there is on farms. Everything we are doing on farm to mitigate our impact on the environment – taking a holistic approach that looks at soil health and biodiversity – is going unnoticed," she says.

At Woodhouse Farm, both the Lidar and soil sampling phases have been completed. "I really appreciate that the AHDB has opted to use the most up-to-date techniques to give us a science-led approach. This will give us the robust data we need to go to our buyers, the government and the public to show them that what we are doing, works," says Lucy. "Over the five-year project, we can then take a data-led approach to implement changes that will have the biggest impact on our carbon footprint."

CASE STUDY: ROBERT MEADLEY

Arable grower and Brown & Co consultant Rob Meadley is awaiting soil core sampling to be carried out at the 600-acre Grange Farm and has arranged the farm's carbon audit after the Lidar scanning was completed last winter.

The forward-looking farm business has had a previous association with the AHDB as one of its Monitor Farms and has taken strides towards becoming net zero with fuel sourced from an AD plant powering some of its ventures. "I am keenly interested in how farming can contribute to cutting the UK's greenhouse gas emissions using new techniques to sequester and store carbon.

"When I saw the pilot baselining project was being developed I knew it would be a great opportunity to find out exactly where we stood with our emissions and our capacity to store carbon."

The simple fact is baselining is vital, he says. Arable margins are extremely tight and the BPS payment is diminishing so the future will require new income streams. Those are likely to come from private finance for natural assets and potentially carbon trading. "We won't attract investors if we can't demonstrate exactly what we are doing now, measure our progress and establish where there is potential for carbon capture and storage," he says.

In the near future, more conventional agricultural customers are also likely to prioritise those farms with proven environmental credentials, Rob suggests. "The baselining project will give us credibility by providing us with robust, independent figures about what we are doing and what we can offer to customers and the country," he says.

Private funding and baselining boost

Transition is following a group of farmers on their journey to adapt and meet the challenges of farming. **Debbie James** reports on the progress of two farms

Andy Bason

Growing winter wheat at Newhouse Farm without nitrogen (N), in line with its Transition goal to cut carbon emissions, resulted in a yield penalty. However, the crop still produced 5.6t/ha compared to 8.9t/ha in wheat established with farm-standard fertiliser inputs.

The Hampshire-based farm has been working with Southern Water on trialling reducing N use on its combinable crops. Farm manager Andy Bason says while less wheat was grown when no N was applied, the penalty was lower than anticipated. "If you take savings made on the fertiliser into account, the returns on both crops would be very similar," he says.

Trimming fertiliser will help the business achieve its ambition to reduce carbon emissions by 30%. Project work with Southern Water is informing decision-making. "Southern Water has a very good farm-knowledge transfer team, which has been really beneficial," says Andy. "While their aim is to reduce groundwater nitrates, for us there is a good financial incentive from using less N going forward."

The water company also contributed towards the costs of replanting a 10ha deer-damaged agroforestry project after Defra closed its Capital Grants scheme. Andy had already lined up a nursery to supply the fruit trees. "We were fortunate Southern Water stepped in because planting is time-critical. So many of these environmental projects need to be planned months in advance, and when the plug is pulled on support schemes at the last minute, it doesn't give farmers the confidence to engage."

Newhouse Farm secured a Sustainable Farming Incentive agreement before Defra closed the application process. One option selected was AGF1, to maintain very low density in-field agroforestry. The agroforestry trees planted in January established well, with stronger guards and stakes to protect trees from deer and wind damage, which destroyed the first attempt in 2023.

With the 10ha of agroforestry established, together with 10ha of woodland established in 2023 funded by an English Woodland Creation Offer grant, Newhouse Farm is at least two-thirds of the way to achieving its Transition goals.

FARM FACTS

Newhouse Farm, Northington Down, Alresford, Hampshire

- 800ha main farm
- Annual rainfall: 770mm
- Soil: Loam

TRANSITION GOAL PROGRESS

Approximate percentage of progress towards completion:

- 30% cut in carbon emissions – 66%
- Establish 10ha of agroforestry – 66%
- Establish 10ha of woodland – 66%

● See p5 for more on our Transition Farmers

Irwel Jones

Cutting inputs and costs with a shift to regenerative farming is a strategy lamb producer Irwel Jones hopes will protect his profit margin as direct subsidies peter out. Although at the early stage of regenerative practices, Irwel has already reduced input dependence by halving his annual artificial fertiliser use to 15t.

FARM FACTS

Aberbranddu Farm, Llanwrda, Carmarthenshire

- Farm size: 375ha acres (255ha owned and 120ha rented)
- Annual rainfall: 2,000mm
- Soil: Clay and peaty on marshy areas

It makes financial sense, he reckons, to transition to a position where the upland farm's stocking capability is optimised rather than maximised. Historically, feed and fertiliser had allowed him to "extend acres" and increase stocking density, but he doesn't believe it's sustainable going forward. "I don't think hauling expensive feed around the farm and relying on fertiliser is the future, I'd rather work within our farm's natural capabilities."

He is supported by experts who offer one-to-one mentoring from experienced regenerative farmers. They will measure Aberbranddu's soil carbon baseline, monitoring this as farm practices change as it will produce verified carbon credits for Irwel to retain or sell.

Irwel's confidence in the new lower input approach took a slight wobble during this spring's dry conditions, when grass growth slowed, but he believes he would have been no better off had he applied more fertiliser since there was little moisture to activate it. "I am not expecting everything to fall into place instantly," he acknowledges.

Benchmarking Aberbranddu with similar systems through the Farming Connect business group has been a "real eye-opener", he says. "I've always known we rely on the Basic Payment Scheme, but having the figures and comparing to other group members made me realise I had to make changes to remain sustainable in the long term."

He hasn't yet progressed with a Transition objective to extend the farm's natural woodland, putting those plans on hold until further details are provided on Wales' new Sustainable Farming Scheme, but he has extended hedgerows using the Small Grants – Environment scheme.

TRANSITION GOAL PROGRESS

Approximate percentage of progress towards completion:

- Carefully extend and manage natural woodland – 50%
- Plant hedgerows to improve biodiversity and aid pasture management – 50%
- Rely less on volatile inputs – 50%

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD STANTON

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Raby Estate embraces change to secure future

Raby Estate opened its doors for a Transition Project farm walk. **Louise Impey** went along to hear how the estate is making changes for the future

Attention to detail has been critical as Raby Estate has changed direction and set about creating a more robust and commercially viable business, with an environmentally sustainable farming enterprise at its heart. Farm manager Philip Vickers describes the system as "best farming practice" rather than giving it a regenerative label and explains that the focus has been to reduce reliance on external factors.

While that has created challenges in some circumstances, it has also allowed them to improve timeliness and find other ways of solving agronomic issues. "I'm as confident as I can be that we are going in the right direction," he says.

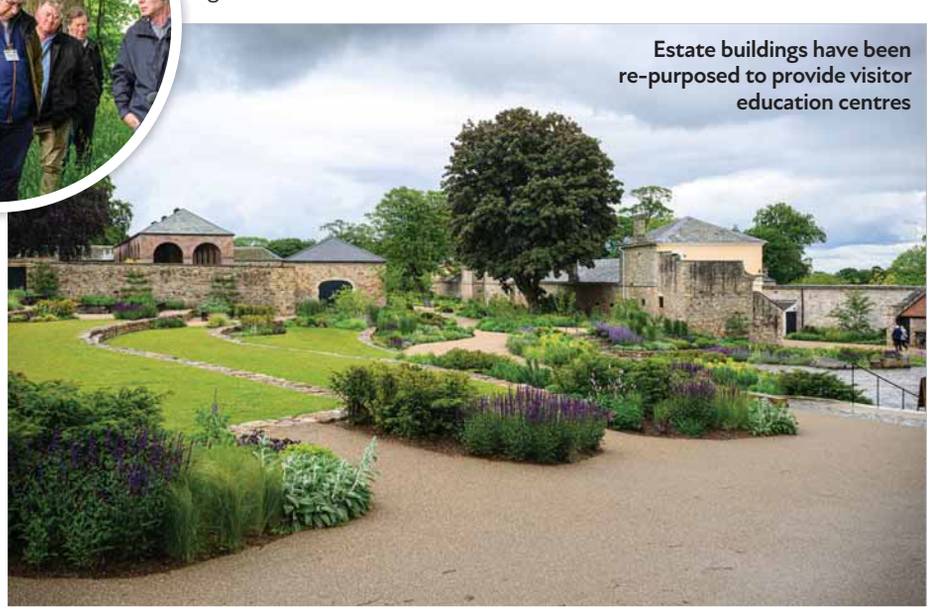
A good example of that in practice is slug pressure, which initially increased with the introduction of less soil disturbance and more ground cover on the farm's heavy soils, especially in a wet autumn. However, the purchase of a straw rake helped to reduce slug numbers by disrupting their life cycle and redistributing surface trash – with slug pellet use falling as a result and carabid beetle numbers rising. "It's taken some of the pressure off," he says. "Our system is based on appropriate use of inputs – we still need to be profitable."

Flexibility

Philip adds that sustainability extends beyond the in-hand farming operation in a business-wide strategy that encompasses the whole of the Raby Estate – meaning that resource efficiency, biodiversity uplift and wider public engagement are all relevant to the farm. "Lord Barnard had the original vision and aims to hand over the estate to the next generation in a better condition. By working together, that is what we are all trying to deliver."

With direct drilling used wherever possible and fewer synthetic inputs applied, both the scale of the farm and its northerly location can work against it in terms of timeliness, he says. "It is more challenging and we do have to think on our feet," Philip says. "Some of the windows we have to get field work done are very tight and we know that if we compromise a direct-drilling situation, we will see a yield reduction."

Overwinter cover crops are a good example. The benefits of including them for better soil function and nutrient cycling are well known, but the opportunity to get them drilled and established before the weather changes can be challenging. For that reason, Philip maintains a flexible approach. He has introduced diversity into the rotation in other ways – by growing some bicrops of peas/spring barley for cattle rations and using variety blends for feed wheat crops. He is also growing spring oats for the first time this year, as he continues to weigh up cropping options and their place in wider, more diverse rotations. >



Estate buildings have been re-purposed to provide visitor education centres

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD LEE

Farmers and Transition Partners heard how the Raby Estate has made strategic changes to improve sustainability and took part in a farm walk to see the effects for themselves

< Variable costs

Fuel use has come down and the farm now uses 4.5 litres/ha to establish crops by direct-drilling. On average, that's a 10-litre/ha reduction. Kerosene use in the mobile grain driers has also fallen due to the strong reluctance to combine the grain above 18% moisture. Input use is described as appropriate and is always being scrutinised. "We dropped our nitrogen rates to as low as 150kg/ha in some first wheat crops but found that protein levels in winter wheat were slipping. They've come up a bit now and are around 10-15% below the RB209 recommendation."

Fungicides are complemented with biosolutions, and sheep are used to graze winter wheat and eliminate the need for an early spray, Philip says. "We are learning all the time so it will be interesting to see what results we get this year."

The opportunities to graze wheat this year were really limited due to low biomass crops because of the wet autumn and winter. A 0.8t/ha yield uplift has been recorded where sheep grazed winter wheat. Otherwise, bromes are the biggest grassweed challenge and seem to favour direct-drilling situations. Both margin and yield are important, stresses Philip, who says that yields have held up well as the system has changed.

Sustainability baselining

The wider estate's sustainability strategy has implications for the farm in terms of resources and soil health, reveals Raby Estate's sustainability manager, Victoria Cadman.

As a result, baselining is being done across 10% of the fields, to see if the change in farming operations is being reflected in soil health and function and whether it is helping to address pre-existing issues. "We can't sample all the soils everywhere," she says. "But we are doing soil organic matter tests, as well as undertaking physical analysis such as visual evaluation of soil structure scores, bulk density, infiltration tests, earthworm counts and slake tests.

"We are also comparing fields that have had different cultivation regimes. Some have been direct-drilled for a while, such as High Carlbury, and others are still in transition, as with Low Carlbury." Early results are encouraging, continues Victoria. "We have measured soil organic matter increases and improvements in nutrient status across both sites and the changes are statistically significant."

Getting soil organic matter levels up has involved straw chopping and the use of farmyard manure, as well as changing cultivations, she notes. "We are continuing with this work so that we get enough data from more varied soil types and management operations to confirm what the most robust approach is."

The final part of the work will be to see if there is a relationship between these variables and yield/margin, she concludes.

Lessons learned

- Be brave... but only if you have the data
- Listen to the people on the ground
- There is one chance to do it right, after that it is a compromise
- Ask for assistance
- Have a plan
- Communicate the plan
- Do not be afraid to deviate from the plan as new information becomes available
- Do not let key capital items age beyond useful life

FERTILISER CHANGES

The repurposing of the farm's original fertiliser store as part of the wider estate's rejuvenation plan prompted a switch to liquid fertilisers. "Losing storage facilities is only one reason to change", says David Booty of Omex, who adds that there are also good technical and practical arguments for using liquids.

"The accuracy of application is better," he points out. "It's also less susceptible to drift, due to better targeting, and nutrient availability tends to be higher. Some of the fields here are very exposed and can be affected by high winds."

Workload and logistics also come into play as fertilising becomes a one-man operation with liquids, continues David. "You don't need bag handling and help with filling the hopper. It becomes a more seamless operation and saves time."

Flexibility is another consideration, as the balance of nutrients applied can be tweaked, along with any other crop nutritional requirements.

The use of urease or nitrification inhibitors can be planned for without having to commit to advance purchasing. Solid fertiliser still has a place at Raby, he acknowledges. "It helps to take the pressure off the sprayer and is used to keep up with operations at busy times."

Looking ahead, David notes that low carbon fertilisers are on their way, which will suit Raby's sustainability focus. "Products based on blue ammonia will be coming along this year. Further ahead, we have green ammonia, which is made from renewable energy but comes at a higher cost. Then we will have fertilisers containing recovered nutrients, such as those from waste water. Again, they will suit the circular economy approach."

FARM WALK

This focus on the Raby Estate was based on a Transition Project farm walk in June. It is part of a series of events to help you achieve a more sustainable future for your farm business.

The events are free of charge and supported and attended by our Transition Project partners, who provide an invaluable source of advice and information.

- Keep it simple
- Join a knowledge transfer group.

Future concerns

- Environmental payments – will there be any and what form will they take?
- Machinery costs: timeliness is key so machinery must facilitate that.

Funding – looking ahead

With the future of government funding uncertain and climate change creating challenges for rotations and business planning, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for farm businesses, says Lewis Butlin of Agrovista. "We are at a crossroads – until we know the detail of any future government funding and how the SFI [Sustainable Farming Incentive] is going to develop, it isn't possible to be more specific.

"Those who have an existing SFI agreement will be able to carry on with the practices that they have committed to, most of which will be improving land and delivering for nature," Lewis suggests.

He believes that the original concept of the SFI was correct, but its implementation was flawed. "It funded different behaviour and allowed farmers to make the decisions that were right for their farms." An added complication has been seasonal factors, he notes. "We haven't had a normal season for five years, so the SFI has helped to manage some of that risk and keep farms on track."

With pressure on public funding, more private funding opportunities are becoming available through the supply chain, according to Ed Jones, sustainable farming adviser with Frontier Agriculture. There are already a number of sustainability programmes up and running through Frontier, with two main different types for the harvest 2025 crop, he reports.

The first is a sustainability data collection contract, where growers are paid premiums as part of a grain contract to supply crop production data, while the second is a sustainable supply chain programme, where growers receive payments per hectare for certain farming practices. "Both help supply chain partners understand the environmental footprint of products entering their supply chain. With the latter, the practices that growers are being asked to do are linked to reducing emissions, improving soil health and supporting biodiversity," he explains. To date, these programmes cover winter wheat, winter oilseed rape and spring barley.

"For farmers, the key is to make sure that you understand what you have to do and what information you have to provide, before you sign up," advises Ed. "The supply chain needs evidence so farmers must be prepared for audits. The data on how crops are grown has a value and making sure that you know why any partner needs it is important." ■

BUSINESS CHANGES

Robert Sullivan of GSC Grays, who has worked alongside the Raby Estate for 35 years, outlines some of the changes that have been made since Philip Vickers arrived three years ago and the farming system started to evolve.

1 MACHINERY Having reviewed the fleet, almost two tractor units have been dropped. As a result, less capital is tied up, running costs have been reduced and the hp/ha of cropping figure has come down. Two main drills are used – a 12m Horsch Avatar as the workhorse, while a Seedhawk is used for environmental plots and some other drilling. "Given the tight working windows, drill capacity may not be optimum yet," Robert suggests.

2 LABOUR Previously, three full-time staff worked on the farm. When two of them retired, the labour requirement was reassessed and there are now two full-time staff on the arable enterprise, covering more land. So labour costs are down. "We've got a great high-quality, motivated team. The aim is to maximise the area we can manage with the existing kit and labour."

3 ROTATION A wider, more diverse rotation that includes spring cropping and cover crops is in place, with an SFI agreement helping, but the margin has not reduced, stresses Robert. "We have more first wheats in the rotation now, so the gross margin hasn't slipped. We also have more grassweed control opportunities."

4 YIELDS Providing the farm team has been able to stick to the narrow September and early October window for drilling, yields have held up. "We get five to six weeks maximum up here. If we have to go outside of that period, the risks associated with direct drilling increase and yield is the first thing to suffer."

5 NITROGEN Overall, nitrogen rates have dropped by 50kg/ha, although they have been revised upwards slightly after protein levels in wheat dropped. First wheats receive an average of 170kg/ha of nitrogen, while tissue testing is used to check the crop's nutritional status.

6 SPRAYS Fungicide use has fallen but the use of nutritional products has increased, so the costs haven't altered. "There are lots of environmental scheme options on the farm," points out Robert. "Over time, they will provide the resilience and sustainability that a lower-input system needs."

7 SUSTAINABLE FARMING INCENTIVE The SFI has been embraced enthusiastically, admits Robert, but in a way that benefits the farm and the environment. Payments for companion crops, no-tillage, zero insecticides and summer cover crops are all received by the business, which has helped with the loss of funding from the Basic Payment Scheme. "It takes a lot of management time, so don't underestimate what's required."

FARMERS WEEKLY

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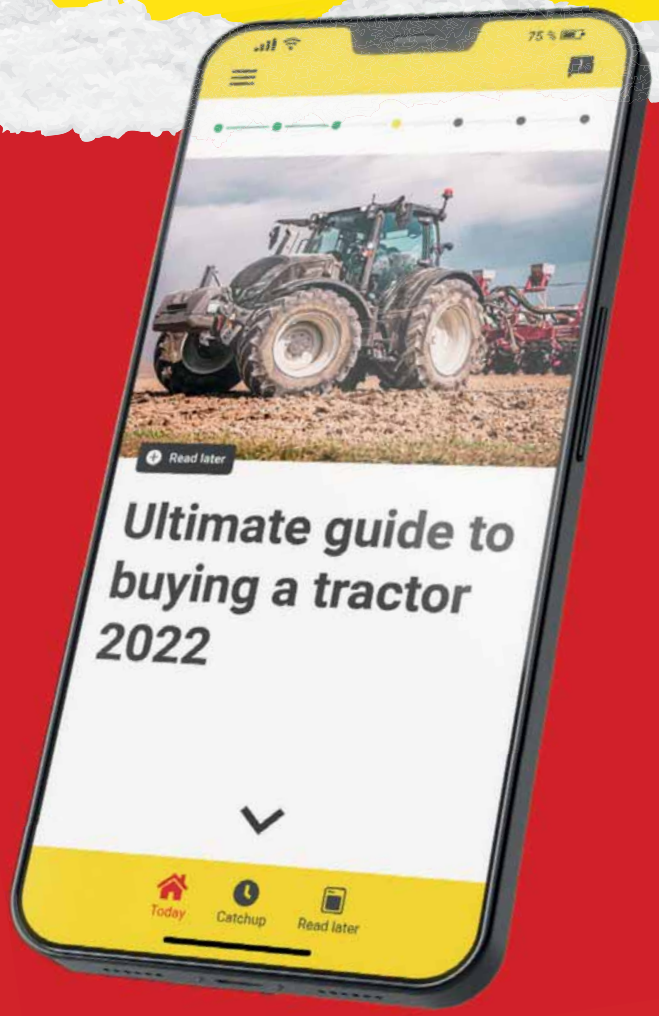

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Eight tips to help you recruit the right staff

Staffing farms is a big challenge, but creative thinking, industry initiatives and a willingness to be 'loud and proud' can retain workers. **Debbie James** reports.

Employee recruitment and retention is tough across agriculture, from large farming estates to smaller family farms. From the generational shift to workers seeking non-manual work, together with the sometimes unsociable nature of farm jobs, to the misconception that agriculture offers no career progression, all have contributed to the struggle to fill vacancies.

The location of farms in rural areas with their small labour pools adds to the challenge. Neither is the outlook encouraging as the number of people in the workforce aged between 16-30 is forecast to fall 5% by 2050.

But there are some tentative signs the situation could be starting to improve. The "Clarkson effect" has reawakened interest from the younger generation in farming, and the industry is taking ownership of the recruitment and retention crisis by upping its game and making farms appealing places to work.

New initiatives such as The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture's (Tiah) Careers Advice Hub have helped too. With input from experts, we look at what businesses can do to position themselves as a "go-to" employer for job applicants, and to keep staff once recruited.

1 Make a job appealing and the farm an attractive place to work

Decent working conditions, hours, accommodation, training and development opportunities, and good communication skills all add interest to vacancies and encourage an existing workforce to stay.

Paul Harris, of recruitment consultancy Real Success, says a lot rests on the interview, but farmers are often poor at conducting that process properly. "An interview often consists of 'Hello, how are you, are you vertical and breathing and can you speak English? I'm desperate so when can you start?' "

Whatever the position being advertised, learning to interview in a professional style is essential. Take the time to show a candidate around and present the farm in the right way as first impressions count – recruitment is a competitive process, with jobseekers often having more than one opportunity to choose from.

Farmers can spend a lot of time thinking about what they want from a candidate, but Izak van Heerden, senior knowledge exchange manager at the AHDB, recommends switching that mindset to what the applicant might want from the job.

"Put yourself in the other person's shoes and consider why they would want to work for you and what you can do to make that happen, whether it's accommodation, giving them weekends off, or being flexible."

A good starting point for farmers is to ask themselves "Would I work for me?", advises Lantra's head of agriculture Andrew Palmer. "If the answer is 'no', you have got a lot of work to do," he says. "The building blocks start with you, the farm. Make your place attractive, and that will sell a lot."

Some farms fail on offering the most basic of needs, such as having a working toilet. Paul insists they must get these fundamentals right, and that includes having a robust health and safety policy. "If I'm a parent and thinking about where I want my children to work, one of the reasons against farming could be because of the health and safety record, so let's get real – if we are going to attract people into the industry, let's deal with some of the stuff that is under our control as farmers."

2 Don't shy away from using social media

Social media gives farm employers access to a national, if not international, labour pool. For more senior roles, such as farm managers, recruiters will place adverts in industry publications, but for other positions social media can be very effective.

Fear of animal rights activists is one reason why some refrain from taking to social media. "We encourage farmers to have accounts and >

PHOTOGRAPHY: GNP, ADOBE STOCK, TIM SCRIVENER, WAYNE HUTCHINSON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, RICHARD STANTON

< engage on social media, but they tell us they don't want people to know where they are, that animal rights activists might turn up at their door," says Paul.

But he urges a different mindset, pointing out that activists are already aware of where farms are located, and advises farmers to fight back with positive messaging. "If we hide ourselves away and don't tell people what a wonderful industry we work in, how are people expected to know about it, especially those from a non-rural environment?

"People in an inner city school are never going to find out about farming unless they see someone on Instagram or Facebook posting about it, so I am very passionate about us being brave enough to talk positively about our farms and our industry. Get out there and tell people if you want to attract people to your industry, be loud and proud."

3 Develop a reputation as a good employer

Tess Howe, Tiah's head of partnerships and policy, says once a business has a reputation as a good place to work, it becomes much easier to "pull people through the door". Consider what potential employees might expect from working within the business.

4 Utilise free industry initiatives and resources

Advertising positions through specialist educational establishments such as Harper Adams University is a popular and well-trodden route. It can offer an easy solution to finding good staff, says Alex Hardy, business development manager at the university's School of Sustainable Food and Farming.

A recruitment initiative the university carried out in conjunction with Leaf 18 months ago involved 2,000 young people principally in inner city locations. It resulted in more than 50 visiting the campus, where they were given insights into careers in agriculture. They had no contact with agriculture until that point, but afterwards 65% said they would consider a career in the industry.

"There really is enormous value in our being loud and proud about our industry – yes to speak to the people we already know but to also speak to those that we don't," says Alex. "If we can do that really well we can position the industry in a light where we can control the narrative and be really clear about what we are trying to do as an industry."

AHDB's AgriLeader programme offers individuals from farms and businesses a chance to develop to drive their business forward. The initiative is another tool that helps farms with recruitment, including the online library of Labour Lifecycle resources, which covers different stages of recruiting, retaining and managing staff.

A wide range of skill sets are needed

This is a good first step to the basics, says Izak, such as producing a profile for the role and how to advertise and interview for it.

5 Show a candidate's 'influencers' that farming is a good career

It's not just the people who are in the market for a job that farmers must sell the position to, but those that have influence over them, such as parents and careers advisers. These influencers might have an outdated perception of agriculture, believing it offers no career progression.

"Those perceptions are really holding us back," says Tess. "When we have on-farm initiatives, the children get excited, but as soon as they leave and discuss with someone else a career in farming, they can get held back. I think it is really important to be shouting about the different roles, how people can move through the industry, and the opportunities that are there."

There can be a gulf between the language farmers use when talking about their industry and what the next generation is looking for. Farmers might talk about their passion for farming but future employees could be more interested in sustainability, protecting the environment or food nutrition.

"The more we can speak the language people understand, the more I think we can drive forward," Tess reckons. Apprenticeships, internships and training partnerships are important routes

TOP TIPS

- Look at yourself and your business and what you offer as an employer – what can you do to improve?
- Being a good employer is a must, not a "nice to have", and is a learnable skill, so make use of resources that are often free or part-funded
- A good boss is a good teacher – teach employees to believe in themselves, their capabilities and strengths
- Learn from bosses in businesses outside agriculture


Farming offers a variety of tasks

to potential employees too, with many employers paying the Apprenticeship Levy.

6 Offer a distinct career path for every role

Some workers will solely want a job they enjoy that will pay a guaranteed wage, but others are interested in positions that offer clear career progression. Gone are the days when a recruiter could tell a candidate that training might be considered further down the line, says Andrew – candidates want to hear about this at the interview stage. Without that, the position might not be an attractive option.

7 Be a good manager and communicator

One of the principal reasons farm employees leave a role is down to poor management. While farmers often have exceptional technical skills in all areas of agriculture, from growing crops to managing livestock, they are less skilled at managing people.

Paul says getting training in how to manage and communicate with staff and participating in leadership programmes can be very beneficial.

"We have got to accept the fact that if we are going to keep people, we need to learn people management skills – 98% of people we ask say they are not leaving because of things that are not right about the farm itself. It's because they can't work with the person they are working with or because of the way the boss speaks to them."

Utilise AHDB workshops and its AgriLeader programme, the Tiah website and other resources to get better at management.

8 Make staff retention a key performance indicator (KPI)

Putting a figure on the cost of replacing staff can encourage businesses to be better employers. Many businesses outside agriculture list it as a KPI and update the figure monthly, says Andrew. "Making it a KPI in a farm business account would probably shake up some people." ■

● **Recruitment was covered in our Transition Webinar series at fwi.co.uk/transition**

TRANSITION FARMERS TOM AND KAREN HALTON, HALTON FARMS

Of all farming sectors, recruiting into dairying is arguably the toughest, but one business not in that position is Cheshire-based Halton Farms.

Tom and Karen Halton have dedicated time, effort and resources to making their 530-cow dairy farm an appealing place to work, getting the basics on pay, hours and good communication right, and rolling out innovative initiatives for staff such as "cream cake Fridays" and hiring the services of a sports masseuse.

While the Haltons attract workers from further afield, they recruit the majority locally, often through word of mouth via existing employees. For example, their herd manager is a rugby player who drums up extra labour for jobs such as sheeting down silage among his teammates, as it not only pays but offers them a fitness opportunity. It often creates an appetite for them to seek further work, such as night milking in the three-times-a-day system.

The farm's direct milk sales vending business also gives potential future employees an insight into what a job in farming can look like. People become curious and ask questions, says Karen. "It opens up new ideas to farming they didn't have before – we recruit people in that way too."

The business enters competitions, engages with the public through social media, and hosts on-farm educational events and farm walks, providing platforms to inform and show off what it does.

Encouraging a good team culture is important too, to dispel the reputation that farmers always work in isolation. The Haltons have separate teams for milking, feeding and calf rearing, enabling employees to take ownership of their roles and to strengthen their connection to the farm.

Facilitating situations that allow staff to socialise and integrate is also part of the culture at Halton Farms, such as stocking a farm fridge with beers to share an after-work drink, providing cream cakes for a get-together before Friday afternoon milking, and paying for the services of a sports masseuse weekly. Three-times-a-day milking enables flexibility on working hours.

Tom and Karen see great value in training opportunities, and not just for their staff. "Don't be afraid to invest in self-development, it starts with you as a business owner," says Karen. "And appreciate people, you can't do without them."

● **See p5 for more on our Transition Farmers**

Karen Halton

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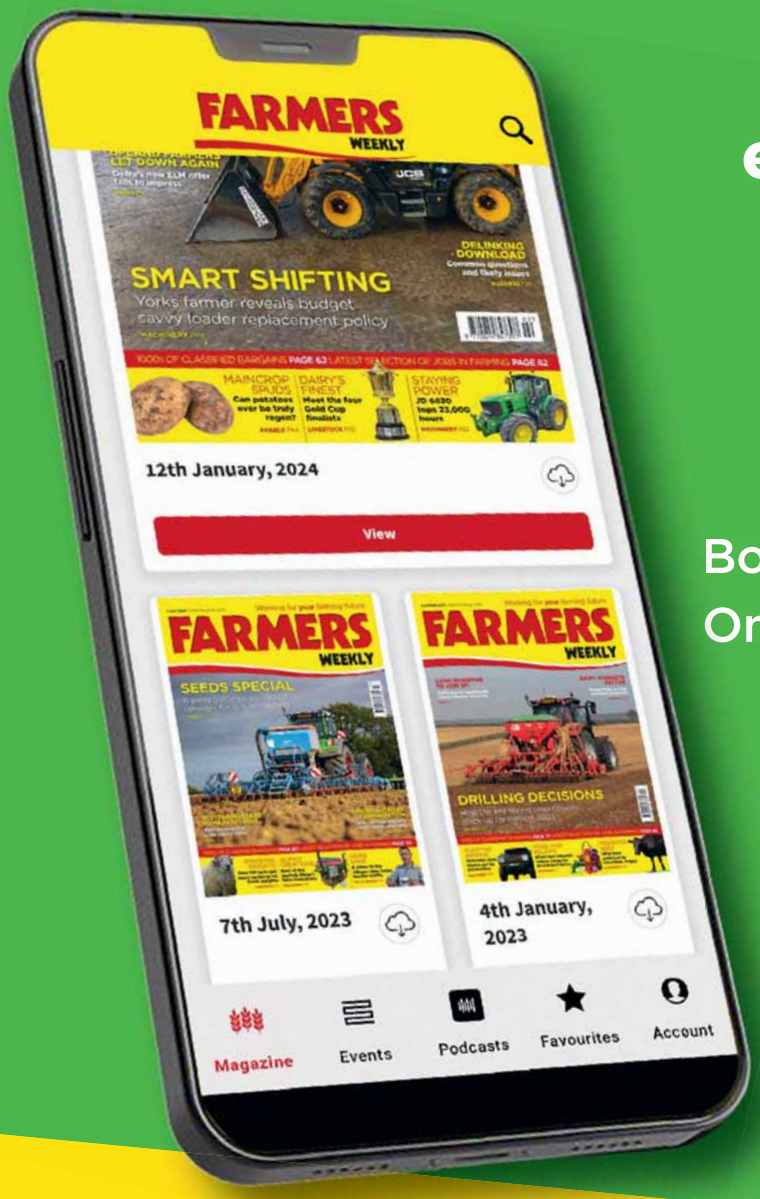

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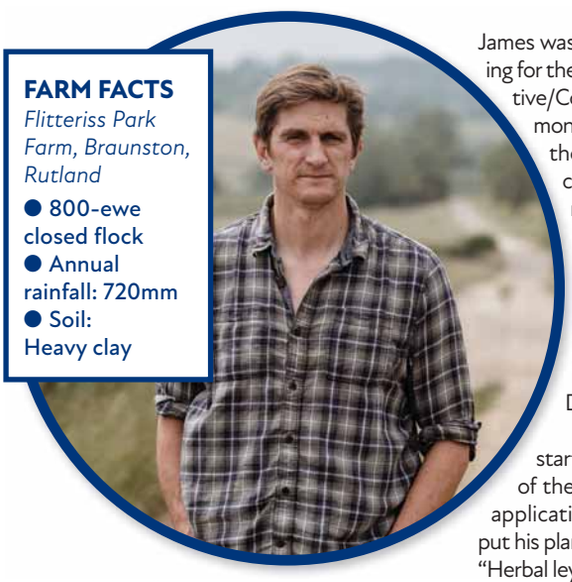
Government ruins targets and objectives met

Transition is following a group of farmers on their journey to adapt and meet the challenges of farming. **Debbie James** reports on the progress of two farms



FARM FACTS
Flitteriss Park Farm, Braunston, Rutland
- 800-ewe closed flock
- Annual rainfall: 720mm
- Soil: Heavy clay

James MacCartney

Uncertainty over government-supported environmental schemes in England is forcing James MacCartney to rethink his Transition goals, and even abandon one of them completely.

With some herbal leys established in 2024, James was aiming to grow another 40ha, applying for the combined Sustainable Farming Incentive/Countryside Stewardship (CS) offer. But months after he submitted the application, the Rural Payments Agency told him a computer error meant he had to resubmit without some options.

"I was advised I had to remove options that were similar to those I had done through my CS agreement, to water it down. The error over the duplication wasn't mine but the delay in advising me about it cost me when Defra suddenly closed the scheme."

He does have an agreement which started in January 2025 but with only 50% of the options he applied for in that initial application, excluding herbal leys. James has put his plan to expand herbal ley acreage on hold. "Herbal leys were attractive when they were part of a subsidised scheme, but without that support they are costly and risky to establish."

In his sheep flock, breeding replacements to keep disease out took a hit, with the flock scanning at 20% lower than usual. The lambing period went well though, thanks to the dry weather, but as rain absence persisted, grass growth dropped.

TRANSITION GOAL PROGRESS

Approximate percentage of progress towards completion:
- Reducing disease in sheep – N/A
- Being better than net zero – N/A
- Establishing herbal leys – N/A

His third goal is to make the farm carbon neutral, but this is no longer a priority. "Farmers were moving forward with environmental schemes but now it doesn't seem sensible to put my eggs in that basket and cut back on beef production when the beef price is so strong, and with a government that doesn't seem willing to support farmers with environmental work."

James says he is unlikely to reach 100% of his Transition goals. "We have cut disease incidence in our sheep and we have some herbal leys in the ground, but we are probably not 50% of the way there." That, he points out, isn't due to lack of ambition, but government policy.

● **See p5 for more on our Transition Farmers**

TRANSITION GOAL PROGRESS

Approximate percentage of progress towards completion:
- Increase cattle numbers and cut finishing time – 100%
- Reduce inputs dependence – 100%
- Improve grassland and access – almost 100%

Andrew McFadzean

There is often a big gulf between possessing an ambition to instigate change in a farming system and applying it, but Andrew McFadzean has more or less fully achieved the goals he set when his Transition journey started four years ago.

Increasing cattle numbers and cutting finishing times, reducing dependence on external inputs, improving grassland and creating better grazing access for cattle have largely been ticked off that list since 2021. "We are just about there," Andrew gauges. Grazing fodder beet has allowed both an increase in cattle numbers and a reduction in bought-in feed requirement.

Andrew grows 12ha and had previously lifted this to include in growing and finishing rations, but last winter he grazed 3ha so successfully that this winter he is doubling the grazed acreage.

The cattle were turned onto the 2024-established crop in October at an average of 400kg. Ground conditions were good for grazing and the animals grew well, weighing an average of 470kg at housing in early January. They spent the next eight to 12 weeks on a fattening ration and were slaughtered at 680kg at 17-18 months, two months earlier than previous years.

All cattle are sold to Dunbia and the buoyant beef price improved margins although, as Andrew points out, store cattle costs increased too.

This year's 12ha crop of fodder beet was drilled in early May at 2.5-3cm. Andrew was worried about depth, but drilling into moisture helped and by the end of the month it was at the four-leaf stage. He is growing LG's Kyros to graze and Brick to lift. Incorporating red clover into a grass reseed in autumn 2023 has also helped reduce inputs as the silage harvested from that field the following year analysed at 16-17% crude protein.

"It made a huge difference to the winter ration – we were able to cut back concentrate use in the youngstock ration by 1kg/head/day," says Andrew.

FARM FACTS
Dalchomie Farm, Kirkoswald
- 285ha split across three units
- Annual rainfall: 1,016mm
- Soil: Upland 100-280m

There are currently 300 cattle on the farm at any one time. When cattle are grazing, access around the farm has been improved as 4km of tracks were laid, together with paddock fencing and water infrastructure. Andrew is finishing the project by replacing temporary fences with permanent ones. Once done, he will have achieved 100% of his Transition objectives.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAG/COLIN MILLER, JEFF HOLMES

Transition Live 2025: Advice and innovative thinking

Expert knowledge, engaging Q&A sessions and thought-provoking farm walks were all on the agenda at *Farmers Weekly*'s recent Transition Live event

Farmers Weekly's Transition Live event drew hundreds of farmers and farming sector leaders to the University of Leeds' Research Farm in May.

Visitors to the second annual event were able to choose from farm walks, informative exhibitor stands and panel sessions on making agriculture sustainable through the transition period and beyond.

There were 12 sessions, organised under three broad headings – food production, business and the environment. Each session was headlined by a farmer speaker, who set out the topic before panels of policymakers and farming sector experts took questions from the floor.

Farm walks offered the chance to see up close the university's world-leading regen research. Inset: Leeds uses cutting-edge technology to monitor inputs and emissions from the regen farming trials. Above left: A variety of stands drew visitors to discuss innovative approaches to modern-day farming needs

Discussion topics

Some of the topics covered included:

- How to succeed at succession
- Innovative forms of farm finance
- Making silvopasture work
- How to add value to what you already produce
- Exploring new on-farm revenue streams
- Innovative approaches to food production
- Climate resilience

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAG/JAMIE HODGSKIN

Above: Visitors flocked to the event in their hundreds. Right: Panel discussion audiences could choose who to listen to using high-tech headgear. Left: Exhibitor stalls included a demo of regen principles by Leeds University

- Marketing strategies for your farm enterprise
- Upland farming
- Making a return from renewable energy
- Sustainable livestock systems
- Innovative ways of driving value from data.

Succession was a hot topic due to chancellor Rachel Reeves' stated plans to cap agricultural property relief at £1m from April next year. Sally Jackson of The Pink Pig Farm, near Scunthorpe, set the scene in the succession session by describing her own experience. Farm inheritance was a source of tension and Ms Jackson said tackling the issue on the family's 324ha regenerative unit had been long overdue.

She explained how she set up a family conference that had helped planning, but admitted to jokingly calling the process "How to stop your daughter killing your husband".

Richard Taylor, Strutt & Parker's director of farming in Yorkshire and the North East, added that the traditional farm structure no longer held water. He told the audience that the structure where ownership was retained by parents until death to leverage tax exemptions had gone. Instead, the new landscape demands earlier transition of equity and clearer family agreements, he said.

Diversification was also a popular theme. Lake District farmer Maria Benjamin shared how she and partner John Atkinson had built thriving brands for wool and handmade soap using milk from their Jersey cows.

Exhibitor stands were busy with visitor enquiries

A new feature for visitors to the 2025 event, the Innovation Hub, showcased the latest agri-tech and promoted collaboration between farmers and researchers. Farmers were invited to talk to experts about their innovative ideas and discuss how they could be brought into practical use.

The farm tours also proved successful again this year, with University of Leeds' researchers guiding visitors around the world-leading regenerative agriculture trials. The research work at Leeds is embedded in a 317ha commercial farm.

Trials compare conventional management with different combinations of min-till, mixed crop varieties, planting understoreys, living mulches and rotations including herbal leys. Data is captured using cutting-edge technology, such as soil moisture sensors, imaging techniques and a network of carbon dioxide monitoring flux towers. ■

Above, from centre: Visitors were able to scrutinise some of the kit on show; there were no difficulties with sound thanks to the headphone system

How trees can enhance and support your business

Tree planting can yield multiple benefits for farm businesses according to a *Farmers Weekly* Transition webinar panel. **Jonathan Riley** finds out more

Woodland and forestry experts have urged growers to look again at the potential benefits of strategic tree planting. Producers had traditionally seen tree planting only as a long-term investment in timber production, said Stephen Briggs. Instead, it should be viewed as a way of building financial and physical resilience into an agricultural business.

Trees can help protect a farm from climate change shocks in weather extremes, said Denise Walton. They can act as a physical barrier to wind, or by slowing water flows to limit flooding, erosion or drought. On arable and pasture systems, trees help soil structure and nutrient profiles. Livestock can also perform better where there is shade and wind protection, she added.

Laura Henderson said woodland offered scope for public activities beyond traditional uses, such as shooting. Woodland glamping, forest schools and learning trails were becoming more popular and represented opportunities.

Strategic objectives

Emma Bird said it was vital to set out what you are trying to achieve, whether it is timber production, a carbon scheme, educational or an environmental or productivity target. "Planning, along with a consultant or adviser, will help to ensure you plant the right tree in the right place and access the support available. The process must also look at the specific challenges on your farm, whether that is local climate or threats from the key pests – deer and squirrels. If you're considering fruit or nut tree varieties, look at the potential in local markets and consider how you might harvest the produce."

Ms Henderson encouraged setting targets that yielded benefits across the business. For example, consider whether there are less productive areas, such as field corners, that could yield an income or where improvements to soil structure can be made with in-field trees.

Charlie Elliot emphasised the importance of tree variety selection. A diversity of plants was always best to meet multiple objectives, and he pointed out that growers were only permitted to grow 65% of one species under the UK Forest Standard. Another constraint was the new England Woodland Creation Offer, which states that only 20% of trees planted can be non-native if growers are applying to get the higher level nature recovery payment, he said.

In Scotland, Ms Walton said that the Scottish Forestry's Woodland Creation grant scheme would determine what species could be grown to ensure they were compatible with the area.

Funding support

Mr Elliot said it was vital to establish what funding support was available because it helped de-risk the early capital investment. Ms Walton added that the long delay in returns made early-stage grant funding essential for planting and maintaining tree ventures. She had collaborated with neighbouring farms on a bid to Nature Scot's Nature Restoration Fund. It enabled landowners to plant 11km of trees over two years, to act as a windbreak and protect livestock and wildlife.

Income streams and funding schemes can also be stacked, said Mr Briggs. This makes tree planting more attractive with income streams from education, biodiversity, carbon offsetting, and tree products all possible. Agroforestry planting on his farm, using small fruiting trees, had seen a return of investment in just seven-and-a-half years, with wider benefits from soil and water management achieved.

Those considering carbon-selling ventures must register on the Woodland Carbon Code before any work begins, stressed Ms Bird. ■

ROLES AND BENEFITS DISCUSSED

- **Climate resilience** Wind barrier, shelter, shade and erosion reduction
- **Environment** Water filtration, nutrient and carbon retention
- **Soil improvement** Nutrient supply and retention, water retention and drainage
- **Production** Timber, fence posts, biomass, tree fruits and nuts
- **Recreational** Walks, glamping and sport
- **Education** Forest schools and trails
- **Trading** Carbon credits and biodiversity net gain units
- **Fodder** Livestock browsing

EXPERT PANEL

Transition Project editor and webinar host Johann Tasker was joined by four experts to discuss "Tree planting: everything you need to know". They looked at the potential benefits of tree planting, management issues and funding options.

- **Emma Bird**, agroforestry project manager, Woodland Trust
- **Stephen Briggs**, farmer and director, Abacas Agri farm business consultancy
- **Charlie Elliot**, sales and development manager, Tilhill Forestry
- **Laura Henderson**, director, English Woodlands Forestry consultancy
- **Denise Walton**, Scottish chairman for the Nature Friendly Farming Network

WATCH THE WEBINAR

Watch the discussion in full at **fwi.co.uk/transition**, where you'll also find the other webinars in the Transition series

PHOTOGRAPHY: TIM SCRIVENER

Where to find project articles

The Transition initiative offers a vast bank of practical articles, which can be downloaded for free

Business resilience

- How to make rotations more resilient – Summer 2021 (p15)
- Advice on building climate resilience into business plans – Winter 2023-24 (p7)
- How to stress-test your farm business – Summer 2022 (p10)
- How to build resilience into a livestock system – Spring 2023 (p36)
- Tips for planning ahead to reduce business risks – Autumn 2023 (p7)
- Why better planning can reduce machinery costs – Winter 2023-24 (p30)
- How TCFD will hit farming – Spring 2024 (p36)
- How to protect your business from a crisis – Summer 2024 (p23)
- How to boost financial resilience – Winter 2024-25 (p7)
- Five ways to build resilience on arable farms – Winter 2024-25 (p24)
- Supply chain funding – what's on offer for regen farming Spring 2025 (p18)

Carbon assessments

- Measuring and managing carbon: What to consider – Autumn 2021 (p11)
- Four popular carbon calculators compared – Autumn 2022 (p7)

Carbon trading

- Hedgerows can boost farm income – Autumn 2021 (p26)
- The carbon trading conundrum: Risk or revenue generator? – Autumn 2022 (p23)
- Trading carbon and natural capital – a lawyer's eye view – Autumn 2022 (p29)
- How to get a carbon-based income from woodland – Autumn 2022 (p31)
- Is there money to be made from carbon farming? – Autumn 2022 (p41)

Collaboration

- How collaboration cuts costs and increases efficiency – Winter 2021-22 (p47)
- Local farmers unite to clean up polluted river – Winter 2022-23 (p45)
- How collaboration delivers landscape-scale change – Summer 2023 (p19)

Data and tools

- Six livestock apps to lift business performance – Summer 2022 (p17)
- How data helped transform beef herd efficiency – Autumn 2022 (p10)
- How to take a data-led approach to sub-field costs Spring 2025 (p7)

Diversification

- The benefits of Paulownia trees for net-zero targets – Spring 2022 (p47)
- Expert advice for making trees work on your farm – Autumn 2023 (p32)

Emissions management

- How livestock farmers can cut greenhouse gas emissions – Autumn 2021 (p19)
- What arable farmers can do to reduce emissions – Autumn 2022 (p12)
- Five ways producers can cut their carbon footprint – Autumn 2022 (p19)
- The vital role of soil in emissions reduction – Spring 2023 (p27)
- How pig producers can strive towards net zero – Spring 2023 (p29)
- How fenland farmers cutting GHGs from peat – Summer 2023 (p11)
- Project shows how farming can hit – or better – net zero – Autumn 2023 (p17)
- Tips to tame emissions from housed systems – Winter 2023-24 (p22)

Inputs

- How to get the most from nitrogen fertiliser – Spring 2023 (p11)
- How science is adding value to livestock manure – Spring 2023 (p17)
- What to consider when replacing farm machinery – Summer 2023 (p24)
- Zero subsidies puts focus on cost control – Summer 2023 (p16)
- Zero grazing switch helps reduce dairy feed costs – Summer 2023 (p22)
- Grassland dairy adopts low input system – Autumn 2024 (p28)

Natural capital

- A guide to unlocking value from natural capital – Spring 2022 (p39)
- How farmers can benefit from biodiversity net gain – Spring 2022 (p44)
- Opportunities for livestock farmers from natural capital – Spring 2022 (p51)
- How supply chain is helping farmers work with nature – Summer 2022 (p15)
- Why water company pays farmers to tackle pollution – Summer 2022 (p21)
- Biodiversity: What's in it for farmers? – Summer 2022 (p30)
- Green capital will fuel future – Autumn 2022 (p17)
- How 'mega-cluster' project benefits farming and nature – Winter 2023-24 (p16)
- How to prepare your business for private funding – Summer 2024 (p31)
- Generating income from the environment – Autumn 2024 (p18)

Productivity

- Can an all-forage diet be practical and profitable – Summer 2021 (p19)
- Productivity: What it is and how to achieve it on your farm – Winter 2021-22 (p35)
- Why better productivity is all about the right balance – Winter 2021-22 (p41)
- Five ways to increase farm output and maintain margins – Spring 2022 (p64)
- Six challenges on your Transition journey – Spring 2024 (p18)
- How to manage crops and soil after a washout season – Summer 2024 (p12)
- Faster progress needed on Transition says survey – Summer 2024 (p7)

Renewable energy

- How alternative fuels are helping to reduce emissions – Spring 2023 (p21)
- Experts outline on-farm renewable energy options – Summer 2023 (p30)
- Renewable energy systems: Which is right for your farm – Autumn 2023 (p26)

Staff issues

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- Tips to stay on top of your game – Summer 2022 (p24)
- Stepping back ways to reduce effort and stress – Autumn 2023 (p12)
- Tips to retain staff in a tough market – Winter 2023-24 (p26)
- Tips to build mental resilience – Winter 2024-25 (p12)

Support schemes

- How to start your journey towards the phase-out of BPS – Autumn 2021 (p34)
- How optimising inputs can help meet SFI targets – Autumn 2023 (p23)
- Scottish support schemes – Autumn 2024 (p12)
- SFI update – all you need to know – Autumn 2024 (p23)
- Welsh Farming Scheme – Winter 2024-25 (p18)
- NI support scheme – all you need to know Spring 2025 (p13)

Water management

- How growers are de-risking maize production – Winter 2022-23 (p63)
- Why farmers must act to secure adequate water – Winter 2022-23 (p41)
- Why irrigation is key to the agricultural economy – Winter 2022-23 (p51)
- Key water company incentives and initiatives – Winter 2022-23 (p57)
- How harvesting rainwater can reduce farm costs – Winter 2022-23 (p53)
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MA Agriculture Part of Mark Allen

Editor Johann Tasker 07967 634 971 • Project lead Anna Eccleston 07769 696 074

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