

SUMMARY OF AHDB DAIRY BOARD MEETING HELD ON 26th SEPTEMBER BY TELECONFERENCE

PRESENT: Gwyn Jones (Chair), David Craven, Andrew Fletcher Oliver Hall, Liz Haines, Ian Harvey, Mary Quicke, Peter Rees Scott Shearlaw, Richard Soffe, Joe Towers, Adam Quinney (from 11:40am)

IN ATTENDANCE: Sue Cleaver (minutes), Paul Flanagan, Christine Watts

WELCOME, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair, Gwyn Jones, opened the call at 10:00 am and welcomed those in attendance. There were no new declarations of interest.

DAIRY SECTOR PLAN DISCUSSION

PF introduced the dairy sector plan discussion which would consider a) what would be different from the current strategy, b) when should the changes be delivered (urgency level), c) what KPIs should be used to measure success. These outputs would then be discussed with the AHDB senior team in order to develop high level activity plans. The consolidated version would be presented at the next Board meeting on November 21st.

The Board discussed the six strategy areas in turn:

BUSINESS

The Board considered the role that benchmarking will play in Dairy. There was concern expressed that the full Farmbench for Dairy was too complex, and that it had not been delivered on time for the Dairy sector. It was noted that the Crops side of Farmbench had been successfully rolled out.

There was a detailed discussion on what would be the best way forward, and it was agreed that getting the Dairy KPIs online should be the key priority. They should link to the KPIs used by Strategic Dairy Farms. The Board agreed to park work on full Farmbench for Dairy for the present.

To take this forward it was agreed to form a working subgroup of David Craven, Oliver Hall and Scott Shearlaw, and AHDB staff, who would provide clarity around the KPIs, and ensure that the resulting software was easy to use. The process to get to the KPIs should not be onerous, and user experience was key. The Board highlighted the need to focus on what Dairy needs right now, and to deliver the project on time.

TECHNICAL

The Board were positive about the direction of travel for Strategic Dairy Farms, genetics and genomics. They wanted to ensure there was a method of linking research back in to the Strategic Dairy Farms, with more integration of research and Knowledge Exchange. There was a recognition that the calf to calving programme was excellent, and an interest in exploring LEAN and waste management within Dairy.

The Board highlighted the benefits of discussion groups, which were highly valued by levy payers.

The current 5 year research plan would finish in May 2021. The view was that future research should either have reputational merit or be able to be demonstrated on a Strategic Dairy Farm.

ENVIRONMENT



DAIRY

The Board discussed environmental benchmarking. There was potential to link with NFU's Net Zero ambitions, and with processors who were also developing their environmental plans. Advice was required for farmers on environmental impact of farming practices, and also assisting farmers in accessing the environmental land payment with cumulative better cost management year on year for the environment.

There were differing views from the Board as to the need for further research to underpin environmental and reputational claims. However, the majority agreed that credible evidence was required, either by utilising current research, commissioning further research, using Strategic Dairy Farms, or accessing data from other organisations. There was an urgency within Defra and Welsh Government to find opportunities to sustain support to industry on the back of climate change mitigation. There would be a global research effort to find solutions, and AHDB should remain nimble with its ability to literature review current research.

It was important not to lose focus on productivity, which was also an agent of reduced environmental impact.

REPUTATION AND DOMESTIC MARKETING

The Board were in agreement that a 'protect and promote' approach to marketing and reputation was needed, rather a purely defensive plan. The Board discussed how to encourage farmers to engage with social media, and whether the Strategic Dairy Farms could be utilised from a reputational point of view. The Board gave strong support to the domestic marketing campaign which was popular with levy payers.

The Board discussed the need to provide fully evidenced, up to date facts, (e.g. on methane, carbon sequestration), versus doing the actual research. AHDB could work in partnership with other Dairy industries across the world and collate evidence where research has already taken place.

INTERNATIONAL

The majority of the Dairy Board did not want a change to the current approach, and proposed keeping this under review for the medium term. There was a need to be agile due to the potential impact of political changes. The international work should not be undersold, for example, there was a role played by recently supporting an inspection from China.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Chair highlighted the need for the strategy to be clearly written, without jargon.

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH JULY 2019

The minutes from the meeting held on 24TH July 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

PF presented an update on the matters arising from the meeting held on the 24th July 2019.

RS requested feedback on the progress AHDB was making with working colleges and trying to get agriculture into school careers programmes. This had been discussed at the Main Board and the Chair would report back to the Dairy Board.

DIRECTOR'S AND OPERATIONAL REPORT

PF presented the Director's and Operational report. It was noted that 1.1 Improve Business Performance was amber as it was a consolidation of Strategic Dairy Farm progress (green) and Farmbench (red).



FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The latest management accounts were discussed. The main variance was due to a funding delay in Wales which therefore impacted on expenditure.

AOB

Comms: PR raised the point that if a farmer had missed a meeting, there should be an easy way to find out what had taken place. The Cereals team had a process in which the Knowledge Exchange manager wrote a one pager within a week of a meeting, that then went onto the website. The Board discussed the need to amplify the message from every single Strategic Dairy Farm event. PF is currently in discussions with the KE and Comms teams on this.

PR highlighted the quality of the team presenting at the Welsh Strategic Dairy Farm launch, and requested that the Welsh delivery team present to the Board to maintain a connection with developments in Wales.

Finance and Hypothecation Committee: OH informed the Board that the Finance and Hypothecation Committee would no longer continue to meet on a regular basis. It had been originally set up to examine the allocation of the core costs of AHDB and give reassurance and confidence to the Boards. This was now well established and understood.

Livestock Information Programme: Adam Quinney, Chair of the Beef and Lamb Board, joined the teleconference to discuss the added value components of the Livestock Information Service. It was important that the Beef and Lamb Board and the Dairy Board take a view on what the priorities should be.

PR requested a briefing of what the opportunities and potentials were before any decisions were made. He had received a briefing about the Welsh equivalent system. AQ agreed that it was crucial to work with both Wales and Scotland to ensure that the calculations were the same. A joint meeting for all livestock boards was taking place on the 20th November. AQ requested that the Dairy Board formed a working group to consider their priorities before this meeting.

The Chair thanked the Board for their attendance, and closed the meeting at 12:00.

