

Plans for future greener farming

Thank you very much Minette and I very much appreciate all the work that you have done for farmers and also all of the insights you have provided us within Defra over these last two years.

I would also like to thank all of you for arriving so early and for accommodating a change to your programme enabling me to speak today. I understand Minette gave you all a lecture about staying out too late at the Walkabout pub last night and thank you for being here this morning. I am afraid the recent storms and consequential floods have given me a particularly difficult and busy start to this new role, and that meant that I had to attend a meeting of the Cabinet yesterday – so I am particularly glad to have been able to come here to Conference today.

Now it is also a great honour to have been recently appointed by the Prime Minister to the role of Secretary of State in Defra. As many of you will know, I first joined this Department in 2013, almost seven years ago. Indeed, you might say that I have been on a seven year transition to the top job. I know that there have been representations from some quarters that a seven-year transition to a new agriculture policy is a bit quick, but I have to say in my particular role, seven years feels quite a long time!

Now as many of you will know, I also grew up on a farm and my family have farmed in West Cornwall for six generations. The names of different fields were passed from generation to generation. We knew our land and every field on each farm and we also knew how best to manage it. Our pedigree South Devon Cattle and British Lop Pigs were almost part of the family since they had been such an integral part of our family story from the beginning.

So I understand the responsibility and commitment that a farmer feels to the hard work and toil of previous generations. I understand the enormous social capital that exists in our farming community and that farmers will often be the ones to step in to help their community at times of crisis. I also understand the burden of expectation that can exist to loyally continue the family tradition and how this sometimes stands in the way of change. And I understand the pain and trauma of being wrenched from land that has been in the family for generations.

However, I also know that sometimes a fresh perspective can make a world of difference; the farmer's son or daughter who leaves the business to work in a different industry for a while and then returns armed with fresh thinking and new knowledge to take things to a new tot level; or those who never had any connection with farming, made a career elsewhere but always yearned to set up their own farming and food business and are finally able to get back to the countryside with their family. New entrants are the life blood of any vibrant industry and farming is no exception.

So, as I contemplate the biggest change in agricultural policy in half a century, I want to design one that is not only right for the farmers of today

but which is also right for the farmers of tomorrow. The farmers we do not yet know. Who are not in this room. Those who yearn to go farming but cannot get access to land. The farm managers who want to set out on their own and maybe those who left the family farm twenty years ago but wish they could find a way to return.

It is because we are designing a policy for tomorrow's farmers as well as today's, that there can be no reprieve for arbitrary area-based subsidy payments. Direct Payments subsidise land ownership and tenure and that is irrational. The largest subsidy payments go to the wealthiest land owners. Direct Payments artificially inflate land rents and stand in the way of new entrants. They encourage some farmers to coast, to take no risks and simply remain in occupation of land in order to collect the subsidy. Area payments are useless as a risk management tool because across farming some of the greatest risks are taken by intensive horticultural enterprises like top fruit for whom the BPS payment is generally an irrelevance. Nor do I believe area payments really support the incomes of our most vulnerable sectors. Indeed some evidence suggests that around 30 per cent of sheep farmers don't even get the BPS payment because they are forced to rely on temporary grazing or are in some form of contract farm agreement and do not qualify for the payment. And I meet these young farmers, who are in this position.

So in this moment of flux, where, for the first time in fifty years, we have a chance to do things differently, to think through from first principles what a coherent policy actually looks like, let's not cling to the railings of a sinking ship that is the Common Agricultural Policy. Let's not counsel for dither or delay. We have some of the most innovative farmers in the world. We can do this, so let's begin it now.

Yesterday we published further details of our current thinking on future policy. It sets out how we intend to use the powers in the Agriculture Bill, currently going through parliament, in the years ahead.

In 2021, just next year, we will begin reducing the BPS payment, but in a progressive way so that the largest land owners will take the largest reduction. We will also use the powers in the Bill to simplify the legacy BPS scheme and we will be looking closely at issues like the Crop Diversification Rule.

We are also giving consideration to the development of an exit scheme to help older farmers retire with dignity by providing the option for them to take several years BPS payment in one final settlement in return for them either surrendering their tenancy or selling or renting their farm to create an opportunity for a new entrant.

We may simplify the existing Countryside Stewardship Scheme even further so that it can become a stepping stone to help farmers gradually move towards the future policy.

By the end of 2024 we will roll out our new policy which will be open to all. We envisage three components to Environmental Land Management. Firstly, there will be a sustainable farming incentive which will be open to any farmer and

will incentivise participation in farm level measures such as integrated pest management, sensitive hedgerow management and soil health. Secondly, there will be a local environment tier which will incentivise interventions including the creation of habitats, improving biodiversity, tree planting, and natural flood management. And finally, there will be a landscape scale tier which will support woodland creation, peatland restoration and other potential land use changes.

Seeing first-hand the communities that have suffered flooding in recent weeks following Storms Ciara and Dennis – and communities that have suffered repeated flooding events in recent years – has highlighted to me the importance of making nature's power part of the solutions we urgently need to tackle the challenge of flooding.

Our new, independent agricultural system will give farmers a big part to play, by encouraging land management that supports flood management – releasing the pressure on lowland and urban areas by keeping water in the soil in upland catchments to slow the flow of water through the landscape. Protecting homes and communities from flooding is a public good and is one of the objectives set out in our Agriculture Bill. As you all know, this is the second attempt that we have made to introduce the Agriculture Bill. It was first published in the last parliament.

I am conscious that when we last published it, the NFU and others criticised it for not having enough about food. We have listened. There will now be a legal obligation on the Government to produce an assessment of our food security every five years. There will be a new obligation on government when designing any future scheme to consider the importance of food production, and that it is produced in a sustainable way.

And we know you need certainty for your businesses. So in our manifesto we committed to guarantee the current annual budget in each and every year of the current Parliament. There will be a new requirement for a multi-annual plan, the first of which will cover all seven years of the agricultural transition and there will be five-yearly plans after that. These plans will set out exactly how we intend to use the powers in the Bill to deliver success for our farmers.

Soil health is critical both for our environment and for farm productivity so that is added as an objective and the often underappreciated value of our rare and native breeds is recognised at last. Genetic diversity is what gives life itself resilience and we should protect and safeguard the genetic resource that exists in our fabulous native breeds.

I am determined that there will be a prosperous future for British agriculture so we will also introduce new powers to improve fairness and transparency in the supply chain so that farmers get a fair share of the cake and we will introduce grants to help farmers add value to their produce and to reduce costs so they can become more prosperous and improve their productivity.

I recognise that change will take time. We have set a realistic timescale of

seven years to complete this journey from the legacy EU scheme to the new policy. We will not undertake change in the chaotic way that New Zealand found itself having to. We want this to be an orderly transition from the old policy to the new. We will pay close attention to the sequencing of different interventions and changes to make sure that we get this right.

And while we are on the subject of getting things right, let's have no more jangling nerves about our ability to compete on the international stage. Let's not get spooked by some New Zealand Haka performance on the global trading environment. We have in this country some of the most efficient and innovative farmers in the world and we need to get on the pitch and compete.

In the UK, we have built a very special market for food based on provenance with particular attention to food safety and animal welfare standards and we will not jeopardise that through trade deals in the future. I have always been very clear about that – and now we are seeing the whole nation tuning in to this conversation. And little wonder, since one in eight of us earn our livelihood from the food industry, and as a nation we have always cared about the welfare of animals, including our farm animals.

And Minette you are absolutely right; food unites us. The entire nation eats the food we produce, and when the NFU speaks up on standards up you are speaking for everyone. And plenty of plenty of people around the world are keen on the way we do things in this country and many want to learn from our new approach.

We will publish our mandate for trade negotiations with EU in the coming days – and the first round of negotiations will begin in Brussels on Monday.

Of course I cannot say much more about our trade negotiations at this stage – but I would like to thank the NFU for taking part in discussions around our tariff consultation.

We will be keeping you updated throughout the course of this year so you can be ready for life outside the customs union and the single market, as we put in place a new free trade agreement.

So, we have a busy year ahead– developing our farming policy, and securing the right kind of agreement on free trade with the European Union and of course many other issues besides: bovine TB being chief among them in my mind.

We have made big progress in recent years but I understand that the huge burden of coping with bovine TB and the stress and trauma that this causes farmers. I'm confident that we can turn the tide on this terrible disease, and the steps we have taken so far are beginning to show results. We will shortly be publishing our response Sir Charles Godfray's review of our 25-Year bovine TB strategy.

So in conclusion, our ambition is to use our new-found freedom to embark on a journey to a better future for farming. We want to innovate and develop the policies of the future.

So this year more than ever we'll need to work together, and I think that if we do then we will make the most of this huge opportunity to write a new, independent chapter for our country together.

I know that the NFU will never be shy about making farmers' voices heard.

And I know we have some of the best farmers in the world. A decade from now I want the rest of the world to be coming here to the UK to see how it is done.

So thank you for inviting me this morning, thank for turning up at such an early hour, – and I wish you the very best for the remainder of your conference.

[Coal Authority attends safety meeting about coal tips in Wales](#)

Following recent storms, we're continuing to closely monitor and maintain the disused coal tips we own and manage in Wales.

We also attended a coal tip safety meeting, chaired by Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart and First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford on Monday 24 February, with the Welsh Local Government Association and Natural Resources Wales.

After stating their governments would work together to assess the safety of tips and ensure they are being properly monitored, the First Minister and Secretary of State agreed that:

- all relevant agencies will work together to share resources and technical expertise, establishing a common set of standards for risk assessment
- information will be provided to people living in the south Wales valleys about the safety of local tips, co-ordinated by a single point of contact

Lisa Pinney, Chief Executive at the Coal Authority, said:

We attended the meeting yesterday and will work with partners to progress the agreed outcomes.

Our tip inspection teams are still busy ensuring that all drainage channels and trash screens are free from debris, so they perform as they should, and we haven't seen any significant issues at our 26 Welsh sites.

We are, as always, working closely with our partners to help and support others as we can, whether we manage their tips or not.

Following these unprecedented weather conditions, our thoughts remain with everyone affected.

You can call us 24/7 to report a coal mining hazard or to get safety advice on 01623 646 333.

The Coal Authority [owns and manages 40 disused colliery tip sites](#) across the United Kingdom.

New CMA campaign urges firms to compete, not cheat

The launch comes after a sustained crackdown against illegal cartels by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which issued over £43 million in fines last year alone.

Anti-competitive practices like price fixing, bid rigging and dividing markets or customers between competitors – commonly referred to as market sharing – can take place in any business. However, a number of recent CMA cases have come from the construction industry.

New research, conducted on behalf of the CMA, revealed that only 6% of firms in this sector were familiar with competition law and that general understanding of the illegality of these business practices is low.

29% of those surveyed thought it was OK to attend meetings with competitors to agree prices. A further 32% thought agreeing not to supply each other's customers was legal, and a quarter (25%) saw no problem with discussing bids and agreeing who would get which tenders.

The research goes on to show that only 6% of management teams of the construction firms surveyed had received competition law training.

Additionally, only 6% of the respondents had actively sought out information on how to comply with the law.

Howard Cartlidge, the CMA's Senior Director of Cartels, said:

"The CMA is cracking down on businesses that collude to rip off customers by fixing prices, sharing out markets amongst themselves or rigging bids. Our message to them is that we know cheating when we see it, even if you don't. Pleading ignorance is no defence; it's up to businesses to know what these unfair practices look like and avoid them.

"By ensuring you stay on the right side of the law, you can avoid substantial fines, director disqualification or jail. And if you suspect something illegal is going on, report it to us before it's too late."

The CMA understands that most businesses want to do the right thing and the campaign is designed to help them do that and to ensure fair dealing. Putting an end to an illegal cartel means that businesses and customers don't lose out because others choose to cheat – cheating that comes with serious consequences.

Lifting the lid

Today, the CMA has also lifted the lid and highlighted the secret conversations that take place inside illegal cartels.

An investigation into a [pre-cast concrete drainage cartel](#) that resulted in £36m in fines in 2019, revealed that the businesses concerned held regular secret meetings (four of which were secretly recorded by the CMA), away from business premises, in hotel meeting rooms.

The businesses discussed and agreed certain price lists, which were then used by sales teams as a basis for negotiating with customers. They also agreed that they would not compete for each other's customers on certain fixed price contracts. One of the individuals at a cartel meeting said:

"...I'm quite happy if we agree jobs, because you know, it is pointless cutting the bloody price, we should be sticking out, as we've always said, get a better price..."

And another said:

"...just set the term deals up, set the ... market rates up and the merchants rates up ... and the likelihood is you're going to get the same market share..."

Meanwhile, [the CMA fined 3 Berkshire estate agents](#) in 2019 for illegally fixing the minimum levels of commission fees that they would charge customers on the sale of residential properties. Four estate agents implemented the illegal arrangement primarily through secret meetings, as shown in the evidence gathered, for example:

"The company average fee is now around 1.8%. I am willing to do whatever it takes to get this sorted. We've had meetings over the last few weeks with

other agents [...] and there is at last a general consensus that something should be done. Let me know if you would like to meet with several of our competitors.”

Campaign reach

The CMA’s campaign will target firms via posts on social media sites, and radio and digital display advertising. The campaign encourages people to visit the CMA’s designated [‘Cheating or Competing?’ page](#) which features videos, short guides and case studies to explain what business cartels are and how people can report them.

Additionally, as the CMA continues to step up its drive to raise awareness of cartels, the campaign has received support from the Federation of Small Businesses and Institute of Directors.

Charlotte Valeur, Chair of the Institute of Directors, said:

“Competitive markets are good for both consumers and businesses, encouraging innovation and keeping prices down, so it’s worrying that the CMA have found that many businesses leaders don’t know their full legal responsibilities. Firms should prioritise director training and professional development to ensure they do not inadvertently fall foul of the law.”

Federation of Small Businesses National Chair Mike Cherry said:

“This awareness campaign from the CMA is so important.

“Greater awareness is needed for all businesses about these practises, some of which could be ruinous for small businesses. SMEs want to do the right thing, which is why it is so important to have a clear understanding of the law surrounding, anti-competitive behaviours such as cartels and price fixing.

“FSB’s own research has found that such practices could have a serious impact on competition as well as issues involving diversity and creating a more complex business environment.”

Notes to editors

1. The CMA commissioned IFF Research to carry out a survey of UK senior representatives from construction firms and other businesses that work in the sector. In January 2020, 400 people were questioned about their understanding of competition law. The results of this survey were used in this press release.
2. One of the companies involved in the October 2019 decision regarding the precast concrete drainage cartel is appealing the CMA’s decision. This appeal goes to both the findings in the decision and the amount of the penalty. The CMA is defending the appeal. The other companies involved admitted breaking the law and accepted the penalties that were imposed

on them.

3. Businesses found to have been involved in illegal cartels can be fined up to 10% of their annual turnover. Individuals can face up to 5 years in prison and directors can be disqualified from holding director positions for up to 15 years.
4. These can be reduced or eliminated altogether where a business or individual report their involvement in a cartel and co-operate via the CMA's 'leniency' programme. Separately, witnesses who blow the whistle on the illegal conduct of others can receive a reward of up to £100,000. People can call: 0203 738 6888 (witnessed); 0203 738 6833 (leniency).
5. Enquiries should be directed to the CMA press team at press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460

Designing a smoking cessation intervention

Background

Researchers investigated changes in mental health after smoking cessation compared with continuing to smoke.

Focusing on the treatment and epidemiology of smoking in people with mental health problems, this study, published by BMJ, aims to contribute to:

- reducing smoking rates
- improving quit rates
- reducing health inequalities in people with mental health problems

The learnings from the study have been used to form a smoking cessation intervention for people with common mental health problems in psychological services settings.

Summary

The study found that stopping smoking is associated with mental health benefits that are as effective as taking anti-depressants. [This project was a systematic review](#) and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, involving 17,060 participants.

Changes in mental health outcomes after people quit smoking were examined and compared to people who continued smoking, with follow-ups ranging from 7 weeks to 8 years.

This project is relevant to public health as it has a clear message – many people and clinicians feel that smoking benefits mental health, alleviates stress or is the only pleasure for people with mental health problems. This misunderstanding contributes to maintaining a smoking culture for people with mental health problems and undermines smoking cessation treatment delivery. The work undertaken in this study clearly tackles this misunderstanding and can be used to evidence the association between stopping smoking and improvements in mental health.

How the programme works

Dr Gemma Taylor, author of the report, holds a £500,000 Cancer Research UK fellowship award to design a smoking cessation intervention for people with common mental health problems and test the intervention integrated into [NHS psychological services \(IAPT\) protocol](#) (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies).

Commissioners are interested in this intervention. Data so far indicate that the intervention is feasible and acceptable. The trial is ongoing and due to publish in 2020. If the trial findings indicate that smoking cessation treatment can be integrated into routine IAPT care, the NHS could ensure that people who access IAPT for mental health care are offered an integrated smoking cessation treatment to give them the best chances to stop smoking.

Dr Gemma Taylor said:

“People with mental illness are at least twice as likely to smoke and, as a result, suffer from serious health inequalities compared to people without mental illness. It’s never too late to quit smoking for improving one’s health. Stopping smoking is linked to improvements in mental health, the size of this improvement is as large as taking anti-depressants. Smoking cessation treatment is 1 of the most cost-effective health care interventions available. If our study shows that IAPT is a suitable and effective platform for smoking cessation treatment, I strongly urge commissioners to consider integrating smoking cessation treatment into IAPT services – the patients will benefit, the services will benefit, the NHS will benefit – it’s a no brainer.”

Next steps

The feasibility and acceptability [trial is currently ongoing](#) and will lead to submitting a grant application to run a full-sized effectiveness trial. If we find that the intervention is feasible, acceptable and effective, this will likely lead to changes in service delivery in NHS IAPT settings, and help reduce smoking prevalence in people with common mental health problems.

To date, the feedback from patients, IAPT services and psychological

wellbeing practitioners indicates that smoking cessation treatment, delivered as part of routine IAPT care, is acceptable and feasible. Some trial participants who've failed to quit using conventional routes state that the integrated treatment has helped them to quit smoking and improve their overall mental health.

[PM outlines new review to define Britain's place in the world](#)

- A wide range of foreign policy and national security experts, inside and outside Government, will be involved to ensure the UK is equipped to meet the global challenges of the future
- The report will seek new and innovative ways to promote our interests overseas while continuing to commit 2% of GDP to defence and 0.7% of GNI to international development

The United Kingdom will overhaul its approach to foreign policy through a new government-wide review set out by the Prime Minister today.

The Prime Minister has committed to hold the largest review of the UK's foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War. The Integrated Review will cover all aspects of the UK's place in the world, from the role of our diplomatic service and approach to development to the capabilities of our Armed Forces and security agencies.

The review will be policy-led and will go beyond the parameters of a traditional review by considering the totality of global opportunities and challenges the UK faces and determining how the whole of government can be structured, equipped and mobilised to meet them.

It will look at areas such as the procurement process used by the Armed Forces and other security services, ways to tackle Serious and Organised Crime more cohesively by building on the work of the Mackey Review and how we can better use technology and data to adjust to the changing nature of threats we face – from countering hostile state activity to strengthening our Armed Forces. All this will be undertaken with the aim of creating a more coherent and strategic approach to our overseas activity.

The Government will utilise expertise from both inside and outside government for the review, ensuring the UK's best foreign policy minds are feeding into its conclusions and offering constructive challenge to traditional Whitehall assumptions and thinking.

The UK's departure from the EU presents new opportunities to define and strengthen Britain's place in the world at a time when the global landscape

is changing dramatically. Worldwide demand for imports is growing as the UK establishes an independent trade policy for the first time in decades. Rapid technological changes are redefining the way we interact with other nations and tackle issues like climate change. And countries all over the world are challenging traditional international structures and alliances.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said:

I am determined to lead a Government that delivers for our people – both at home and abroad. The UK's institutions, expertise, leadership and values are renowned around the world.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. We must do more to adapt. We will be judged by how we respond to the opportunities ahead.

As the world changes we must move with it – harnessing new technologies and ways of thinking to ensure British foreign policy is rooted firmly in our national interests, now and in the decades ahead.

The remit of the review, set out for the first time today, is to:

- define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world and the long-term strategic aims for our national security and foreign policy
- set out the way in which the UK will be a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation, examining how we work more effectively with our allies
- determine the capabilities we need for the next decade and beyond to pursue our objectives and address the risks and threats we face
- identify the necessary reforms to Government systems and structures to achieve these goals

The Integrated Review will report to the Prime Minister, who will be supported by a cross-Whitehall team in the Cabinet Office and a small team in Downing Street comprised of experts from inside and outside the civil service. Departments across Whitehall will input, including the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence, Department for International Development, the Home Office, the Treasury, and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Decisions on the review will ultimately be made by the National Security Council, chaired by the Prime Minister.

The Integrated Review will run in parallel to the Comprehensive Spending Review, ensuring departments are equipped with the resources they need to enact the review's conclusions.

The main bulk of the review is expected to conclude in line with Comprehensive Spending Review later this year, although implementation of its recommendations will be a multi-year project.