

The Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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Email: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk

Dear Ms Reynolds,

Open Letter to DEFRA SoS Emma Reynolds – Redesign of the SFI

We were encouraged by your announcement at the Oxford Farming Conference regarding the reintroduction of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) from June/September 2026.

The SFI has been an important pillar towards supporting the transition to more sustainable farming practices and we hope the new offer will provide farmers with confidence and certainty.

The notion of sustainability should, of course, encompass both environmental and economic sustainability and in this regard, we believe the role of “data-driven agriculture” will be a vital component towards driving up profitability and resilience.

Increasingly, data is at the core of how farmers operate, but there is a need to raise the bar when it comes to quality on-farm data collection with a focus on a set of core metrics.

The UK’s departure from the EU created an opportunity to reshape government support for agriculture but we believe a lack of focus on “making farming digital” was a missed opportunity by the previous administration in the first iterations of post-Brexit support.

We are therefore writing to ask that the redrafting of the SFI includes an option(s) to reward farmers for the adoption of suitable software and technology for the collection of credible and useful farm data. Such data would:

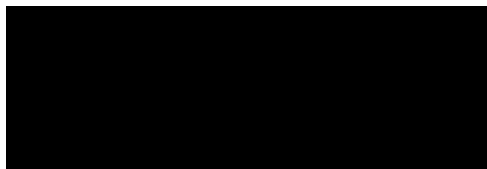
- Enable all farmers to start to track a core set of data-driven metrics and support the creation of a farm data baseline
- Provide farmers with helpful insights to support decision making
- Turbo charge the potential for appropriately permissioned data sharing across the sector which will help realise sustainability goals, productivity gains and national food security

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- Provide important evidence to support Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and trade negotiations
 - Provide credible evidence to consumers and taxpayers about the food they buy and eat

Incentivising or requiring data collection would support and align with many of the aims and objectives of the *Farm Profitability Review* including (but not limited to) the development of environmental/nature markets; business advice and CPD; boosting learning, research and innovation; and the creation of standardised metrics for soil health and carbon.

Our belief is that the new SFI presents an opportunity for the UK to become a global leader in data-driven sustainable food production and we stand ready to support the design and development of the scheme to achieve this.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Williamson

Chair, Hutchinsons Sustainability Advisory Council ([HSAC](#))

(For response: Please contact julian.gairdner@communagator.com 07484 229448)

Co-signatories

Tina Barsby – Chair, Farm Data Principles Ltd (Farm Data Safe)

Judith Batchelar – Founder, Food Matters International

Helen Browning – CEO, Soil Association

James Dallas – CEO, Openfield

Jake Freestone – Farm Manager, Overbury Enterprises

Julian Gairdner – Managing Director, Communagator Ltd

John Gilliland – Chair of UK's Sustainable Farm Networks

Simon Pearson – Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology

Richard Profit – CEO, Cool Farm Alliance CIC

Nick Shorter – CEO, Velcourt Ltd

John Shropshire – Chairman Gs Fresh Group

Mark Suthern – Chair, Arthur Rank Centre

David Webster – CEO, Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF)

Mike Young – HL Hutchinson Ltd