

SUMMARY OF AHDB DAIRY BOARD MEETING HELD ON 21st NOVEMBER 2019

THE BOARD ROOM, AHDB, STONELEIGH PARK

PRESENT: Gwyn Jones (Chair), David Craven, Andrew Fletcher Oliver Hall, Liz Haines, Ian Harvey, Mary Quicke, Peter Rees Scott Shearlaw, Richard Soffe, Joe Towers

IN ATTENDANCE: Sue Cleaver (minutes), Paul Flanagan, Jenny Gibbons, Tom Hind, Jane King, Alistair McLaren, Rebecca Miah, Nic Parsons, Jamie Perry, Kate Smith, Christine Watts

WELCOME, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair, Gwyn Jones, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. There were no apologies and no new declarations of interest.

STRATEGIC DAIRY FARMS – Nic Parsons and Jamie Perry

NP updated the Board with the latest progress regarding Strategic Dairy Farm (SDF) recruitment and engagement.

The Board discussed the geographical location of the farms and the balance of Spring/Autumn/All Year Round farms. JP explained how the comms plan and structure of the new website farm excellence “hero” pages would amplify the message. This would enable farmers and growers to follow the journeys of the SDFs and access information easily without necessarily attending a SDF meeting.

The Board highlighted the need to ensure that the facilitators/KE team received good support and training so that they could run effective sessions. This would be covered further on the January agenda.

The Chair thanked the team for the good progress that had been made.

SS highlighted the need for a successful programme in Scotland. NP confirmed that work was in progress to ensure that the Scottish SDF’s were in place.

In order for the SDF programme to work as a farmer engagement platform, all the existing farms needed to be up and running on the website as a priority. They could then be used to develop rich stories, act as a platform and a focus for discussion, work as an enabling tool for farmer to farmer learning, disseminate information, and ultimately help the Dairy industry learn and move forward.

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 26th SEPTEMBER 2019

The minutes from the meeting held on 26th September 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON 26th SEPTEMBER

The Board expressed their concerns regarding the interaction of the Livestock Information Service with the systems used within the Devolved Administrations. They also noted the importance of informing and allowing farmers enough time to buy compatible EID tags.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT



The Board dinner had been attended by Rebecca Geraghty (Chief Technical Officer) and Jon Foot (Head of Environment and Resource Management).

The Board discussed the announcement from Board Bia and TEAGASC that all dairy calves in Ireland must be reared.

CEO UPDATE

JK updated the Board with the latest corporate developments. Headline results from the Defra Request for Views (RFV) would be shared in early December with staff and Sector Board members at the same time. The results would be discussed in detail at the January Board meeting. The delay to the results of the RFV and the timing of purdah and the general election had resulted in a delay to the appointment of a new AHDB Chair to replace Peter Kendal. This would also impact on the timing of the strategy work, and the appointment of replacement sector board chairs.

DIRECTOR'S AND OPERATIONAL REPORT

The Operational report was discussed. The “amber” status items were examined and discussed. MQ requested that “1.1 Improve business performance” was split out so that it did not show as “amber”, but rather “green” for SDF progress and “red” for Farmbench.

2.3b BVD was marked as “green” but only had 25% progress.

MARKETING AND REPUTATION UPDATE – Christine Watts and Rebecca Miah

RM and CW updated the Board on the latest marketing developments including the Department of Dairy Related Scrumptious Affairs, digital work, search engine optimisation, pre-competitive work with Board Bia, Food Advisory Board launch, Ordinary Foods Project, segmentation work with Kantar data and other developments. The Board were enthused with all the progress and work that was taking place.

Year 3 of the Department of Dairy Related Scrumptious Affairs was continuing to deliver versus targets. Dairy UK, who had supported years 1 and 2, were in the process of reviewing their funding mechanism, and unable to support year 3 at this time. The Board discussed in detail the pros and cons of the various options open to them, examining finances and reputational impacts. Without Dairy UK’s financial input, it was possible to continue the campaign, but there was not sufficient funding to cover PR costs. (See AOB). **It was agreed that AHDB would continue funding the campaign on its own for year 3, and then review options going forward.**

STRATEGY SESSION

TH introduced the strategy discussion. Key measures of success would include satisfaction amongst levy payers and return of investment for levy. The leadership team were seeking a clear direction from the Boards on priority areas of delivery.

PF went through the strategy areas previously discussed, to check that the Board views were reflected accurately. He would then take this iteration to the functional directors, and begin the process of allocating finance, which would be presented and signed off at the March Board.

Business: The Board had been clear around Farmbench - to get traction and to provide value for farmers, especially the middle 50%, and focus on having a Dairy KPI engine online by the end of January. Comms and messaging were important, as well as working across industry and with Defra and Devolved Governments to make this a success.

Technical: Several Board members were keen to include education and colleges work (as part of “Prepare industry for change”). It was suggested that Tess Howe be invited to the January or March Board to discuss her College Partnership work.



The Board discussed how to communicate the technical outputs. For the KE team the immediate priority was to recruit SDFs and get them up and running with common protocols. The second priority was to promote and engage industry with online KPI tools to increase business resilience. Underpinning these priorities was the comms amplification work that JP had detailed (agenda item 2).

ODS: The Board discussed whether Optimal Dairy Systems (ODS) should be included specifically in the top-line bullet points, or whether it was taken as implicit within the next level of detail. OH noted that he did not want to see ODS dropped from key priorities.

Environment: This had been discussed at dinner with the new Head of Environment and Resource Management Jon Foot. It was important for AHDB to tie in with industry and the NFU, to come up with a joint plan and way forward. AHDB could help identify opportunities to reduce environmental impact on farm, and help identify environmental benefits on farm.

Domestic and Reputation: There were areas in which consumers have trust issues that the industry needed to address. Some of the focus would be on environmental benchmarking. The Board were in agreement with the wording in the strategy document.

International: The Board were in agreement with the priorities they had previously set for international.

BULL CALVES AND PROGRESSIVE WELFARE – JENNY GIBBONS

JG updated the Board on a stakeholder meeting that had taken place in October, facilitated by CW, to tackle the issue of dairy sired bull calves. At this meeting a general consensus was reached; that the industry needs to commit to *rearing all calves with care and end the euthanasia of calves by 2023*. The Board discussed the next steps that JG proposed, including timelines and responsibilities, potential consequences, the role of Red Tractor, and the role of AHDB. JG proposed a working group that partnered with the NFU to investigate the next steps. GJ had offered to join the working group, and JG also welcomed any board members who wanted to contribute. JG was tasked with scoping the next steps further.

JG presented the Board with an early stage concept note for a progressive higher welfare scheme that would encourage higher standards, recognise additional effort on-farm and communicate positive change. The proposal was that a higher voluntary assurance standard that is system-neutral, open to all, and encompasses key indicators of health and welfare outcomes would provide this opportunity. The Board discussed how this would fit within current standards, implications for use by retailers, concerns regarding AHDB's role, and the various interdependencies within industry, and Red Tractor. There was no clear agreement of a way forward. JG was asked to work further on the concept until there was alignment within AHDB, and the issue would be revisited in the future.

DC highlighted the need for an offer to the top 25% of farmers, as well as catering for the middle 50%. The top 25% were keen to continue pushing forward.

AOB

The Board discussed the £200k contingency budget and underspend in a number of functions.

Electronic Board packs: From January 2020 it was confirmed that Board papers would be paperless and be available on an on-line portal. To support this, all members gave approval for their email addresses to be held by a 3rd part to facilitate this.

A Dairy Board member was required for the GrowSave Committee. IH was already on the committee for a different role. It was agreed that he would represent the Dairy Board.

The Chair thanked the Board for their attendance, and closed the meeting at 14:35.

