

ALL ABOUT Scotland

YOUR BIENNIAL AHDB UPDATE

AHDB

Autumn/Winter 2018



**New programme
aims to *cut costs*
and *increase profits***

Page 4



Trial results discussed at SPot Scotland summer open days

Page 6



Monitor Farm Scotland driving technical and business improvements

Page 7



Seed potato varieties approved for export to Kenya

Page 8

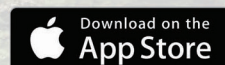
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Scotland Director &
Sector Strategy Director - Dairy

Welcome

This is our very first issue of All About Scotland, which gives you a short, snappy summary of our current projects in Scotland.

This summer, the team has been incredibly busy, working largely with partner farms. We know farmers learn best from each other and so these collaborations are very important to AHDB in Scotland.

As you'll see, our Monitor Farm Scotland project, focusing on arable, beef and sheep enterprises, which we run with QMS, is gathering pace. All nine farms are working on business and technical improvements, supported by their community groups.

To offer similar support to the dairy sector, we have just launched our first Strategic Dairy Farm in Scotland (based in Lanarkshire), which aims to drive cutting-edge science into commercial practice, and are now on the lookout for another Scottish host farm – please get in touch if you are interested.

Another of our most successful initiatives – the Scottish Dairy Hub – (funded in partnership with the Scottish Government) has also been busy, visiting agricultural shows across Scotland, taking in more enquiries than ever and supporting mentoring schemes in the south-west.

On the potato front, we have once more been a key partner of the brilliant Potatoes in Practice, as well as holding a number of open days on our Strategic Potato Farm in Perthshire to discuss the results of some of their trials on key issues including cultivations, nutrition and cover crops.

Horticulture is also an important area for us, of course, heavily focused on technical areas such as EAMUs and research. Our work is shaped not only by our Horticulture Board but also our grower panels and we are currently looking for new members – please get involved if you can and make a difference.



“ My remit as Scotland Director is to make sure that our farmers and growers here are getting as much as possible from their levy ”

Of course, we have many other activities which aim to support the agriculture sector, including our market insight and analysis, research and development and education and skills programme (check out our website to find out more – ahdb.org.uk).

Our industry will experience significant change over the coming years and you will want to make your business as resilient as possible against exposure to fluctuating prices, currency swings, adverse weather and other unplanned events.

Farmbench is a web-based tool developed by AHDB that allows you to

input your own data and importantly split your costs between all the enterprises on your farm. It is currently being used by arable and livestock farmers and is being rolled out to dairy farmers in November.

Please read on for more information on what we're doing and do feedback. My remit as Scotland Director is to make sure that our farmers and growers here are getting as much as possible from their levy. so I urge you to contact me (ScotlandDirector@ahdb.org.uk) if you have any suggestions, ideas or concerns – we are listening!

New programme aims to cut costs and increase profits

Over 70 farmers and industry representatives attended the recent launch of our first Strategic Dairy Farm in Scotland; Hillhead of Covington, hosted by William Baillie and family.

At the meeting, AHDB Dairy Strategy and Scotland Director, Paul Flanagan, described the aims of the new initiative.

He said: "The Strategic Dairy Farm programme gives farmers the opportunity to compare their own businesses, both physically and financially, against performance measures from other farms and target areas to improve their own results.

"Through the programme, AHDB aims to harness the benefits of 'farmer-to-farmer' learning, improve dairy farmers' business resilience and help them to remain competitive and sustainable over the long term."

AHDB currently has six strategic dairy farms across Britain, all of which will spend the next three years benchmarking their performance against specific key performance indicators (KPIs). The KPIs have been developed by AHDB and are tailored to block and all-year-round calving systems.

Like the other host farmers, William has measured Hillhead's performance and is planning on focusing on genetics and nutrition to boost their performance in specific areas.



“ Through the programme, AHDB aims to harness the benefits of 'farmer-to-farmer' learning, improve dairy farmers' business resilience and help them to remain competitive and sustainable over the long-term ”

He says: "I'd like to see a reduction in our total feed costs, which at the moment are just under 10p per litre of milk produced, and ideally also increase litres from forage to 4,000.

Fixed costs are also a challenge. At the moment, we are sitting at 38% fixed costs as a proportion of income, which is pretty much average, but if we could

find a way to reduce that a little that would be great."

William will be publicly sharing his journey through a series of meetings over the next three years to encourage other local farmers to make similar improvements to their own businesses. The next meeting at Hillhead will be on 4 December.

Fast facts about our new Strategic Dairy Farmer

Name: William Baillie

Farm: Hillhead of Covington, Lanarkshire

Livestock: 310 pedigree Holsteins

Management: All-year-round housed herd, milked 3x daily

Land: 159 hectares

Yield: 11,591 yield: 3.82% fat, 3.11% protein





AHDB welcomes new dairy manager

Chris Stockwell recently joined AHDB's team in Scotland as a Knowledge Exchange Manager for the dairy sector.

Chris, who most recently worked as a nutritionist with East Coast Viners, has over 20 years' experience working in the agriculture sector. Having gained a degree in Agriculture from Myerscough College he worked on dairy farms in Lancashire, Cheshire and Jersey before moving to Scotland in 2005 and accepting a role with Scotland's Rural College. He remained with the College for over a decade employed latterly as the Head of Agriculture and Business Management.

“our new combined approach will give the team greater momentum”

Chris's role at AHDB will involve working directly with farmers to help them improve their business and technical practices, and it's a challenge he relishes.

He says: “AHDB has a wealth of knowledge to share, whether that is on

research and development, business and skills or market insight and my aim is to get that knowledge onto as many farms as possible across the country, working with farmers to make genuine improvements to their businesses and the wider industry”

There are other changes afoot for the Scottish team, alongside Chris's appointment. Claire Hodge has been promoted to Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager for the arable sector widening her remit to include cereals. She will be supported by a second Knowledge Exchange Manager, also working with the potato and cereals sectors. Recruitment for this role is underway.

AHDB will also soon welcome another new team member based in Scotland who will focus on helping farmers compare and contrast their costs locally and nationally using benchmarking tool Farmbench.

AHDB Scotland Director Paul Flanagan says: “In order to best support farmers and growers across Scotland, we need great quality people in our team and I am delighted that we have been able to make these appointments.



“On the arable side, our new combined approach will give the team greater momentum, particularly in vital areas such as benchmarking, soil management and working with agronomists. Claire is an asset to AHDB and I'm sure she will continue to excel in this new role.

“I'm also very pleased to welcome Chris on board. Having seen him in action already at the launch of our Strategic Dairy Farm near Biggar, I can see that his experience and commitment will help us strengthen our support to the Scottish dairy sector.”

Chris Stockwell
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Scottish Dairy Hub looks to the future

It's been more than four years since the Scottish Dairy Hub was founded, with funding from AHDB Dairy and the Scottish Government, and for the man at the helm, Stuart Martin, those years have flown by.

Stuart says, “It's incredible actually, how we've grown over the years and the genuine differences we've been able to make. Year on year we have been taking on more work, dealing with more and more enquiries, which I think shows not only that we're doing a good job, but that this service is really helpful to the sector.”

At its heart the Hub is a signposting service, providing answers to questions from dairy farmers on a diverse range of issues.

As Stuart explains: “For example I might have directed them to a grant scheme which has allowed them to invest and grow their business, or I have helped them find a new staff member.

“We get a huge range of questions every week and they very much reflect the current climate. For example when the milk price drops, questions often relate to contracts, while we have seen a marked increase in calls about labour since the EU referendum.”

Farmers can place their question to the Hub via scottishdairyhub.org.uk or by email info@scottishdairyhub.org.uk or through a dedicated phone line: 03454 755110.

“At its heart the Hub is a signposting service, providing answers to questions from dairy farmers on a diverse range of issues”





Trial results discussed at SPot Scotland summer open days

Over the summer, farmer and industry groups have been visiting our Strategic Potato Farm in Perthshire, keen to find out about the ongoing trials.

As well as the annual open day, which attracted over 70 farmers, the farm welcomed a number of other groups including the NFUS, representatives from Greenvale and Tesco, the Pre-Basic Growers Association and a group of Latvian potato producers.

All attendees were updated on current on-farm trials, which focus on cultivations, cover crops, nutrition and seed sourcing and spacing, and their feedback is key to the success of the project.

Claire Hodge, AHDB Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager, explains: "It's really important to us not only to listen to industry but to then use that feedback to shape the project.

"Last year, we trialled a triple bed tiller as part of our work on cultivations due to suggestions from producers and it gave us the highest marketable yield of all the different treatments. We're using it again this year to see if we can replicate that success."

SPot Farm host Bruce Farms are also looking at whether they can reduce the nitrogen applied to the crop, particularly at top dressing.

Bruce Farms Manager Kerr Howatson says: "Nutrition is a key area of research for us. We spend a lot of money on fertiliser and blight chemicals every year, so finding a way of trimming that successfully without increasing the risk is really helpful.

"Last year, we found that we could remove the nitrogen top dress completely and actually improve marketable yield; it'll be interesting to see how this year's hot, dry weather has affected things."

AHDB Potatoes' SPot Farms are used to drive research in to practice through the demonstration of cutting-edge techniques – appropriate to the region and market sector – in a commercial-scale growing environment. SPot Farm Scotland will run for three years and is funded by the Scottish Government.

For Kerr the focus is really all about reducing costs. He says: "If we can get bigger yields, if we can get better quality, if we can reduce our costs without compromising quality or yield, then that's what we are looking for."

The results from the 2018 trials will be released in early 2019.

Future of the potato industry debated at Potatoes in Practice

Potatoes in Practice one again attracted over 750 visitors, thanks to its mix of trade stands, trial plots, machinery demos and seminars.

The event is organised and hosted by the James Hutton Institute in partnership with AHDB Potatoes, SRUC (Scotland's Rural College) and Agrii and is also supported by Potato Review.

The seminar programme, managed by AHDB, saw a varied range of talks on exports, consumer insight and plant health, as well as a debate on the industry's future which featured speakers from AHDB's Next Generation programme, which aims to develop the future leaders of the potato industry.

Claire Hodge, AHDB Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager, who organised the sessions, says:

"The debate generated some really interesting conversations; discussions which helps us build a picture of which areas the industry should be investing in to make sure it is thriving in years to come."

The event was followed by AHDB's annual Storage Event – a smaller yet no less impressive affair which featured speakers from our Sutton Bridge Crop Storage Research facility, as well as industry experts, who shared the latest research and spoke about storage best practice.



Monitor Farm Scotland driving technical and business improvements

Our Monitor Farm Scotland initiative, which we run with Quality Meat Scotland with funding from the Scottish Government, is now halfway through its three-year lifespan and all nine farms are storming ahead with technical and business improvements.

Claire Hodge, Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager, says: "Across the entire programme, we are seeing practices reviewed and tightened up, both in arable and livestock, and all the farms have business groups where they use Farmbench to compare both where they are performing strongly and also where they might be lagging behind."

Benchmarking was a particular focus at the July Morayshire Monitor Farm meeting, with Orkney farmer Steven Sanderson sharing his experience of using benchmarking as a way to reach previously unreachable management targets.

"I used to go to these meetings where we were told we should be meeting certain targets," Steven said. "For example, 92% weaning in a nine-week breeding period – at the time that for me seemed nigh on impossible.

"So I set out to find out if it was possible, and if so, how the farmers achieving it were doing so, and that's where benchmarking came in. It's only through having a clear idea of how you are doing in terms of inputs and outputs, and then comparing that to others, that you can see where changes can be made."

As well as developing a better understanding of their costs, the farms are also working on improving their productivity and efficiency.

Over the summer, the Shetland Monitor Farm discussed pasture management with Nuffield Scholar and Management Group Chair Jamie Leslie, who believes it is the golden key to profit and equity growth, and, of course, the topic of

livestock feed featured across most of the farms after a long wet winter and hot dry summer.

Angus Monitor Farm have successfully under-sown some of their spring barley with Italian ryegrass, which has allowed them to use the land for grazing with little negative impact on their grain yield, while they, and other Monitor Farms, are trying out alternative forage crops such as fodder beet.

Many of the farms are also turning to technology to improve their management. Nithsdale recently invested in a new sheep-handling system to allow them to weigh and monitor growth rates and Morayshire is trialling a similar system for cattle, while others are looking into the use of drones to monitor crop growth.

Over the autumn and winter months, there will be meetings on Monitor Farms across Scotland; find your local one and go along – www.monitorfarms.co.uk

Monitor Farm Scotland Hosts



Angus – Courtesy of the Stodart family, Mill of Inverarity Farm, Inverarity, Forfar.



Lothians – Courtesy of Bill Gray and Peter Eccles, Prestonhall and Saughland Farms, Pathhead.



North Ayrshire – Courtesy of John Howie, Girtridge Farm, Dundonald, Ayrshire.



Borders – Courtesy of the Mitchell family, Whitriggs Farm, Denholm, Hawick.



Morayshire – Courtesy of Iain Green, Corskie Farm, Garmouth, Morayshire.



Shetland – Courtesy of Kirsty and Aimee Budge, Bigton Farm, Bigton, Shetland.



Lochaber – Courtesy of Chris Cameron, Strone Farm, Banavie, Fort William.



Nithsdale – Courtesy of Andrew and Aileen Marchant, Clonhie Farm, Penpont, Thornhill.



Sutherland – Courtesy of Jason and Vic Ballantyne, Clynelish Farm, Brora, Sutherland.

Seed potato varieties approved for export to Kenya

Three potato varieties have been recommended for release in Kenya thanks to the joint efforts of AHDB, James Hutton Ltd, SASA and Seeds2B Africa (part of the Syngenta Foundation).

The AHDB Exports Team is also working on a number of other key areas, including increasing seed exports to Cuba, simplifying access requirements for Brazil and exploring further African and Middle Eastern markets.

Ten potato varieties were trialled at three separate farms over two seasons, with free variety, Cara, and two James Hutton Ltd varieties, Gemson and Lady Balfour, making the grade.

The approval opens the door for GB producers to export to Kenya, where potatoes are the second most important food crop after maize. About 2–3 million tonnes of potatoes are grown annually. However, most farmers use home-saved seed and achieve yields of as little as 10 tonnes per hectare.

In the trials, Cara yielded very strongly over the course of both seasons, with a combined average yield of 52 tonnes per hectare. However, the top performer

in terms of yield was Lady Balfour at 56 tonnes per hectare, while Gemson yielded 42 tonnes per hectare on average.

Rob Burns, AHDB Head of Crop Market Trade Development, says: “This is great news for GB seed producers and our next steps now will be to support them to create links in Kenya so that they can take advantage of this opportunity.

“Kenya has a burgeoning middle class; and as well as table varieties, there is a growing need for processing potato seed to supply the growing market for premium potato-based products such as crisps and chips.”

Scottish seed potato sector secures access to Chinese market

After years of negotiation, a deal was recently secured which will allow Scotland to export seed potatoes to China, the largest global consumer of potatoes in the world.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, signed the deal on his recent visit to the country.

AHDB Head of Crop Market Trade Development Rob Burns says: “This is fantastic news as AHDB has been involved in this activity for ten years, working initially with the Scottish Government and Defra, to ensure that GB had a workable protocol for exports of seed potatoes to China.

“We’ve also funded inward and outward missions, to allow officials from both

sides to meet and agree plant health arrangements, and been involved in the negotiation process and providing advice on practical solutions to plant health challenges.”

This deal is expected to bring major benefits to Scotland, which supplies 70% of the 100,000 tonnes of seed potatoes exported annually from the UK.

AHDB’s role will now be to develop this new trading relationship through events such as large-scale trade shows where exporters can showcase their varieties and start building business in China.





Ring-fenced levy fund supports joint projects

Earlier this year, we announced that we would be working with the red meat levy bodies in Scotland (Quality Meat Scotland) and Wales (Hybu Cig Cymru) on a major programme of joint activities to be paid for by a ring-fenced fund of £2 million of AHDB red meat levies.

Only six months into the initiative, we have already seen some significant successes. The key projects are summarised below.

Ring-fenced fund spend so far:

- Joint exhibits at international trade shows, including Food and Hotel Asia, SIAL Montreal and SIAL Paris (two more to come early in 2019)
- Exploring new market opportunities such as the USA, China and Japan
- Plan for large-scale programme of activity to collectively raise consumer awareness of red meat's positive messages
- Two research projects commencing:

one on breeding herd efficiency and another on neonatal survival of lambs and calves

- Four market reports: The Characteristics of High Performing Beef and Sheep Farms in Great Britain (published); how red meat is traded; managing risk in red meat; and understanding the livestock sector's environment impact

The fund was developed as an interim arrangement while a long-term solution is sought on the issue of levies being collected at point of slaughter in England for animals which have been reared in Scotland or Wales.



New conference to drive technology advancements in horticulture

SmartHort 2019, a new conference designed to connect innovators with the horticultural industry, is part of AHDB Horticulture's SmartHort campaign to address the challenge of access to affordable seasonal labour in the UK.

Grace Emeny, AHDB project manager for SmartHort, said: "Guest speakers from around the globe will be sharing some of the most exciting developments in robotics and automation that could play a role in revolutionising the horticulture industry in the future.

"The conference will create an excellent opportunity to connect technology and engineering companies, research organisations and funders with the horticultural industry to help find solutions to the serious challenge UK businesses are facing with the current labour shortage."

AHDB's Chief Strategy Officer Tom Hind said: "Horticulture has seen cases where there has been a 30 per cent shortfall in seasonal workers

this season, putting huge strains on businesses who are reliant on labour to pick fruit, vegetables or flowers in fields and glasshouses.

"While full automation is a long way off from solving this crisis, in addition to work to improve management practices for existing workforces, we are exploring how robotics, automation and artificial intelligence may help to offset some of this challenge in the future."

Day one of the conference will focus on labour-saving technologies, including the latest developments in robotics and automation for tasks such as harvesting, packing and crop monitoring.

The second day will bring together the latest innovation in production and growing techniques, including crop protection, product handling and data-driven cropping systems.

The conference will be held in Stratford-upon-Avon on 6-7 March.

“Guest speakers from around the globe will be sharing some of the most exciting developments in robotics and automation that could play a role in revolutionising the horticulture industry in the future”



Dishing the dirt

New soils resources are available at:
horticulture.ahdb.org.uk/greatsoils

- Carrot case study – Martin Evans, Freshgro
- Maintaining optimum soil pH
- Compost increasing soil organic matter
- Engineering the landscape to secure asparagus production



For general soil management resources and content visit:
ahdb.org.uk/greatsoils



AHDB team tackles the Great Glen Challenge!

Save the date

DairyLeader Forum

7–8 November, Edinburgh

Seed Industry Event

15 November, St Andrew's

AgriScot

21 November, Ingliston

Strategic Dairy Farm meeting

4 December, Hillhead of Covington, Lanarkshire

Agronomy workshops

8 January, Borders;
10 January, Perthshire;
15 January, Inverurie;
17 January, Inverness

Strategic Potato Farm Results meeting

7 March, Perthshire

Supervisory Skills Workshop

7 March, Stirling

Monitor Farm Meetings

Dates below are the confirmed meeting dates; there will be more meeting dates TBC – check out monitorfarms.co.uk for up-to-date information.

Angus 1 November

Lochaber 1 November

Borders 7 November

Sutherland 4 December

Morayshire 4 December

Lothians 5 December

Angus 13 December



Claire Hodge, Sarah Hunter-Argyle, Tim Isaac and Paul Flanagan recently took part in the Great Glen Challenge, a fundraising event where teams of four bike, walk, kayak and run around the beautiful Loch Lochy.

They were ably supported by former colleague Gavin Dick who drove them to their various start and finish points on the day. The team raised £1,500 which contributed to the record £65,637 total for the event which supports rural charity RSABI.



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