



AGRILEADER

The Leader

Business insights and advice to help you stay ahead of the curve

September 2025

Welcome to the autumn edition of *The Leader*, your go-to source for practical insights and inspiration relating to leadership in agriculture.

As we emerge from a challenging summer and testing harvest, we're focusing on the core skills that define resilient farm businesses: decision-making, negotiation and risk management.

With volatile markets, unpredictable weather and squeezed margins, these skills are more relevant than ever. Below, we focus not just on overcoming pressures but on positioning your business for a successful future.

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Leading Self: Strengthening decision-making under pressure

This year's unpredictable harvest highlighted the value of smart decision-making.

A *Forbes* article discusses insights from six decision-making experts who emphasise strategies such as rethinking risk, focusing attention, adapting proactively and fostering trust – all vital when under pressure.

On the farm, this means intentionally pausing to recalibrate, using stress tests and scenario planning to weigh up your options, and staying flexible amid uncertainty. It's about making deliberate, confident choices and not reacting as the situation unfolds.

[Read the Forbes article about making smart choices](#)

Leading People: Negotiating with courage to build stronger outcomes

In times of uncertainty and disruption, leaders who lean into courage achieve far better outcomes than those who withdraw. In a *Harvard Business Review* article, author and professor Ranjay Gulati reminds readers that “fortune favours the brave, not the cautious”.

But what does this look like in practice?

- Being prepared to initiate difficult conversations and resisting the urge to avoid short-term conflict
- Having discussions about shared values and long-term perspectives, rather than the immediate costs
- Creating trust through steadfastness under pressure, even when markets or weather test your resolve
- Embracing courage as a strategic advantage
- Negotiation isn't just about price. It's about leading with conviction, communicating clearly and taking principled positions that foster long-term trust.

[Read the full article for further insight](#)

Leading Business: Managing risk and planning for the year ahead

As many of us face harvest challenges and volatile commodity markets, risk management must be central to business planning. From forward-selling grain to hedging feed costs, the most resilient businesses use a mix of tools to manage risk and prepare in advance.

Key risk strategies you could consider this autumn include:

- Reviewing cashflow and stress-testing against different price and yield scenarios

- Exploring insurance and risk-sharing models
- Using benchmarking to understand your position
- Planning investments that reduce long-term exposure (e.g. soil health, water resilience, automation)

[Discover our risk management hub](#) and our [financial risk management tools](#)

Janet Swadling appointed Interim Chief Executive of AHDB

In August, Janet Swadling joined AHDB as Interim Chief Executive.

The appointment was made to allow for a necessary break in employment for former CEO Graham Wilkinson as he moves to a pork sector levy payer.

Janet brings more than 35 years of senior leadership experience across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

The appointment will provide continuity and focus for AHDB as we move forward with the recruitment of a permanent chief executive.

[Read more about the appointment](#)



Listen, watch, read



Listen

Because I can

Tim Bradshaw is a British army officer and Everest mountaineer. Catch up with our first ever Talking Leaders broadcast in which Tim discusses how to deal with a crisis and cope with situations where a carefully laid-out plan has been ruined by factors outside of your control.

[Catch up with the broadcast](#)



Watch

Negotiating for success

In this webinar, retail expert Ged Futter and pig farmer Charlie Thompson cover several aspects of how to negotiate for success, different techniques to try and how to plan a strategy before entering a negotiation.

[Watch the webinar recording](#)



Read

How to make business decisions

There are countless books about making better business decisions because decision-making involves a complex interplay of factors. Yet, the basics are relatively straightforward and logical.

[Read this article on how to make better business decisions](#)

Get in touch



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Talking Leaders webinar series

Last webinar: Ingo & Nina Plöger
on Local to Global Impact



Catch up with our conversation with Ingo and Nina Plöger, two of Brazil's most respected voices in agribusiness, trade and sustainable development.

[Watch the recording](#)

Next webinar: **Leading change and shaping the future of UK farming**



Join our conversation with Emily Norton, Chair of AHDB, as we discuss leadership, innovation and opportunities for UK farming.

[18 Sep – Book now](#)





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