

NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

ISSUED BY THE UK FARM ASSURANCE REVIEW

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UK FARM ASSURANCE REVIEW REPORTS ON PROGRESS WITH ITS RECOMMENDATIONS

The UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR) concluded the initial stage of a post-review monitoring exercise with the publication today of the first of its monitoring reports.

This stage of the UKFAR process was again commissioned by the UK national farming unions (NFUs) and the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) and was conducted independently by the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner, Dr David Llewellyn.

The report provides an update on actions taken by organisations tasked to implement the 56 operational UKFAR recommendations, focussing on those with a 6 month delivery timescale. Recommendations with a longer timescale are also included.

The evidence provided to the monitoring exercise was gathered from a survey of participating organisations, 40 of which submitted their statements of progress and other comments relating to the Review. The survey included the 12 farm assurance schemes included in the original UKFAR Report, UK government departments, industry regulators and food chain organisations, so that a broad picture of actions taken by these bodies could be presented.

The report notes that progress in addressing the UKFAR recommendations is being made, not least by the farm assurance schemes. It is, however, somewhat variable, and largely dependent on the starting position of the scheme. It was evident from the submissions that certain schemes were well advanced in meeting the recommendations, while some had more to do. There were also positive signs from other organisations, with the NFUs and AHDB taking on additional tasks to help deliver specific recommendations and work being undertaken by sector regulatory agencies and the Welsh Government as particular examples.

Dr Llewellyn commented that: "It was a natural step for the sponsoring bodies of the UK Farm Assurance Review to wish to understand how the recommendations in the Commission's report were being implemented. Not only were there a substantial number, but they pointed to a complex operating environment for farm assurance with many participating organisations and varying interests in the assurance process. It was also clear that in seeking to effect change in the system, a degree of momentum would need to be maintained.

"We opened up the monitoring exercise with introductory discussions with the organisations identified in the Review's recommendations to explain what the monitoring round sought to achieve, the information we required and how they could participate. The fact that 40 organisations made contributions to this report is a sign that there is a commitment to change the nature and delivery of farm assurance and to reaffirm the position of the farming community as a key part of the farm assurance system.

"Disappointingly, other government bodies have not yet been as engaged as might have been wished. It remains to be seen, in the second monitoring round next year, whether they will play their part in driving improvements in the farm assurance system that could, in turn, assist with the development of government farming and food policies.

"Whilst progress is being made, there remains more to be done. The report highlights, for example, some of the more challenging issues identified by the Review where early work has started, but where effective collaboration across the industry will be required to deliver improvements to the farm assurance system.

"Of course, the acid test for all of this is whether the farming industry will see, in time, any difference on the ground – in the procedures associated with farm audits, in the information and communications they receive from farm assurance schemes and industry regulators and in the lessening of the overall burden

associated with the current farm assurance system. In some instances this may take longer than originally anticipated in the original UKFAR report, but the monitoring round has, at least, identified a willingness amongst many of those operating the system to consider these issues and to take steps to address them.”

A second monitoring report is expected to be published in the Spring of 2026 to provide a further update on progress.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. The Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner, Dr David Llewellyn, was the Lead Commissioner for the UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR). Further background details about Dr Llewellyn can be found at Annex 4 of the Monitoring Report released today.
2. The monitoring and reporting exercise was supported by Promar International Ltd, acting as the Secretariat to this stage of the UKFAR.
3. The UKFAR provided the first UK-wide, comprehensive review of farm assurance and called for a fundamental reset of the system to rebuild confidence amongst farmers.

The review, established by the UK farming unions and the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), was conducted independently by four Commissioners and was published in January 2025.

It concluded that farm assurance was delivering necessary assurances on quality to consumers but that it must make some fundamental changes to address growing frustration amongst farmers in how it was delivered.

The 9 month review collected evidence from every link in the UK food supply chain. The dissatisfaction expressed by farmers was not uniform across all sectors nor across all nations, notably with assurance schemes in devolved areas working more effectively than UK-wide schemes. The report was therefore nuanced in its approach, recognising where existing arrangements worked well, but being clear where changes were essential.

To that end, the review made nine strategic recommendations:

1. On-farm audits must be reduced, simplified and delivered more consistently;
2. There must be a transformational step forward in embracing technology;
3. Schemes need to reset and/or restate their structures to establish farmers as the driving voice in standards development;
4. A new industry-led initiative must set out the future environmental ambitions for farm assurance;
5. The inclusion of regulatory requirements within farm assurance should be conditional on government agreeing a form of ‘earned recognition’;
6. There must be greater collaboration between farm assurance schemes across the UK;
7. Schemes must better position the UK farming industry in world food markets and in competition with imported food;
8. All schemes must review and improve their communication with farmers
9. The Red Tractor scheme must complete the implementation of recommendations in the Campbell Tickell report on its governance.

Under these nine strategic recommendations, a total of 56 operational recommendations were also made, with clear lead bodies and timescales.

The Commissioners also called on governments across the UK to take a more structured and active approach to the interaction between assurance schemes and regulation, recognising the benefits

this would bring to the farming industry, as well as to consumers, and the potential it would have to contribute to the better understanding of the impact of post-Brexit farming policies.

4. More details of the UKFAR, and the first monitoring report, can be found here:

<https://promar-international.com/farm-assurance-review>

And you can contact the UKFAR at this email address: uk-farm-assurance-review@genusplc.com