

UK Farmer Group Discussion Network

We are looking for farming discussion groups to take part in a national debate on the big topics affecting farming today.

Whether your group exists to buy and sell produce; share technology; or trial new breeds and ideas, we'd like to hear from you.

UK Farming is set to face one of the most significant periods of uncertainty in recent times. Our aim is to promote open discussion within local farming groups to enable farmers to debate and consider the big topics such as Brexit, future farming grants, food supply chain dynamics, and much more.

A NATIONAL DISCUSSION - AT A LOCAL LEVEL

How will it work?

Taking the lead from participating farmers, we will provide groups across the UK with a rolling programme of issues to consider, posing specific questions on the matters that affect the future of farming most.

We will then capture those views and opinions, combining them with voices from across the whole network. The core themes that emerge will be written up and shared with all participants through regular newsletters and bulletins.

Not only will your group gain its own platform for discussion, but you'll get to hear what groups from other parts of the country are saying too.

All participant details will remain confidential and all survey responses will be anonymised.

The key points that arise will also be shared with government, and businesses and organisations with an interest in land management, food production, or the environment.



Who can get involved?

Established and newly formed farmer discussion groups can take part. We believe these small, local groups are the best place to kick-start an on-going national discussion within the farming industry.

What will be discussed?

We'll be asking groups to talk about a wide range of issues concerning farming today. For example:

- What is the role of land, and how can it make a good financial return after the CAP?
- How can we balance food production with society's increasing demand for environmental and animal welfare?
- How can farmers engage with the public to re-establish the connection between consumers and food?
- What skills, technology, innovation and advice do farmers need for themselves and their businesses?

Why take part?

Participating in the network will provide local groups like yours with a chance to openly discuss some of the most pressing topics on the future of farming.

Feeding back your thoughts and opinions to the network will create a true picture from across the UK. Our job will be to share those thoughts with other farming groups, and with people who can influence change.

We hope the network will provide an opportunity for individuals and organisations from both inside and outside the farming sector to develop long-term agricultural and environmental management policies which work for farm businesses and wider society.

How will the Network be run?

The network will be managed by the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy Institute (LEEP) at the University of Exeter's Business School.



Initial funding for this activity has been provided by sponsors including WWF (World Wildlife Fund), Southern Water and South West Water, all of which are interested in working with the farming sector. Over time, we hope a range of other organisations from across the UK will join in supporting the network.

LEEP will provide an **independent** coordination role, and carry out the following tasks:

- (1) identifying and supporting group leaders and members to engage with the debate
- (2) surveying group leaders and members, collecting and sharing opinion data
- (3) establishing a network facilitation service, enabling farming groups to contact one another to arrange group visits and exchange information.

Timetable

We are currently recruiting groups to take part. The first opinion gathering exercise is planned for April 2018, with newsletters to participating farmers in May 2018.

This will follow in a quarterly cycle thereafter. The plan is to continue indefinitely, for as long as the participating farmers see value in the process. Participants are free to join or leave the network at any stage.

If you are interested in joining the network please contact:

Alex Inman

Land, Environment, Economics and Policy Institute
University of Exeter Business School

Tel: 01392 723340 | Mob: 07895 061633

Email: a.inman@exeter.ac.uk

