



ULSTER
FARMERS'
UNION

UFU 2019 MANIFESTO

BACK UK FARMING BREXIT AND BEYOND







Ivor Ferguson
UFU President



Victor Chestnutt
UFU Deputy President



David Brown
UFU Deputy President

Why farming matters



The success of UK farming matters to the UK electorate – especially at this time of unprecedented change. The UK's decision to leave the European Union may dominate the political agenda but now is also the time for long-term planning. There are new opportunities with a growing UK population, and opportunities too with a new relationship with the European Union. Plans are needed to counter the threat of climate change and global concern over food and energy security.

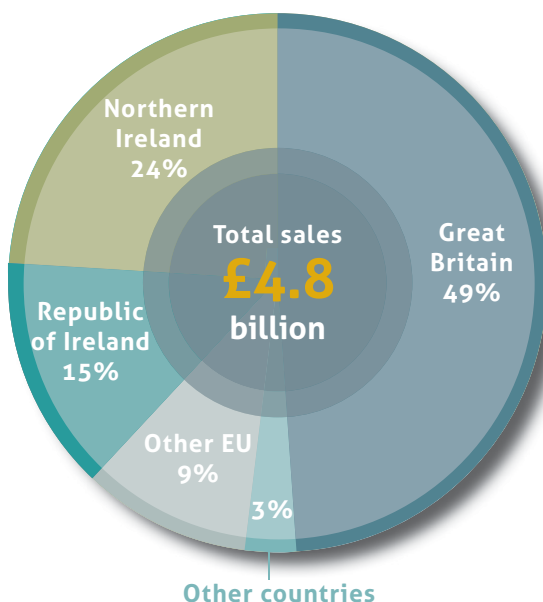
We want the next Government to have confidence in UK farming and that enables us to deliver for our country, our countryside and the vast majority of people who want to buy UK food.

The UFU has a vision of a productive, profitable and progressive farming sector which can deliver: for the environment; for the consumer; and for the economy.

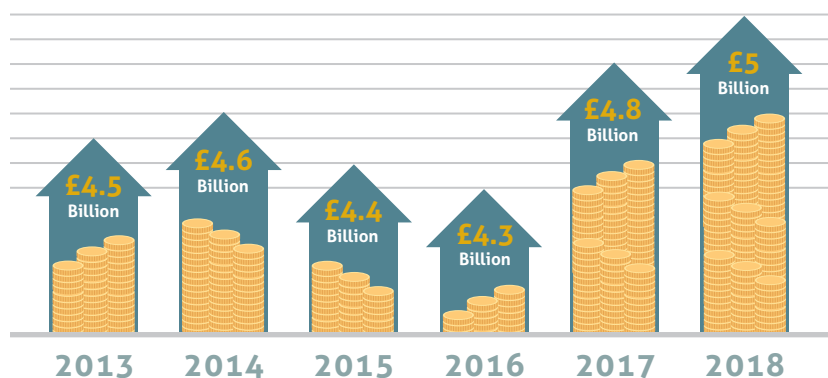
As well as growing and producing the high quality, healthy food that we all eat and enjoy, UK farmers and growers are custodians of our iconic countryside and leaders in promoting animal welfare standards. We underpin the food and drink industry, the largest UK manufacturing sector making a fundamental contribution of £122 billion to our economy, providing over 4 million jobs and supporting rural and urban communities up and down the country.

Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing Sector 2017

Destination of sales

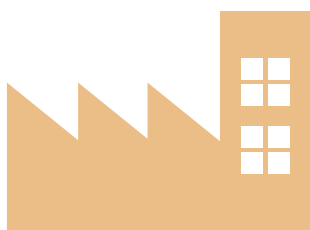


Sales trend over time



Provisional estimates suggest that the sector will hit £5 billion in sales in 2018

Contribution to Northern Ireland's manufacturing Industry



32%
of total sales

Employment



**Employing over
100K across
agriculture and
agri-food**

Source: NI Food and Drink Association

Value Added



**£904
million**



However, it would be remiss not to highlight the very real threat which we currently face as an industry, particularly in Northern Ireland. Whilst we want to work with the future Government to deliver all of the above, if we crash out of the European Union without a deal, we will not be able to do so.

In order to support farming over the coming Parliament, we need at the very minimum to see action on:

1. A commitment to protect our standards of production in trade policy;
2. A long-term investment programme to support UK farming;
3. Guaranteed access to a skilled and competent workforce.

In our manifesto, we are setting out five key policy challenges - *Navigating Brexit for UK farming; Developing a framework for a more competitive and sustainable farming sector; Building a thriving countryside and rural communities; Securing a long-term Government food strategy; and Placing science at the heart of policy making* - which UK food and farming, working alongside Government, must address over the next Parliament.

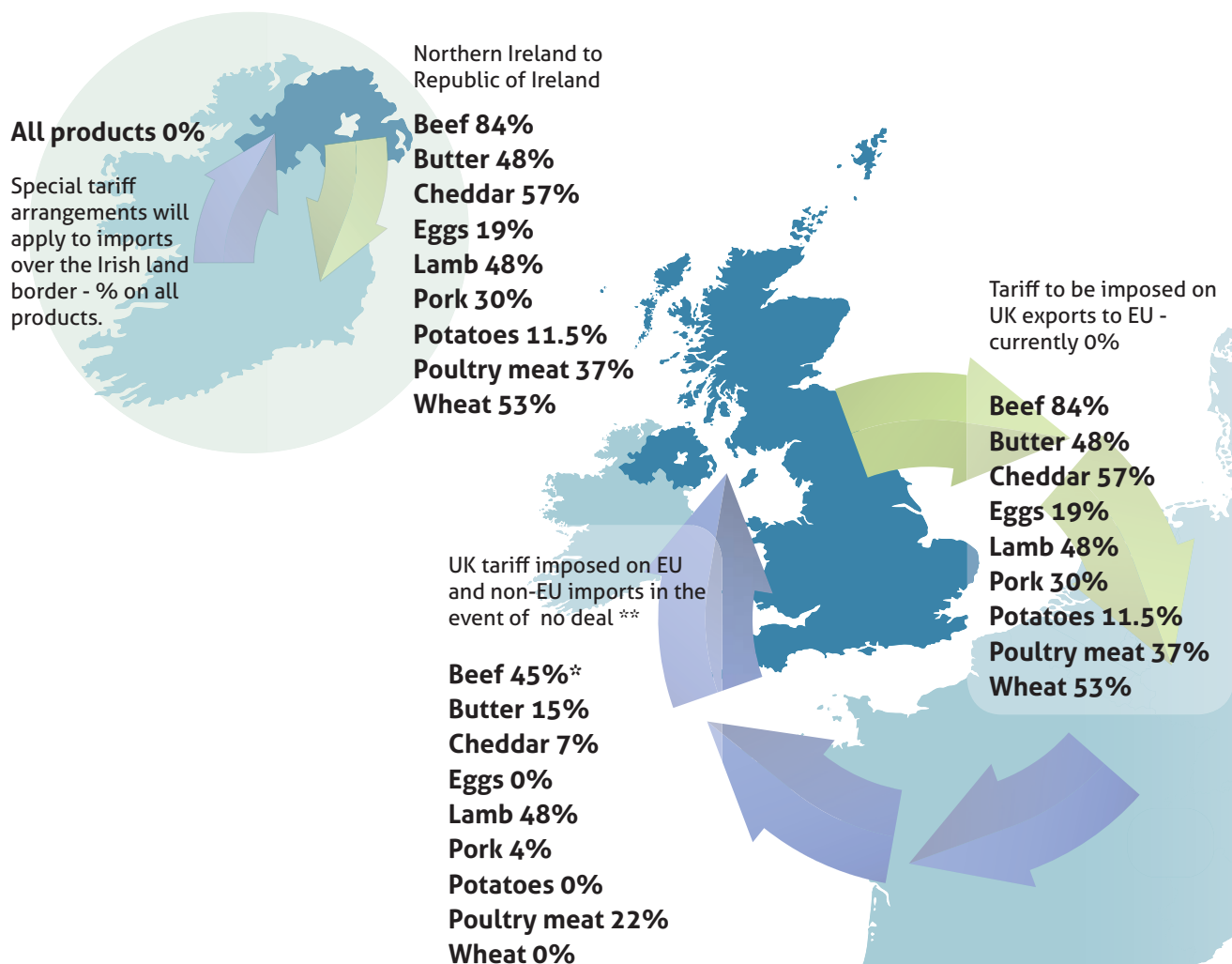
Farming delivering for the UK

1. Navigating Brexit for UK farming

Avoiding a 'no deal' outcome

The UFU has consistently called on the Government and parliament to ensure that our exit from the European Union is an orderly one. One which enables UK farmers to continue supplying the nation with safe, traceable and affordable food produced to world-leading animal welfare, environmental and food safety standards. In particular, we have repeatedly highlighted the disastrous consequences of the UK's intended temporary import tariff schedule. Which includes both a zero percent tariff on certain agricultural goods and also differential import tariff arrangements within the UK in terms of imports from the Republic of Ireland to either Northern Ireland or Great Britain. This would have a long-lasting and far-reaching negative impact on Northern Ireland's farming industry at a time when there would also be new prohibitive export barriers. We remain determined to avoid costly and disruptive customs checks, processes and procedures.

No deal tariffs - a bad deal for UK farmers



* For volumes supplied outside of 0% rated quota.

** All existing market access concessions for imports through WTO membership for products such as lamb, poultry and dairy will continue.



Free and frictionless trade with the ROI, EU and mainland UK markets, ambitious new deals and protecting our standards

Maintaining access to all of these markets that is as free and frictionless as possible is a fundamental priority. It is assumed that the UK will have a role, along with the EU, in ensuring that any future arrangements work for the Northern Ireland economy. This means that Northern Ireland businesses will engage with the rest of the EU on a 'level playing field' basis, which will be in fulfilment of the UK and EU joint commitment in December 2017 to the Good Friday Agreement and all-island economy. It must also be ensured that Northern Ireland businesses can continue to participate fully in the UK internal market and that trade will be protected in both directions. The UK and EU have an ongoing joint responsibility in delivering continued fair participation in both markets.

Given the complexities involved in securing such a relationship, the Government must ensure sufficient time is provided for the negotiations to ensure a smooth transition to this new partnership.

Government must seize opportunities in global trade but must also ensure that the UK's internal market is not damaged by a more relaxed import tariff schedule. The Government must also match fund investment from industry to open and leverage new markets around the world, while developing our market at home.

We are also calling for plans to ensure our international trade respects domestic production standards. Put simply, a commitment that after Brexit the food the UK imports will be produced to the same standards which is legally required of UK farmers. The UFU believes the establishment of a trade and standards commission is necessary to achieve this.

Access to a skilled and competent workforce

We are calling on the next Government to maintain access to the seasonal and permanent workforce required by the UK food chain. We would like to see immediate expansion of the Seasonal Workers Pilot scheme to enable recruitment this winter and rapid action to reach a full scheme of 70,000 seasonal workers as soon as practically possible.

In terms of permanent labour, we would like to work with the next Government to ensure any future immigration system does not block farming's or the agri-food processing industry's access to the labour market in the future. An island of Ireland level playing field is particularly important for Northern Ireland to avoid operating at a serious disadvantage to our Republic of Ireland competitors.

2. Developing a framework for a more competitive and sustainable farming sector

A commitment to invest in and support UK farming over the long-term

We now have an opportunity to work together to create a well-funded, refreshed and fit for purpose future domestic agricultural policy that delivers for all sectors. The UFU believes it is essential for Government to maintain existing levels of investment in farming for all parts of the UK. Farm businesses invest for the long-term, so an abrupt cliff-edge to long established policies and income streams must be avoided – we are calling for a multi-annual budget, with Government providing sufficient time for new policies to be agreed and implemented over a seven year horizon.

We would like to see this in hand with a basic farm resilience payment coupled with a comprehensive production efficiency programme targeted at active farmers and growers, complemented by a fiscal framework that encourages investment and generational renewal/land mobility, and also assists businesses to navigate a new trading and support environment outside the EU. We would like to work with Government to develop a capital allowances regime which offers incentives for investing in business.

Supply chain fairness

We wish to extend the remit of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP) to include more retailers (such as online) and food service business. This is to ensure the principles of fair trading are inherent across the groceries market.

We also want to see the principles of the agri-voluntary codes made mandatory and to be overseen by an independent adjudicator to give the same level of protection to farmers that apply to the food processing and manufacturing industry which sells direct to retailers.





3. Building a thriving countryside and rural communities

Broadband

Rural areas are crying out for accelerated roll out of high-speed broadband and reliable mobile coverage, with universal coverage equivalent to urban areas. Better coverage of a range of digital technologies is required to support farmers to maximise the opportunities that these can provide for their businesses, to improve productivity and workers' health and safety.

A promise to combat increasing level of rural crime

We want to work with government to address the major rural crime issues, such as fly-tipping, livestock-worrying and theft, which are having a huge impact on farming communities and agricultural businesses. We believe we can do this through:

- A more co-ordinated cross-departmental approach to rural crime;
- Increased funding for rural policing;
- Simple changes to legislation where appropriate to aid the police and criminal justice system when dealing with rural crimes.



4. Securing a long-term Government food strategy

UK Food Strategy

Delivery of a comprehensive food strategy should remain a strategic priority for Government. This must be a policy that delivers for everyone – from a fair deal for food producers to families and consumers across the country, whatever their income. Safe, traceable, affordable food that is produced to high standards of animal welfare and environmental protection is a right for all of us and the UK's farmers should be the number one supplier. Clear, unambiguous country-of-origin labelling at point of purchase in both the retail and food service sectors is essential to assist consumers in making informed choices.

UK consumers expect their food to be safe and produced with integrity, but these characteristics are not universally available around the world. A UK Food Strategy should establish a food commission to protect the food consumed in the UK and our high production and food safety standards.

Public Procurement

As we leave the EU, Government should ensure that it is supporting our farmers by buying UK in all its public procurement. Our schools, hospitals and local authorities should be sourcing food produced to UK quality standards, such as Red Tractor, as a first resort, ensuring public funds are invested in supporting the regulatory and production standards farmers and growers deliver. The next Government can achieve this by making buying UK a mandatory element of all crown commercial service contracts for food.

An education system which supports farming

We want food and farming to be at the heart of the national curriculum so people of all ages understand the importance of provenance. We also want to work collaboratively with Government and other relevant organisations to develop skills in our sector through technical education.

5. Placing science at the heart of policy making

Climate Change

Agriculture is unique. It supplies food, stores carbon and generates renewable energy. Farming is on the frontline of climate change impacts, being particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events. However, agriculture in the UK has significant potential to address the challenge of producing for the future as well as tackling climate change. The emissions profile of agriculture is fundamentally different from that of other sectors because greenhouse gases are emitted from inherently variable, biological processes linked to all kinds of agricultural production.

The UFU has been a member of the Agriculture and Forestry Greenhouse Gas Implementation Partnership, voluntary local partnership between the agri-food sector, science, government and environmental organisations, since its inception in 2010. The GHGIP produced an 'Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases' plan which sets out a roadmap for the agriculture sector with support from DAERA to reduce emissions from the agri-food sector. To address the climate change challenge will require investment on farms and management changes – this needs Government support through the appropriate research and development, advice, grants and fiscal incentives.

The implementation of a strategy to eradicate Bovine TB

Bovine TB continues to be the greatest threat facing our beef and dairy farmers and it is vital we do everything we can to control and eradicate it. It is essential that proactive measures across all sources of Bovine TB infection are urgently introduced to achieve this.

Ensure the UK's world-leading animal welfare standards are recognised and promoted in line with farm businesses

UK farming offers consumers fantastic choice and world leading standards of animal welfare. Across the farmed species, consumers can rely on Red Tractor Farm Assurance to deliver a robust welfare baseline compared to many imported products. Future welfare policy must be based on science and evidence, focusing on meaningful welfare outcomes for farmed animals and supported by trade policy. Livestock transport regulation must remain broadly in line with current EU requirements in order to safeguard domestic transport standards that recognise the structure and diverse nature of the UK livestock sectors.

A policy framework that aids development of sustainable plant health solutions

Many UK farmers and growers, and most food production, need continued access to a range of plant protection products. We want Government to work with industry to develop a sustainable regulatory framework for pesticide use and approvals post EU-exit, balancing the needs of UK farmers and growers with interests of consumers and the environment. Fundamental to this will be robust scientific evidence that is based on a risk-based approach to managing environmental impacts. This framework should use research and development that delivers safer, more effective and lower risk pesticides in the context of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) activity and other approaches.





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