



Welcome to Focus On... our special quarterly bulletin looking at issues relevant to particular sectors and topics of interest.

In January's Focus On... Agriculture, we find out about the Farming Recovery Fund to assist farmers affected by the recent floods and we learn about McDonald's partnership with the Nuffield Farming Trust. There is a look at plans to increase investment in agriculture by 12 per cent and we discover what can be done to deliver on reducing emissions.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of our specialist accountancy and business advisory services for farmers and rural businesses, please contact Richard Grayson, Managing Partner at Nicholsons, at richard.grayson@nicholsonsca.co.uk or phone 01522 815100.

Investment in agriculture planned

Agriculture Secretary Liz Truss has said that the government plans to increase investment in agriculture by 12 per cent over the next five years, to £2.7 billion.

"We will invest in technology, digital systems, growing our exports, world leading science, protection against animal health and plant disease and flood defences," Mrs Truss said.

This would partly be achieved by creating greater efficiencies in Defra and its agencies, including shared back-office services, which would "save 15 per cent from our running costs", she claimed. Liz Truss also promised to "cut thousands more inspections" with the proposed Single Farm Inspection Task Force and mentioned that the government will be publishing a new programme for Food and Farming for the Environment covering the next 25 years. This will include decentralising decision-making in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and cutting red tape for farmers.

Nicholsons has been working with farmers for over 90 years and welcomes this investment in the future of the industry. The team is going to watch with interest and looks forward to greater security for Lincolnshire farmers in the future.



FRF to benefit affected farmers

Farmers affected by the recent flooding in Cumbria, Northumberland, Lancashire and Yorkshire can get grants worth up to £20,000 to help restore damaged agricultural land under the Farming Recovery Fund (FRF).

The FRF will provide money to help farmers in these four counties whose agricultural land has been affected by the impact of the

flooding that took place in December 2015. The money will go towards the costs of restoring agricultural land to the state it was in before the flooding took place. As part of their application, farmers must explain which activities they want funding for and how much the activities will cost.

The minimum grant available is £500 whilst the maximum grant available is £20,000.

Applications will remain open until Friday 1 April 2016.

For information about the FRF, visit: www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-the-farming-recovery-fund-frf.

If you would like to discuss the FRF and what it means for you, please contact us.

Fast food giant backs UK farming

McDonald's UK has become the first ever major retailer to enter into a partnership with the Nuffield Farming Trust.

Announced at this year's Oxford Farming Conference, the exclusive agreement is testament of its support for the UK farming industry. The McDonald's Nuffield Farming Scholarship will mirror the traditional programme, with a 'Global Focus Tour' included. McDonald's encourages enthusiastic individuals to

consider a scholarship which will see a study into their own choice in agriculture, land management, horticulture or the food chain. The first McDonald's scholar will embark on a programme that will identify new methods and apply practical knowledge, seeking profitable industry outputs.

Speaking at Oxford Farming Conference, Connor McVeigh, McDonald's UK Supply Chain Director said: "We make no secret

of our reliance on a thriving farming sector which underpins our UK business, currently in its 38th consecutive quarter of growth. That success is down to an industry which involves brilliant people and minds and being the first UK retailer to sponsor a scholar is something we are infinitely proud of. This partnership further demonstrates our support of the sector and finding talent within it, critical in securing the future of farming within our UK shores."

Land-sparing could help meet carbon target

A national push to boost agricultural leads so that large areas of farm land can be reforested or returned to natural peat land and wetland habitats could help ensure the industry delivers emissions cuts by 2050.

That's the conclusion of a new study published in the journal Nature Climate Change, which explores how an agricultural industry that currently accounts for 10 per cent of UK greenhouse gas emissions can deliver on national targets to cut emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

The study – which included input from researchers

at the Universities of California, Bangor, Aberdeen, East Anglia, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Forestry Commission, Rothamsted Research, ADAS UK Ltd and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) – argues that emulating the levels of forest and wetland cover seen in other parts of Europe could help deliver emissions cuts, alongside benefits such as improved biodiversity and greater flood protection.

"Land is a source of greenhouse gases if it is used to farm fertiliser-hungry crops or methane-producing cattle, or it can be a sink for greenhouse gases – through sequestration,"

said senior author Professor Andrew Balmford from Cambridge University's Department of Zoology. "If we increase woodland and wetland, those lands will be storing carbon in trees, photosynthesising it in reeds, and shunting it down into soils."

The paper suggests that a programme of land-sparing where forest cover is upped from 12 per cent to 30 per cent – the same level seen in France and Germany – and restoring 700,000 hectares of wet peat land would allow the agricultural industry to play a full role in meeting the UK's carbon target for 2050.

How LEADER could help you

Nicholsons reminds readers that the LEADER fund – which is available to local businesses, communities, farmers, foresters and land managers – is now open for business and the firm has witnessed applications being processed and progressing to the next stage. A total of £138 million is available in England between 2015 and 2020 under the scheme for projects

such as this that support one or more of the six LEADER priorities. These are:

- support micro and small businesses and farm diversification
- boost rural tourism
- increase farm productivity

- increase forestry productivity
- provide rural services
- provide cultural and heritage activities

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