

# FARMERS FIRST

Issue 72 | Autumn/Winter 2024

**FRAM**  
**FARMERS**  
GREAT BRITISH FARMERS CO-OPERATING



**PLANS FOR NEW  
FARM ANIMAL VET IN FRAM** **PAGE 15**



**SFI APPROACHES:  
INSIGHT FROM OUR SPECIALISTS** **PAGES 18 & 19**



**SAVING TIME AND REDUCING COSTS  
WITH FRAM BUILDING MATERIALS TEAM** **PAGE 21**



**HARVEST ROUND-UP** **PAGES 12-13**

Photo by Ed Brown, R & W Brown, Clapham Farm, East Sussex

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# REDUCING EMISSIONS IN AGRICULTURE: WHAT ROLE COULD HVO PLAY?



UK farmers are increasingly tasked with reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as agriculture contributes around 10% of the nation's total. Balancing these environmental goals with productivity is a key challenge, and one solution being explored is Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), a renewable alternative diesel.

## What is HVO?

HVO is a renewable fuel produced from sustainable waste materials, like used vegetable oils, which can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by up to 90%. It aligns with the UK's target to reach net zero by 2050 and the NFU's goal for agriculture to achieve this by 2040. Importantly, HVO can be used in existing diesel engines and storage systems without modifications, making it a practical option for those considering lower-carbon fuel alternatives.

## Benefits of HVO for UK Agriculture:

- **Excellent Compatibility**

HVO can be used as a direct replacement for diesel, with no need for new machinery or storage infrastructure. It can also be mixed with diesel, offering flexibility and ease during the transition.

- **Performance in All Conditions**

HVO functions well in various conditions, including cold weather, with a Cold Filter Plugging Point (CFPP) as low as -30°C, making it suitable for UK winters. Its shelf life of up to 10 years also makes it ideal for long-term storage or backup generators.

- **Lower Maintenance Costs**

Compared to traditional biodiesel, HVO is FAME-free, which reduces microbial growth and engine wear. This could help lower maintenance costs and downtime, keeping machinery running smoothly.

- **Environmental Impact**

HVO not only reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions but also cuts nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and particulate matter (PM), contributing to improved air quality and helping farmers meet regulations such as the UK's Clean Air Strategy.

## Looking Ahead: Could HVO Be Right For Your Farm?

As the farming sector looks for ways to reduce its carbon footprint, HVO offers an option worth considering. The potential long-term benefits, including reduced emissions and maintenance costs, could make it a valuable investment.

As Great Britain's largest fuel distributor Certas Energy is leading the way with energy transition for fuel users looking to decarbonise. Discussing your farm business and sustainability goals with suppliers like Certas Energy, or your contacts within a buying group like Fram Farmers, can help you to explore how HVO fits into your sustainability plans.

As its availability grows, HVO could play a key role in meeting future emissions targets without disrupting farm operations.

Start the conversation today:

**0345 456 1800**  
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Ask us  
about  
HVO



## CEO'S WELCOME

# NAVIGATING CHANGE: KEY UPDATES FOR THE SEASONS AHEAD



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of Farmers First, now with a fresh, new design. We've reimagined the format to make it easier for you to find the updates that matter most, with news from each department at your fingertips.

This issue reflects on a relatively smooth harvest, bringing some relief after a challenging year for both livestock and arable members. We hope the coming months will be less challenging for us all.

As we navigate a period of significant change, including new agricultural policies and support payments like the introduction of the SFI replacing BPS, and a new government at Number 10, we're all keenly awaiting the autumn budget, which could bring the most transformative changes for farming businesses in a generation.

At Fram Farmers, we're working hard to ensure your membership brings even more value during these uncertain times. Expect improved communication from us, with a new monthly podcast, a single weekly email update, enhanced functionality on the Member's Portal and WhatsApp groups - read more about these changes plus our upcoming events and staff updates on pages 4 and 5.

On page 7 we share how the changes to permitted development rights could offer members alternative opportunities for generating income, with support of Fram Farmers Finance.

This edition also covers our Harvest round-up on pages 12 and 13, news on the forthcoming AGM, member case studies from the livestock team on page 11, and a building materials case study on page 21.

Keep an eye out for new offerings, including a joint venture with veterinary services on page 15, a new HR service for members, plus, our team share their insights on the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme, and how you can make it work for your farm business - pages 18 and 19.

Going forward, Farmers First will be published twice a year, so our next issue will be Spring/Summer 2025. Until then, on behalf of all the Fram Farmers team, we wish you a successful autumn and a joyful festive season.

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Every precaution has been taken to ensure that the material published in Farmers First is accurate at the time of printing. For further details about anything featured in this edition please call Fram Farmers on 01728 727700, or Hannah Boyce at Kendalls PR and Marketing on 07719 447897.

If you would like to opt out of receiving Farmers First, please email [mail@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:mail@framfarmers.co.uk)



## WHATSAPP GROUPS

Join over 800 members who receive Fram's WhatsApp Alert groups for daily prices, market updates, and helpful reminders. These groups are your essential resource for all things Fram, keeping you informed and ahead in the agricultural market.

Each group provides expert insights tailored to your needs, helping you make informed decisions.

To join, call the office and make sure you add our phone number to your contacts, or you will not receive our messages! ■

We offer four specialised groups:

- **Grain Marketing:**  
Managed by Jono Woollatt
- **Crop Inputs:**  
Led by our fertiliser, seed, and crop protection specialists
- **Feed:**  
Managed by Rachel Burroughes
- **Fuel:**  
Managed by Alex Harrison



## CROPTEC 2024

CropTec takes place on 27th-28th November at the NAEC Stoneleigh and offers an opportunity for arable farmers across the UK to gain valuable insights from industry experts, government bodies, and fellow farmers to help plan for future challenges.

Attendees will explore critical topics such as crop protection, soil health, sustainable farming, and diversification. Key innovations in gene-editing, AI, robotics, automated weather systems, and controlled environment agriculture will be showcased, equipping farmers with tools to thrive in an evolving landscape.

This year's event introduces three keynote theatres focused on Innovation, Knowledge, and Profit, offering practical advice to futureproof farms. Sessions will include panel discussions, keynote speakers, and lectures featuring experts such as the Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board, Adam White of Barclays Business, and NFU Deputy President David Exwood.

CropTec also provides a prime networking opportunity, allowing participants to connect with peers, exhibitors, suppliers, and potential business partners. The event fosters knowledge sharing through workshops, presentations, and farmers'



discussions on best practices and innovative systems.

Visitors can also explore the Sprayer Showroom to see the latest machinery and equipment, with leading manufacturers on-hand to offer advice.

CropTec is the ideal show for discovering cutting-edge advancements in arable farming, ensuring attendees leave with insights to enhance their operations and prepare for the future.

Join the Fram Farmers team at the show by securing your spot – scan the QR code to complete your registration! ■



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### LELY OPEN DAY

29/10/24

Hosted at Trevorder Farm in Cornwall, Lely will showcase their milking robots alongside presentations from other industry professionals on the benefits and reality of robotics in dairy. Our Membership Manager, Becky Bower, will attend — don't miss her! Complimentary lunch provided, so book your spot!

### HARPER ADAMS CAREERS FAIR

12/11/24

Looking for a 2025 placement? Visit our stand at the careers fair! We're seeking a placement student passionate about agriculture to develop their procurement skills across different areas within the business including, seed, fertiliser, crop protection, machinery, fuel, and more.

### SOUTH OF ENGLAND FARMING CONFERENCE

13/11/24

Fram Farmers are proud sponsors of the annual South of England Farming Conference. The event will focus on land use challenges in the Southeast of England. Fram CEO Andrew Knowles and Membership Manager Becky Bower will attend in person.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

14/11/24

The next Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in-house in Framlingham and virtually via Microsoft Teams. This event presents an excellent opportunity to meet Fram Farmers CEO Andrew Knowles, Chief Commercial Officer Tim Styles, and members of the Fram Farmers Board.

# PORTAL UPDATES

Based on feedback from our recent members' survey, we have made further changes to the portal to encourage greater use from our members and enhance the service delivered. Here's an update...

We have put the security and service of our members first by investing in multi-factor authentication to reduce security risks and keep your data and information safe.

Online ordering is live! Our first revision proved very popular, and since then, we have completed some additional revisions, meaning the old service is no longer available.

Invoice searching is now complete and fully functioning. Members can search for a specific invoice from any supplier on the system since the new IT system was put in place in March 2023.

Members can now find a selection of short-term offers and hot deals for machinery and equipment on the portal, and there is now an opportunity for members to advertise! Whether this is for machinery, recruitment, livestock, grazing or dogs, you can contact Izzy and Ben from our marketing team, who will assist you in booking your advertising space.

We are working on the supplier directory, which will feature key information for each of our suppliers, allowing members to search by category and business name to see what products can be supplied. The members' directory will provide the opportunity to search for fellow members



via name, business and website, allowing members to communicate with each other. There will be an option to opt out of this on the Annual Declaration Form (ADF).

Over the next few months, members can expect to see additional profile functions, including the option to add sites, delivery addresses, business information, contacts, permissions or email recipients to their profile.

Conducting regular updates to the portal is all part of mission Fram26, where we focus on adding value for our members through our products and services. ■

## WHAT'S ON YOUR MEMBERS PORTAL:

- Statements and current invoices
- Online ordering
- Crop protection product guide
- Machinery, parts, and vehicle offers
- Members adverts
- Grain marketing portal
- Market prices
- News and events
- Team directory



## MEMBER COMMS CHANGES

### LOOK FORWARD VLOGS

Have you seen our new 'Look Forward' vlog series?

Created by Crop Protection Product Manager, Matthew Cobbald, it keeps arable members informed on the crop inputs industry, covering fertiliser, seed, and crop protection.

The episodes offer seasonal guidance and advice on maximising Fram Farmers membership benefits. The latest episodes highlight the importance of early communication with the team, while Matthew reviews key crop protection products for next season and offers advice on purchasing.

You can catch up on all episodes in the 'news' section of our Members Portal.

### FRAM WEEKLY

We've streamlined our communication!

Instead of multiple emails, you'll now hear from us once a week.

Fram Weekly includes all the essential updates, order forms, and member adverts in one place.

### FRAM FARMERS PODCAST

The Fram Farmers Podcast is now live for members!

Tune in for insightful discussions on farming, business updates, and industry trends. Subscribe through the Members Portal and don't miss upcoming episodes packed with expert interviews, practical advice, and the latest news to support your business! ■

## STAFF UPDATES

**DAN HEWITT**  
Machinery Buyer – page 21

**CHARLOTTE KINSEY**  
North West Membership Development Manager – page 22

**ED SAUNDERS**  
Logistics Coordinator – page 9

**ED FULLER**  
Graduate Trainee Commodity Trader – page 9

**LIAM SMITH**  
– Utilities Product Manager



1+1=

3

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# HOW CLARKSON'S CLAUSE COULD EASE THE PATH TO DIVERSIFICATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



With mounting pressures on rural businesses, it is more important than ever to consider alternative opportunities for generating income. Fram Farmers' Nick Hindle discusses how the changes to permitted development rights could enable this, with support of Fram Farmers Finance.

## What is 'Clarkson's Clause' and what are the changes?

What has become known as Clarkson's Clause relates to the changes in permitted development rights, in particular, Class Q and Class R development. These changes could ease the path to diversification for farmers and landowners by widening what is allowed under these rights.

The Clause has extended the General Permitted Development Order with the purpose of creating diversity and rural economic benefits that the current permitted development allowances do not facilitate. It is aimed at providing greater flexibility for those seeking to utilise agricultural buildings in different ways without having to secure planning permission from the local planning authority.

For Class Q development, this means redundant agricultural buildings may be able to be converted into up to ten residential dwellings, and for Class R development, buildings could now be converted for a broader range of commercial and industrial purposes. While the changes are not an instant green light for on-farm development, they aim to simplify the process and lower the eligibility threshold for buildings. For example, under Class Q, landowners will no longer be required to demonstrate that buildings have been used solely for agricultural purposes before conversion, making buildings that have been used for farm storage eligible for change of use.

Fram Farmers members should note that, despite not requiring formal planning permission, prior approval of specific aspects of the development will need to be sought from the local planning authority before starting work. Local planning authorities may also exercise their discretion to remove these permitted development rights entirely in a particular area by making an 'Article 4 direction'.

## Fram Farmers Finance

In the Spring 2024 issue of Farmers First (Issue 71), Fram Farmers announced it has partnered with Asset Finance Solutions (UK) Ltd (AFS) and Synergy Commercial Finance to enhance its finance offering, providing a broader range of financial solutions to members including cover for inputs, property, development, and diversification, as well as a wide range of assets.

"The change in legislation is very positive for farmers and landowners that want to diversify their business, as it cuts red

tape and shortens the timescale to bring their projects to fruition," says Nick.



Nick Hindle

"In these instances, it is crucial that they also have easy and rapid access to funding and we are pleased to be able to support them with their financial needs", he adds.

"If changes to this clause do speed up development and business opportunities, don't let finance be the element that holds up the project."

"However, when it comes to larger developments, such as residential housing estates, we advise members to seek separate advice. Finance through Fram Farmers can still be suitable for developments of this type and scale, but it is a longer process."

For more information on asset and commercial finance options please contact Nick Hindle in the first instance: [framfarmersfinance@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:framfarmersfinance@framfarmers.co.uk) | 01728 727700 ■

## Did you know?

### LLOYDS COMMERCIAL CARD

Since Spring 2022, Fram Farmers members have been able to take advantage of the Lloyds Bank Commercial Card. Designed to save you and your business both time and money this card can help streamline administration and automate the reconciliation of purchases.

The card can be used anywhere Mastercard is accepted, even at non-Fram Farmers suppliers, and is paid as part of the Fram Farmers monthly statement. The card includes a commercial card data management system, with its own mobile app.

For more information, please contact the team by email: [members@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:members@framfarmers.co.uk).

## FRAM FARMERS AGREES DEAL WITH WORLDPAY

Fram Farmers has partnered with Worldpay, enabling members to take payments and manage credit card receipts. With tailored setups, card terminals featuring both WIFI and GPRS, and 24/7 support, it's ideal for diversified businesses like farm shops, glamping, and campsites. Competitive pricing and easy setup are available at an exclusive Fram Farmers rate.

Worldpay is live now! For more information speak to Nick Hindle: [framfarmersfinance@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:framfarmersfinance@framfarmers.co.uk) | 01728 727700 ■



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# GRAIN TEAM UPDATE FROM JONO WOOLLATT



**The Fram Farmers grain marketing team is pleased to report strong growth, with member trading up 10% compared to last year.**

Grain marketing-only memberships are also continuing to rise. Fram Pools have performed exceptionally well, with 88,000 tonnes in Fram Pools this season, an increase of 2% for 2024/25, despite

an anticipated smaller crop size. It is projected that pools will account for 40% of the total grain purchased next year.

Malting barley has been a standout success, with the 2023 harvest being four times larger than in 2022. Our malting barley offering is now well-established, thanks to increased market knowledge and more detailed sampling, which is boosting Fram's reputation both in trade

and on-farm. We've also seen increased competitiveness and volume in break crops like maize, pulses, and oats, although rapeseed volume is down, reflecting the national trend.

Members can now stay informed through our market reports in the new Fram Weekly newsletters, with regular updates from Jono shared via WhatsApp. ■

## EXPANSION OF LOGISTICS AND BUYING TEAMS

### ED SAUNDERS – LOGISTICS COORDINATOR

We're excited to introduce Ed Saunders, who joined our crops team in April as Logistics Coordinator. Ed handles transport and logistics for the grain marketing team, liaising with mills, hauliers, and members to ensure smooth grain movement. He also oversees grain sampling during harvest and manages certification for members.



Ed, from a family farm in Eye, Suffolk, previously worked in accountancy and is chairman of Diss Young Farmers Club. Working alongside Scott Manning, he's quickly becoming a key contact for grain marketing.

To reach Ed Saunders: [ed.saunders@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:ed.saunders@framfarmers.co.uk) | 01728 727732 ■

### ED FULLER – GRADUATE TRAINEE COMMODITY TRADER

We're delighted to welcome Ed Fuller back to the grain marketing team! Many members will remember Ed from his placement year with us in the crops department. After graduating from Harper Adams this summer with a degree in Agriculture and Farm Business Management, he has rejoined us following a busy harvest.



Ed, who grew up on the Norfolk/Suffolk border, will focus on seed buy-back contracts and serve members in north Suffolk and south Norfolk, particularly grain marketing-only members. Meanwhile, Jono Woollatt will focus on expanding Muntons malting barley contracts in south Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Essex, as Fram continues to grow its grain marketing services.

Ed is eager to reconnect with Fram Farmers members. To get in touch, contact: [ed.fuller@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:ed.fuller@framfarmers.co.uk) | 07917 050959 ■

## 06/11/24 ROOT CROP FOCUS GROUP MEETING

### Agenda:

- Update on Crop Protection purchasing and Agrii Gold Club
- Research on sonar technology for Destoners
- Updates from Grimme and Amazone
- Presentation on current High-vis offerings from Blaklader
- Introduction to Paul-Tech and their technology
- Overview of current Fram offerings

Interested in attending this or future events?

Contact David Wilson:  
[david.wilson@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:david.wilson@framfarmers.co.uk) |  
01728 448203

## MAIZE MARKETING GROUP

**In January 2024, Jono Woollatt met with 12 Fram Farmers members to explore the potential of grain maize as a contender for arable rotations, given the challenges of wet autumns.**

Despite a tough growing season, maize yields have been promising at 8-10t/ha, with mills satisfied with the quality. Jono has contracted over 3000 tonnes this year using futures-related contracts and is looking to expand with both existing and new growers.

Interested in growing maize?

Contact Jono at [jonathan.woollatt@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.woollatt@framfarmers.co.uk) | 07583 037577 ■



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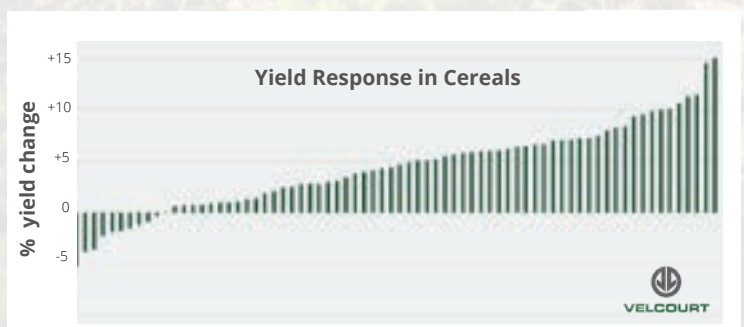


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**Nick Anderson - Technical Director**  
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# SUSTAINABLE CHANGES TO DAIRY HERD NUTRITION MAINTAINS PERFORMANCE BENEFITS

**A long-term commitment to reduce farm carbon footprints has enabled a dairy unit in West Sussex to remove soya and palm from its feed rations, while maintaining performance across its 510-strong milking cow herd.**

A Fram Farmers member since 2007, buying all feed products, as well as fuel, ear tags, bedding sand and more through its membership, Holmbush Farm on the Heaselands Estate operates an all-year round calving operation on a Sainsbury's Müller volume-based contract.

"Although on a 'white-water contract', we do have requirements to meet in terms of milk quality," explains herd manager Sam Picot, who oversees the Holstein X Friesian herd, currently averaging 4.07% butterfat and 3.32% protein.

"We were never looking for a quick fix to reduce feed carbon footprints, but had been considering ways that could help us reduce or remove reliance on palm oil, as well as soya, from our rations, without impacting milk yields or constituents," he added.

Having read about impressive university-based studies, alongside commercial trials through Co-op and Müller Milk & Ingredients, for a new palm-free fat supplement claiming to bring environmental benefits, while maintaining herd performance and yields, Mr Picot discussed options with his nutritionist, Warwick Bastard.

"The research indicated that we could get similar benefits from the herd by removing palm oil, and as reductions in feed carbon footprints are being encouraged by

processors and retailers, that became the main driver for change," says Mr Bastard.

The new palm free fat supplement, manufactured from locally sourced vegetable oils, together with marine oils, has been shown in the University of Nottingham trials, to reduce the feed carbon footprint per kg of energy corrected milk by 11%, compared to a control palm-based supplement.

"I thought, why wouldn't you try that, so we introduced envirolac in March 2023," says Mr Picot, who has now replaced palm-based supplementation in the once-a-day TMR, consisting of maize and grass silage, rape, maize gluten, wheat and minerals.

"What we saw was a seamless change, and if I didn't know we had switched, I certainly wouldn't have noticed in terms of herd performance. This wasn't affected at all, so I'm really pleased," he adds.

While recognising there have been many contributing factors to herd performance, both Mr Picot and Mr Bastard say the cows seem to be doing better in what has been a difficult year, certainly from a forage quality perspective.

"It is hard to say if there are any critical benefits, but in a difficult year we have certainly seen performance maintained from the cows, and gradually fertility has improved over the year," explains Mr Bastard.



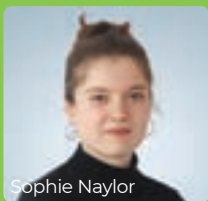
(Stock image)

"We have also removed soya totally from the diet, and are balancing the ration with protected amino acids, Lysine and Methionine. It is difficult to pin-point the exact reason for fertility improvements, but there have certainly been no negative effects from envirolac," he adds.

Mr Picot concludes, "While we don't currently have any direct requirements about the use of palm oil, we can see the direction we are heading, and we will need to pay closer attention to what we are feeding. We now certainly feel ahead of the game."

Speak to the Fram Farmers team about making sustainable changes to your herd's nutrition, and improving your environmental footprint. Fram Farmers works with a wide range of feed suppliers, and is happy to provide advice on sustainable feeding solutions and fat supplements. 01728 727716 | [jodie.allen@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:jodie.allen@framfarmers.co.uk) ■

## SOPHIE COMPLETES CIPS APPRENTICESHIP



Sophie Naylor

**Purchasing assistant Sophie Naylor, who has been with Fram Farmers for two years, has completed her 18-month procurement and supply apprenticeship.**

Many members will be familiar with Sophie, a valuable member of the livestock team, having spoken to her over the phone when ordering livestock inputs.

Sophie started her apprenticeship with CIPS – the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply - in January 2023, and

has just completed it, earning a level four qualification in procurement and supply.

The apprenticeship which involved taking eight online exams, and a 5000-word project has been based around her role and experience at Fram Farmers.

Sophie continues her training this month, as she's attending the BCFTA (Bristol Corn & Feed Trade Association) Trade Awareness Course. She will also be expanding her knowledge by attending the Oxford Farming Conference in January through the Fram Farmers scholarship programme. ■



# HARVEST ROUND UP

We caught up with a selection of Fram Farmers members to share the highs and lows of this year's harvest. From disappointing yields in Sussex to surprisingly good results with spring barley, members reflected on challenges faced, weather impacts, and the importance of crop diversity for future planning.

**NAME:**  
**DANIEL WORMELL**  
**LOCATION:**  
**COLCHESTER**

We farm 600ha, mostly on loamy clay soils, and as far as the harvests go, it was one of the strangest I can remember due to the wet winter and protracted autumn and spring drilling.

While harvest was extended, with breaks between crops becoming ready, the outcomes varied. Flooding and herbicide damage caused the loss of 150ha of winter wheat, which we replaced with Mulika spring wheat, which exceeded expectations at 7t/ha, well above the farm's average of 5.7t/ha. Surviving winter wheat yielded 8.5t/ha, though protein levels were lower than usual. Despite dry weather, about 40% of wheat had to be dried due to moisture content which stubbornly sat at 17-18% M.C for much of harvest.

Break crops fared worse, with winter beans yielding only 2.5t/ha, well below the farm's 4.5t/ha average. Spring linseed, despite initial promise, produced a disappointing 1.5t/ha, leading to its removal from next year's rotation due to poor margins compared to SFI options.

However, five years ago we took the decision to start growing grain maize which, now in its fifth year, looks promising, with 100ha expected to yield around 10t/ha by late September or October.

Cultivations went well overall, though dry conditions increased wear on equipment, and mole draining was less frequent due to unfavourable conditions. ■



**NAME: TOM MCVEIGH**  
**LOCATION: MID-SUFFOLK**

This year's harvest was a pleasant surprise, especially given the near-constant rain. We grew three varieties of wheat — Champion, Dawsum, and Crusoe.

Champion excelled, yielding 4t per acre, with Dawsum at 3.7t. Crusoe, while decent at 3.7t per acre, underwhelmed in protein content at 11.2-11.4%. On our heavy clay soils, hitting milling specs is tough, and this is the last time I'll take on that extra risk again.

Spring drilling has been successful, with barley (Laureate) and borage planted in April and May. Both performed well,

with barley yielding 2.8t per acre and borage meeting its target yield.

Beans, planted in February, yielded 2t per acre despite some compaction and chocolate spot towards the end of growing season.

Overall, the season exceeded my low expectations. My biggest takeaway from this season is the importance of growing multiple crops with different drilling and harvesting windows, I feel we've been quite lucky this year but it's a reminder of how many problems overexposure to bad weather patterns can cause us over a season. ■



**NAME: RYAN GUE**  
**LOCATION: WEST SUSSEX AND BERWICKSHIRE**

**This year has been far from ideal for cereal crops in Sussex. The relentless wet winter conditions severely impacted our farming operations, causing many applications to growing crops to be either missed or poorly timed.**

Our winter barley (SY Kingsbarn) and winter wheat (KWS Extase) both showed signs of nitrogen deficiency, turning a fluorescent yellow before receiving any fertiliser. Unfortunately, the barley couldn't recover from this setback and combined with missed early plant growth regulator (PGR) timings, it resulted in a flat crop with disappointing yields.

The wheat faced similar challenges but managed to cope better. While the KWS Extase withstood disease pressure reasonably well, it was certainly the dirtiest we've encountered. As we drove the combine through the fields, it was easy to forget the struggles of the year and wonder about the missed yield potential. However, upon reflection, it's clear that very little went right for the crops.

Maize drilling was also challenging, but yields seem promising. We've begun drilling winter barley, although the drill might remain idle for some time due to unfavourable weather conditions.

In Berwickshire, the story is much the same, with a disappointing and prolonged harvest. Looking ahead, when considering how to improve for next year, the only solution that comes to mind is 'better weather'. The ongoing challenges have left us frustrated, and we can only hope for more favourable conditions in the future. ■

**NAME: ED BROWN**  
**LOCATION: EAST SUSSEX**

**After the yield-breaking harvest of 2023, we won't look back on 2024 with the same fondness.**

Our modest arable rotation consists of winter wheat, spring barley, and beans. We are winter wheat seed growers for Bartholomews, favouring KWS Extase for the third year.

Despite surviving a wet winter and benefiting from 450 in-lamb ewes grazing, which helped with natural growth regulation and disease control, we faced a disappointing yield averaging 7.2t/ha due to a lack of sunshine and disease pressure. Harvest began on 4th August, with moisture levels averaging 15.5%.

The Laureate spring barley provided some relief, looking excellent throughout the growing season. We were pleased with an average yield of 7.9t/ha, drilled into



overwinter stubble turnips, with most seeded in mid-March and the last by mid-April—usually too late for us. Fortunately, the samples met malting specifications, although prices remain disappointing. We

started harvesting barley on 12th August, but progress was slow due to regular showers and heavy dews. We wrapped up the season with the beans on 4th September. ■



**NAME: LUKE CORBETT**  
**LOCATION: HEREFORDSHIRE**

**Harvest began on 25th July with OSR, which confirmed our decision to replace it with SFI options.**

Barley exceeded expectations despite a wet winter. Wheat was a mixed bag — lighter soils performed well, but late-drilled wheat on heavier ground didn't fare so well, with Dawsum going flat and difficult to harvest due to constant rain.

Surprisingly, beans yielded 5t/ha, much better than anticipated. Once harvest was finished, we focused on remedial work, using the subsoiler to repair damage from the wet winter and spring. Cover crops established well in warm, damp conditions, but over 90mm of September rain delayed our planned early drilling start. ■

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\* The highest wheat yield is 17.95 tonnes/ha (39572.97 lbs/ha) and was harvested from 8.2920 ha (20.49 acres) by Tim Lamyman (UK) in Louth, Lincolnshire, UK, on 10 August 2022. Data from Guinness World Records.



# PLANS FOR NEW FARM ANIMAL VET IN FRAM



Fram Farmers is pleased to share that it will be establishing Fram Farm Vets Ltd, a new dedicated farm animal veterinary service, in the new year.

Increasingly, a significant number of Fram Farmers livestock members in East Anglia have voiced their concerns and frustration with the farm animal veterinary landscape, which has dramatically changed in recent years; almost all local and regional veterinary practices in East Anglia have been acquired by larger corporate veterinary businesses or have closed, leading to limited provision for farm animals in the area.

Therefore, in partnership with an established Yorkshire-based independent farm animal veterinary business which shares our values and vision, Fram Farm Vets will focus purely on farm animals (including goats).

The business will provide consistent high-quality advice and continuity, including local out of hours support from a small

dedicated team of farm animal vets that know their clients, their livestock and the farming context.

The service will be available to all livestock farmers, Fram members and non-members alike, and will provide visits and veterinary services tailored to the individual farmer or smallholders' needs, including advice on herd or flock health, welfare and productivity, ultrasound scanning, assistance with farm assurance and health programmes, plus competitively priced medicines and services.

Fram Farmers livestock manager Jessica Frost will play a key role in the business. Although, this will not be run administratively from the Fram Farmers office in Framlingham, there will be desks in the office for the vets and Jess will very much remain a part of the Fram

Farmers team, bridging the gap between the two businesses and making best use of her existing member knowledge and relationships.

Fram Farm Vets is actively recruiting for two farm animal veterinary surgeons, with plans to launch the business in the new year. Any farming business or smallholder will be able to register as a client of Fram Farm Vets Ltd, however, Fram Farmer members will benefit from preferential rates and charges.

We believe Fram Farm Vets Ltd will mark a return to the traditional farmer/veterinarian relationship that puts farm animal health and welfare at its heart and is best able to deliver the Defra Animal Health and Welfare Pathway objectives.

**Further information will be shared with members in due course.** ■

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Suffolk-based family farming business Rattlerow Farms is actively looking for farmers interested in long-term pig finishing contracts.

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# Enhancing yields with improved nitrogen efficiency.

The 2023/24 season saw remarkable change – mainly out of necessity. From rotations to fungicide programmes, there have been some very significant adaptations on farms.



Adrian Whitehead

With the new urea stewardship scheme coming into force, how crops are fertilised is a key example. Here, Business Development Manager Andrew Clune together with Adrian Whitehead, farm manager at Velcourt, explore the use of the urease inhibitor, Limus<sup>®</sup>, and how its benefits go beyond yield.

“Limus<sup>®</sup> is the only available solution containing two urease inhibitors (NPPT & NBPT),” Andrew explains. “It has been proven to significantly improve yields in trials, and in the field, by independent trialists and farm businesses. The dual active technology increases efficacy by 40% which gives a 3% yield uplift over generic NBPT, and, for much needed flexibility on-farm, BASF’s patented technology allows for storage up to 12 months.”

“Importantly, the use of urease inhibitors demonstrates our collective commitment to reducing emissions – something we know politicians, regulators and other stakeholders are keen to see,” he adds.

“But using an inhibited urea on farm should be more than a box-ticking exercise – it is about maximising the nutrient potential in fertiliser while also adhering to the guidelines.”



Adrian agrees: “We feel that, in comparison with ammonium nitrate (AN), there are no downsides to it – our trials and experiences have shown that Limus<sup>®</sup> treated urea acts in a very similar manner. It fits both financially and environmentally with what we’re trying to achieve.

“Given the benefits and the early season price advantage, two thirds of our nitrogen requirements next year will be Limus<sup>®</sup>-treated urea.”

Limus<sup>®</sup> is available for both solid and liquid fertiliser through the Fram Fertiliser Desk. Limus<sup>®</sup> Perform for liquid fertiliser is added through the induction bowl before application. Limus<sup>®</sup> protected urea is granular urea that is supplied already treated with Limus<sup>®</sup>.

For more information, visit  
[agricentre.basf.co.uk/limus](http://agricentre.basf.co.uk/limus).

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# ELECTRICITY UPDATE

The energy industry has faced significant volatility in recent years, with the impacts of Covid and the Russia/Ukraine conflict causing challenges in electricity purchasing and billing. Despite this, the Fram Farmers Utilities team has consistently provided competitive pricing and helped members navigate billing issues.

Energy prices began to rise in autumn 2021, but the Fram Farmers portfolio remained protected by fixed rates until October 2022. In August 2022, electricity prices peaked at around 85p/kWh before the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provided government support. From October 2022, Fram Farmers' purchasing strategy secured an average price of 38p/kWh for the winter months, which dropped to 28p/kWh in April 2023.

Looking ahead, from October 2024, Fram Farmers members with over 4,000 electricity meters will benefit from an average price of 21p/kWh—close to pre-Russia conflict rates, with only inflationary non-commodity costs keeping prices higher. Additionally, higher standing charges are due to the government's Targeted Charging Review (TCR).

Billing issues have largely been resolved, with most discrepancies corrected through recent quarterly billing cycles. Members now receive clearer, easier-to-read bills. Despite the challenges over the past 18-22 months, more members are moving their meters to the Fram Farmers portfolio, where they are consistently quoted lower rates than elsewhere. ■



## GRANT EXPERTISE AND APPLICATIONS

We've seen significant successes with grant applications in recent years and are currently assisting members with a wide range of new applications.

The grant application process can vary greatly, and understanding and completing the required forms, along with gathering the necessary information for DEFRA, can feel overwhelming. Many members have provided positive feedback on our grants newsletters and bulletins, with a large number seeking guidance from Dan Cox.

We strongly recommend speaking with Dan Cox from the Business Services Team before starting an application. Dan's extensive knowledge and experience in securing grant funding can be invaluable in helping members submit strong applications.

Keep an eye on our weekly updates for upcoming bulletins about new grant opportunities. Guidance is included in Fram's service up to a certain point, after which it becomes a chargeable service.

For more information, contact Dan Cox: 01728 448207 | [bizservices@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:bizservices@framfarmers.co.uk) ■



Dan Cox

## Did you know?

### BIG CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT LAW ARE COMING, BUT DON'T WORRY - FRAM FARMERS HAS GOT YOUR BACK!

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- Guidance on maternity/paternity leave and all those tricky employment questions
- Training and resources to help you run your farm team more effectively

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# SUSTAINABLE FARMING INCENTIVE: INSIGHT FROM OUR SPECIALISTS

The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) in the UK represents a significant shift in agricultural policy, emphasizing sustainability, environmental stewardship, and the enhancement of natural capital. Here, seed specialist Chessie Aitchison and crop protection product manager Matthew Cobbald share their insights on the scheme, and how you can make it work for your farm business.

## MATTHEW COBBALD – AGRONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

From the perspective of agronomy and soil management, the SFI offers both opportunities and challenges that can influence long-term farm profitability. The SFI's focus on sustainable agronomy and soil management is fundamentally about enhancing the long-term resilience and productivity of the farm.



By improving soil health, reducing input dependency, enhancing biodiversity, and tapping into new markets and revenue streams, farms can achieve greater stability and profitability over time. However, the transition requires careful planning, investment, and management.

### 1. Soil Health and Fertility

- The SFI places a strong emphasis on improving soil health, which is foundational to sustainable farming. Healthy soils are more resilient, offer better water retention, and can reduce the need for synthetic inputs.
- By promoting practices that build soil organic matter and enhance microbial diversity, the SFI helps maintain or even improve long-term soil fertility. This not only sustains crop yields but can potentially increase them. Sustainable soil management practices also help build resilience against climate change.

### 2. Carbon Sequestration and Climate Resilience

- The SFI incentivises carbon sequestration through practices like agroforestry, cover cropping, and permanent pasture management. Farmers who adopt these practices could benefit financially from carbon credits, adding a new revenue stream that aligns with climate goals.

### 3. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

- The SFI encourages practices that enhance biodiversity, such as hedgerow planting, wildflower strips, and maintaining natural habitats. While these may reduce the land available for production in the short term, they can improve pollination, pest control and soil health, leading to better yields and reduced input costs over time.

### 4. Input Efficiency and Cost Management

- Sustainable farming practices often lead

to reduced dependence on chemical fertilisers and pesticides. While there may be an initial investment in learning and implementing these practices, over time, the reduction in input costs can contribute significantly to farm profitability.

### 5. Market Positioning and Consumer Demand

- SFI-aligned practices could lead to certifications or labels that differentiate products in the marketplace, adding value and enhancing profitability.

### 6. Risk Management and Compliance

- By improving soil health and implementing sustainable practices, farms can reduce the risk of environmental damage (like soil erosion or nutrient runoff), which can lead to regulatory penalties or loss of subsidies. Compliance with SFI standards helps mitigate these risks.

### 7. Challenges and Considerations

- There may be short-term costs associated with transitioning to SFI-compliant practices, such as purchasing new equipment, altering crop rotations, or investing in new knowledge and skills. However, the long-term benefits often outweigh these initial challenges as systems stabilise and crops are targeted on profitable land.

Speak to Matthew to find out more: [crop.protection@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:crop.protection@framfarmers.co.uk) | 01728 727712 ■

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## CHESSIE AITCHISON - SEED AND CROPPING

Choosing the right seed mix is like selecting the perfect playlist but for your farm – it sets the tone for biodiversity, soil health and overall sustainability. The new seed mixes have been a navigational hiccup for many farmers, so we hope that this article can help shed some light on them.

Here is a quick summary of the main schemes and the payments available for them, that require an SFI Seed Mix\*.

\*Details of schemes and payments taken from gov.uk in July 2024

### Payment per year

- SFI AHL1 Pollen and nectar flower £739/ha
- SFI AHL2 Winter bird food £853/ha
- SFI AHL3 Grassy field corners £590/ha
- AFI AHL4 Buffer strips £515/ha
- SHI IGL3 Buffer strips £235/ha
- SFI IGL2 Winter bird food on improved grassland £515/ha
- SFI IPM2 Flower rich margins £798/ha
- SFI IPM3 Companion crops £55/ha
- SFI NUM2 Legumes on improved grassland £102/ha
- SFI NUM3 Legume fallow £593/ha
- SFI SAM2 Multi species winter cover £129/ha
- SFI SAM3 Herbal Ley £382/ha

### Three most popular SFI Mixtures

**SAM3** – All about the soil, this mix brings together grasses, legumes and herbs. This diverse crowd of plants contribute to a varied root structure, helping to nitrogen fix and provide deep rooting swards. SAM3 aims to support pollinators and other beneficial insects. You can manage these herbal leys by grazing them with livestock or cutting them.

**NUM3** – this scheme looks towards the nutrient management, focusing on creating legume fallows. The NUM3 must produce flowering plants from May to August. The mix of 6 flowering legumes aims to manage nutrient efficiency and improve soil health, as well as providing food for farmland insects and birds. These mixes support integrated pest management schemes by reducing grass weeds. You ARE NOT allowed to graze or cut (except under black grass prevention strategies).

**AHL2** – This mix has goals of protecting and feeding wild birds. The aim is to provide a supply of small seed for small farmland birds, for the period in which food is short.

### Hints and tips for choosing an appropriate seed mix

- Think how long you want to have the scheme in for. Some mixes are long term leys which will have sturdy and winter hardy, returning plants. These can be used in situations where the scheme will not move around locations, such as 3-year NUM3. For SFI schemes that are being used as break crops, a six-month, annual or 2-annum mix will be more suitable and cost effective.
- Bear in mind what type of land you are on. The NUM3 scheme cannot be planted into peaty land due to fears of deep rooting legumes damaging the peat. There are also differences in the swards you should place on heavy or light land.
- Consider different plant species when cutting and grazing swards. Some plants will give a different outlook when using an SFI mix for cutting or grazing. If you want the ability to cut and graze, it is important to choose a mix that can cope with this style of management. You will also need to consider, clover or no clover, depending on the weed control.
- Drill depth should be considered once your seed is on farm. Small seed should be drilled at a shallow depth, no more



than 10mm deep and, for maximum establishment, drilled at a depth of between 2 – 3 mm.

With the popularity of SFI schemes and seed mixtures growing, there is now an abundance of seed mixture and differing opinions out there. Fram Farmers aim to get the best value seed mix for our members, spending time finding the best deals on good quality small seed, delivered on time from our preferred suppliers. We not only have a full range of premixed SFI mixtures, but also the ability to mix bespoke to suit the individual farm.

Speak to Chessie:  
seed@framfarmers.co.uk | 01728 727717

### Fram Farmers member and board member, Doug Inglis gives his view 'from the ground', with his perspective as an agronomy and farm management consultant, advising on SFIs.



SFI offers a means for businesses to generate additional income streams through the many and varied schemes, and how an individual business uses SFI will depend on particular circumstances.

There is the ability for businesses to increase their income without really affecting their rotation. There isn't a blueprint, and each business will need to consider how it uses the various options available. While it won't replace the BPS, there are some very real opportunities to bring alternative revenue streams that can make a difference, and quarterly payment can provide a welcome boost to cash flow.

With a level of flexibility, providing the opportunity to slightly adjust approaches over the three-year period, SFI represents the potential to improve soil and land management, while bringing in new revenue.



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# SAVING TIME AND REDUCING COSTS WITH FRAM BUILDING MATERIALS TEAM

**Suffolk County Council tenant farmer and Fram Farmers member of 27 years Harry Brown has made considerable savings on multiple development projects with the help of the building materials team.**

Farming 270 acres of cereals and sugarbeet, Harry purchases crop inputs, electricity and fuel through the cooperative, saving himself time and money, and simplifying the admin process. It was a side venture of property development alongside business partner Mark Stedman that saw him turn to the building materials team to achieve further efficiencies.

Harry has now been working with Mark, a builder by trade, for 12 years, under the name Harvest Homes. Together, they have developed upwards of 25 properties over ten years across rural Suffolk and Essex. The latest development, a 0.45ha site in Raydon near Hadleigh saw the construction of five three- and four-bedroom homes. They broke ground in February 2023 after a wet winter slowed down proceedings, but progress has been good since.

Sourcing block and beam flooring, concrete, drainage, blocks, bricks and insulation through Fram Farmers, as well as some timber and cladding, the ability to lean on the Fram Farmers team helped Harry to streamline his procurement for the development.

"In many ways, building and development is similar to farming, where we are having to plan ahead, battle with weather challenges and consider supply chains," explains Harry.



"Having the help and expertise of Nick Millar in the building materials team has been really beneficial; not only have we made savings of 5% overall on materials, but the simplified invoicing process has helped us monitor costs throughout the project, which is crucial."

"It's also useful to have the insight and knowledge of the industry from Nick, which helped us plan ahead, manage lead times on certain materials, and save us a considerable amount of time," he added. All properties on the Raydon development have now been sold; carpets have been fitted, and the focus is now on the landscaping, ready for the new owners to move in by Christmas. Elsewhere, Harry is currently in the process of building a timber framed property for himself, where the Fram Farmers building materials team is also proving valuable.

For any enquiries related to building materials, please contact: [building.materials@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:building.materials@framfarmers.co.uk) | 01728 727718 ■

## NEW SUPPLIER: BLAKLADER WORKWEAR



Blaklader Workwear Ltd is a Swedish company producing a high-quality range of PPE clothing, with popularity growing fast in the UK.

We are pleased to announce that Fram Farmers members can now enjoy trade terms on this excellent range of clothing, boots and gloves.

The company also leads the market in new innovations - wearers of hi-viz clothing often get 'bugged' when wearing bright colours that are attractive to insects. Blaklader has answered this with a new range of black and red workwear that conforms to PPE standards, but that is not so attractive to insects.

Now, with Fram's extensive range of suppliers we can cater from low budget to premium products to keep your workforce safe.

For more information, please contact the Fram Farmers office: 01728 727 700. ■

## Did you know?

### 10% TRADEPOINT DISCOUNT

Fram Farmers members can now order a TradePoint card to receive a 10% discount from TradePoint, B&Q's trade membership scheme.

The card can be used in-store or online, via the TradePoint website [www.trade-point.co.uk](http://www.trade-point.co.uk).



Please contact the Building Materials Team for further information and to order your card: [building.materials@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:building.materials@framfarmers.co.uk)

## WELCOMING MACHINERY BUYER DAN HEWITT

Working with a vast range of suppliers, Dan will support members in sourcing everything from machinery and equipment, to tyres, parts and servicing, even grain drying equipment or potato sacks.

"I am delighted to join the Fram Farmers machinery team. I have already met and spoken to many members, and I am looking forward to meeting and supporting many more in the coming weeks and months."

Dan works alongside Gordon, who has taken a step back but remains a part of the Fram Farmers team as strategic partnerships manager, looking after long-term supplier relationships.

For all machinery related queries, please contact: [machinery@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:machinery@framfarmers.co.uk) | 01728 727719 ■





# INTRODUCING CHARLOTTE KINSEY, NORTHWEST MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MANAGER



**Based in Cheshire, Charlotte joined Fram Farmers in June as our northwest membership development manager. Representing 100+ members in the area, Charlotte is the key point of contact for the region.**

From a farming family in the area, Charlotte is very much a part of the farming community; she is chairlady of her local Nantwich Young Farmers Club and 2023/24 Dairy Queen.

Charlotte's appointment means a dedicated Fram Farmers voice and someone local to the area who understands the local nuances, pressures and challenges. This also means Fram Farmers as a member cooperative has a local presence with suppliers, ensuring

the products and services available to members are suitable and delivering value. Charlotte speaks regularly with the Fram Farmers team in Suffolk, ensuring that member views and requirements are fed back to the wider team and board.

Very much a people person, Charlotte has already met a number of members in the northwest region, and is looking forward to continuing this in the coming months. Charlotte aims to gain a true understanding of members' businesses and form a sense of community among members in the area.

If you're a Fram Farmers member based in the northwest, please get in touch with Charlotte for a friendly chat: 07443 344471 | [charlotte.kinsey@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:charlotte.kinsey@framfarmers.co.uk) ■

## REGIONAL UPDATE IN THE NORTHWEST

Following suit from other regional forums, Fram Farmers is looking to establish a northwest group, made up of a variety of members from the area, covering different ages and farming set-ups.

Charlotte Kinsey will be involved in constructing and coordinating the group, which will be made up of around 10-12 members from the region. We are keen to ensure that a range of perceptions are represented; we are looking for constructive criticism and feedback, providing an open forum to discuss ideas and requirements.

There will also be a board meeting in the northwest in the spring, as well as a members' event, providing the opportunity for members to meet the Fram Farmers board. ■



## EXPLORING THE VITICULTURE SECTOR

**We are happy to share that Fram Farmers is currently looking into how the cooperative can support members in the viticulture and wine production sector.**

It is a rapidly expanding sector, due to the increasingly temperate UK climate, along with progression in suitable grape varieties. Not only has this enabled the UK to produce some top-quality wine, but vineyards and wineries also serve multiple other functions, including tourism, community interaction and education, offering an opportunity for diversification and expansion for rural businesses.

We are in the process of benchmarking how our services could benefit the sector, including gaining an understanding of the challenges and risks associated with diversifying into this area, as well as ongoing support for already established businesses.

If members would like to share any insight into the sector, or suggest ways in which they believe Fram Farmers could benefit wine growers and producers, please contact our membership team: [membership@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:membership@framfarmers.co.uk) ■





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