

# All things DAIRY

YOUR AHDB DAIRY UPDATE

AHDB



Spring 2019



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## Farmbench

**Third-generation mixed farmer Jill Bathgate runs an arable, dairy and sheep enterprise in Midlothian. Jill already uses Farmbench for her arable and sheep businesses but now plans to add dairy figures too.**

“I am excited about being able to benchmark the whole farm using one piece of software; the addition of dairy will mean I can take a more joined-up approach,” said Jill.

Data can be entered into Farmbench at any time to fit best around each

farm business; for Jill, this is at the end of the year, coinciding with planning for the year ahead.

“I use Farmbench figures in discussions with my accountant and bank manager, as they give a good overview of where the business is at and whether we have achieved the goals we set out for that year. I can also use the figures to highlight what we want to achieve in the following year.”

Benchmarking can highlight areas that may not be performing as well as they could, by analysing figures from similar set-ups and understanding

why and how they are achieving what they are.

“The beauty of Farmbench is its ability to pinpoint what is working and what is not, and where I should focus my resources to make the whole business work better.”

Farmbench is a user-friendly, intuitive, online tool that helps you understand and compare your costs. Find out more at [ahdb.org.uk/farmbench](http://ahdb.org.uk/farmbench)



Jill Bathgate

“ I am excited about being able to benchmark the whole farm using one piece of software; the addition of dairy will mean I can take a more joined-up approach ”

## Paving the way for dairy export markets

Exports of cheese from the UK continue to grow, with total figures up 23% in 2017 to over £615 million. AHDB has been working hard to open up new export opportunities and help dairy market opportunities.

Our ‘Country Insight Reports’ expose key consumer eating habits and buying behaviour within target markets. The reports provide valuable insight into how the UK can grow its dairy exports, focusing on China, USA and Japan.

The reports are a valuable source of information for industry and will help to better understand various global food trends, eating behaviours and purchasing decisions.

We’ve also been working hard to grow our presence at major export shows across the world. Our Exports team returned to both FHC China and the SIAL Paris Show for a third

consecutive year in 2018, with our biggest presence ever on the British Pavilion – including collaborative stands with UK exporters and producers.

Six dairy exporters from the UK joined us to showcase their high-quality products, including cheese, butter, milk and cream, at this year’s FHC China – one of Asia’s most influential shows. Additionally, a selection of dairy produce took centre stage at the SIAL Paris Show – where 15 producers joined us at the British Dairy Pavilion for the five-day event.

Attending these key industrial shows means we can further develop our already impressive export figures.

Find out more about AHDB Exports at: [ahdb.org.uk/exports](http://ahdb.org.uk/exports)





Paul Flanagan,  
Sector Strategy Director – Dairy

## Welcome to the spring update

**It is good when someone tells you they like what you do. It is even better when they are prepared to fund your work to help it grow to a new level.**

Our Strategic Dairy Farm (SDF) network got going just over a year ago, with an initial commitment for AHDB to fund the set-up of nine strategic farms across Britain, covering all year round and block calving systems. The aim of the network is to showcase best practice, share key performance data and accelerate farmer-to-farmer learning.

As well as nearly 1,000 farmers attending the SDF meetings we held in 2018, a large number of people from a range of organisations came along to see what we are doing. Following this, two bodies saw real benefit and have now committed to further funding over the next five years.

The Welsh Government is funding the expansion of our SDF initiative across Wales, as well as putting money behind herd health planning and monitoring.

In addition, we have just finalised an agreement with the Betty Lawes Foundation, the charitable arm of dairy nutrition global leaders Volac, to fund additional SDFs in England and Scotland.

These relationships with the Welsh Government and the Betty Lawes Foundation, and the funding they have provided, will give us a valuable platform to expand our Strategic Dairy Farm network from our original target of 9 farms to 25 farms across Britain in the near future. The support and trust that these organisations have placed in SDFs provides us with the opportunity to set up a large network of that will improve the resilience and profitability of the British dairy sector.



## Genomic indexes stand the test of time

A study of Holstein dairy sires has confirmed that genomic indexes are a remarkably reliable predictor of actual daughter performance. The study provides reassurance to the thousands of UK dairy producers who select service sires on the strength of an index based on their DNA.

The study included every genomic sire marketed in the UK in August 2014 and compared its genomic index at that time with its daughter-proven index in August 2018.

Some 7,745 bulls were included in the analysis, which showed there was little difference between their average genomic index in 2014 and their proven index today.

Correlation figures for all traits were generally considered high, and most individual bulls' indexes were close to their former prediction.

A second analysis of a smaller sub-set of bulls, which now have far more daughters, showed exactly the same pattern. This gives further reassurance that, as large numbers of daughters finally contribute to a bull's index later in life, their indexes are still unlikely to see much change on average from their initial genomic predictions.

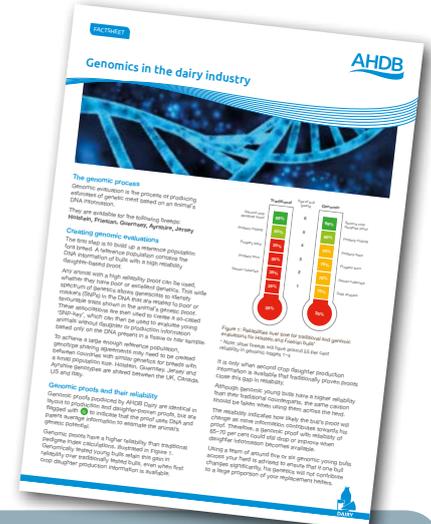
We were confident in the system when we launched genomic indexes in the UK in 2012, and this analysis confirms the reliability of the techniques we used.

Teaming up with the USA, Canada and Italy to provide one of the largest reference populations in the world, helped ensure the reliability of the UK indexes.

All UK genomic indexes are now calculated in this country by AHDB Dairy, and the findings in this study indicate that farmers can feel reassured that UK genomic indexes have proven to be among the most stable and reliable in the world.



Marco Winters,  
Head of Animal Genetics –  
AHDB Dairy



### Genomics Factsheet

Download our genomics factsheet to learn more about its benefits:  
[ahdb.org.uk/genomics-factsheet](http://ahdb.org.uk/genomics-factsheet)

A message brought to you by



The Department  
of Dairy Related  
Scrumptious Affairs

# DAIRY MARKETING HITS THE BIG SCREEN

The Department of Dairy Related Scrumptious Affairs has taken over the big screen, as a second year of the successful campaign kicked off last month.

Cinema advertising has been used for the first time in our joint £1.2 million consumer marketing campaign with Dairy UK.

The decision to take over the big screen comes from the campaign's continual targeting of millennials and young parents. The spoof organisation uses mouthwatering taste messages to remind consumers about their love for dairy and it's nutritional value.

The new promotional activity also includes videos on social media and on-demand TV, alongside refreshed billboard posters at busy city sites.

In its first year, the tongue-in-cheek campaign created fictional jobs within 'The Department', including 'Minister for Milk', 'Director of Cheese' and 'Chief Yogurt Officer'.

Great British Bake Off winner Ed Kimber was appointed as 'Head of Butter', helping to drive 19 million interactions on social media, and 14 million people were reached through traditional advertising.

Attitudinal research conducted after the first year of activity showed that 8% of the target audience were less likely to cut down their dairy intake and 11% were less likely to replace dairy with alternatives.

"We know that people really enjoyed the tongue-in-cheek humour from the first year campaign. The next phase builds upon that success and introduces new ways in which dairy can be enjoyed, on iconic poster sites and social media activity", said Rebecca Miah, AHDB head of dairy and crops marketing.

## FIRST YEAR RESULTS:

**5.3m**  
views of  
on-demand TV

**100%**  
**POSITIVE**  
sentiment 

**17.3m**  
social  
media reach 

**1.5m**  
FOLLOWERS

**7.23m**  
impressions

**2.6m**  
display  
impacts

Don't forget to follow Department of Dairy Related Scrumptious Affairs on Facebook and Instagram.



**BE SCRUMPTIOUS**



Rebecca Miah,  
Head of crops & dairy marketing

## Telling dairy's story

Nothing seems as contentious right now as the dairy debate on social media. Frequently, farmers feel under attack for simply providing nutritious, delicious products that are the mainstay of our diets.

It can feel a lonely place and lead to negative interactions on social media that are emotionally damaging to those on both sides of the argument, and also to people 'watching' the conversations. The majority of consumers still buy and adore the taste of dairy, but being onlookers in a polarised debate can easily damage trust.

“Dairy is and remains the market leader, we should remember this and act accordingly, telling our own positive story, rather than being drawn into an unproductive debate by a small but vocal minority”

Plant-based alternatives are in growth but with a lower repeat purchase than dairy, and are often eaten with a dairy product too. They are adding excitement and innovation to the category, which isn't always a bad thing because it encourages dairy brands to evolve too.

It's important not to disregard the negative voices, but instead reframe this as our social conscience and recognise what the industry is doing to protect future generations.

AHDB and Dairy UK promote the positives of dairy via The Department of Dairy Related Scrumptious Affairs, which has seen significant reductions in those seeking to reduce their dairy intake and switch to alternatives.

Dairy UK speaks to 'tribes' of consumers such as gym goers, teenage girls, young parents, etc. about the importance and facts of dairy nutrition. They also ensure that healthcare professionals are educated about the importance of dairy in the diet.

AHDB works via the Global Dairy Platform to tell the story of dairy farming worldwide, linking influencers with farmers, to counter some of the myths and give farming a face.

We are also myth busting on social media, together with other industry bodies, we manage communications cohesively when a 'bad news' story breaks.

But we do need to listen and work on some of the issues, such as bull calves being dispatched. This isn't comfortable for consumers or farmers alike, and is something our industry is trying to address.

If we all do the best job we can, then the majority of consumers trust us and enjoy our products. So, remember that we speak to and for the majority. Be proud every day of the work you do, tell your story in your own way, to the watchers, not the shouters.

“Be proud every day of the work you do”

**98%**  
of households  
consume dairy

**4%**  
dairy growth  
in the last  
5 years

**64%**  
of all food occasions  
include dairy

**0.5%**  
of the population  
are vegan

**£10.5 billion**  
is spent on dairy  
products annually



William Baillie

## Pushing up herd productivity

**Willie Baillie farms in Lanarkshire, Scotland, and joined the strategic farm network in 2018. By making changes to his nutrition and herd genomics, he aims to increase his lifetime milk yield from 11,400 litres to 12,000 litres.**

Together with independent nutritionist Hugh Kerr, Willie has been reviewing his nutrition management. They identified three key changes that improved the dry matter intake of his herd of 310 pedigree Holsteins. In just a few weeks, he saw his milk yields increase by 1.5 litres per cow; here's how:

### Soaking concentrates

"We have good evidence that adding water to a ration that is 40–45% dry matter will give you more milk from the same feed," explained Hugh.

"Soaking concentrates seemed likely to fix our sorting and, hopefully, increase cudding, which we all know is vital," added Willie.

Explaining the decision, Hugh said, "It means cows don't have to visit the water trough as often and will eat bigger meals if they are already wet. Cows spend more time lying down, which is when the milk is being produced, hence improved yields."

### Changing the diet

Willie has also tried to make starch feeding as rumen-friendly as possible. Instead of feeding a rolled cereal, he is now feeding a wholegrain wheat which has been treated with caustic soda.

"The particle size of the wholegrain is bigger, which improves digestion by taking longer to work through the rumen," Hugh explains.

"Treating it with caustic soda raised the pH to approximately nine, which helps ensure there is no acidity or inflammation of the gut."

In general, Hugh's first priority is ensuring that the cows are getting enough dry matter, as there can be a lot of variation between farms.

“ We need to spend more time monitoring what is going in, rather than focusing on what is coming out ”

"You should always review what you are feeding regularly; what worked well at the start of winter won't necessarily work well by the end."

### Feeding more than once a day

Feeding more than once a day can also increase yield, as Hugh describes, "all the trial work I have been involved with suggests that moving to twice a day feeding will improve dry matter intake by 10–15%, which can increase yields."

For Willie's system, feeding once a day and pushing up six times has kept his yields high, but other farmers have seen real improvements simply by going from feeding once to twice a day.

Willie is already seeing good results after tweaking his feeding system, but he hopes there is more to come when he looks more closely at his herd genomics.

### Could you be our next Strategic Dairy Farm?

We're building our strategic farm network and are looking for passionate farmers who will be open, receptive and willing to share best practice to get involved.

If you are a top performer, operating either a tight block (autumn or spring) or all year round calving system, then it could be you. To find out more, go to [ahdb.org.uk/optimal-dairy-systems](https://ahdb.org.uk/optimal-dairy-systems)

## New targets for the top farms

You can now benchmark yourself against the top 5% of farms, following an update to our key performance indicators (KPIs).

The addition of this new category to the existing bands for the top 25% and industry average farms enables you to see how you compare with others and identify areas for improvement.

The KPIs have also been refreshed using the latest data and include changes to the definitions and calculations, following discussions with farmers and industry consultants.

Mark Topliff, AHDB lead analyst, said: "We listened to feedback from our strategic farm meetings, plus consultants from across the industry, and updated the KPIs to make sure they are relevant to all and stretch the best."

The KPIs are split into six physical measures for each calving system, as well as three financial measures, which are applicable to both calving systems.

As well as other changes, the 'income retained' KPI has now been replaced with the 'full economic net margin'. In addition, 'total purchased feed costs' now excludes forage and youngstock feed.

The KPIs form part of our optimal dairy systems programme, which is encouraging farmers to focus on either all year round or blocking calving.

"Our updated KPIs enable farmers to review their performance, identify areas for improvement and make changes to ensure they're performing well for years to come," concluded Mark.

See how you compare, visit our website to find out more: [ahdb.org.uk/optimal-dairy-systems-kpi](http://ahdb.org.uk/optimal-dairy-systems-kpi)



# News from across AHDB

## Latest updates on our new website

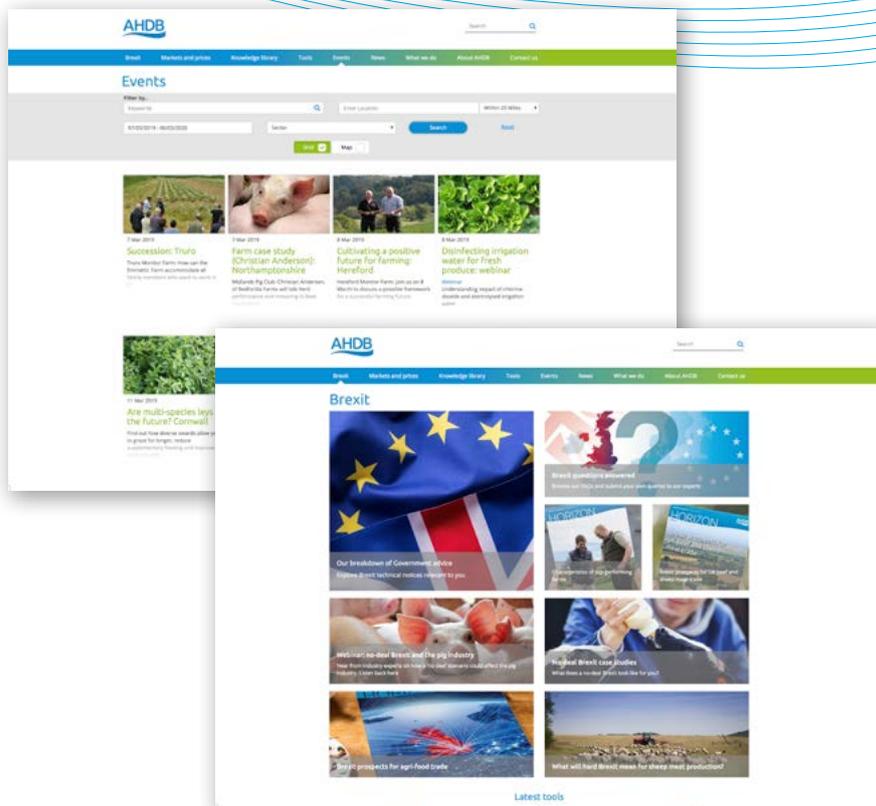
Our new events portal now makes it even easier to find events in your area. It's a one-stop shop with events across all farming sectors, so you can find those relevant and local to you.

The events portal forms part of a wider project to move content from our current website to a new cross-sector site, making our resources more accessible.

You can also check out our new Brexit page, where you can access a range of useful tools, calculators, expert advice and our latest Horizon reports, in one convenient place.

All the usual dairy information is still available at [dairy.ahdb.org.uk](http://dairy.ahdb.org.uk) and we'll keep you updated as we move information across to the new site.

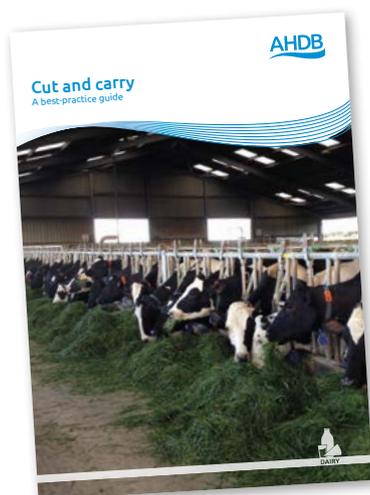
Discover more at [ahdb.org.uk](http://ahdb.org.uk)



## New cut and carry guide

Our new cut and carry guide provides best-practice advice for understanding cut and carry systems and how it could benefit you. Could cut and carry be for you?

Download the guide at [ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library](http://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library)



## Food: a fact of life

In partnership with the British Nutrition Foundation, we've launched a new education website, Food: A Fact of Life, which makes it easier for teachers to find over 2,000 classroom-ready resources.



Find out more at: [foodafactoflife.org.uk](http://foodafactoflife.org.uk)

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