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What Building a Resilient & Sustainable Future for Farming May Look Like

A report from the event:

Food & Finance: How Do We Build a More Resilient Future Together? Held on 2nd October 2025



Building a world where industry and farms thrive together.



Executive Summary

Farming is at a crossroads. Climate change, volatile markets, tightening regulations, population growth, and rising demand for sustainably produced food present challenges and opportunities for UK farmers. Building resilience while delivering environmental sustainability requires collaboration, trusted data, clear metrics, and practical solutions.

This white paper draws on insights from a high-level round table organised by Map of Ag in October 2025, which brought together farmers, food supply chain leaders, banking experts, and industry representatives to explore how to build a more resilient future together while driving environmental sustainability on farm.

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The challenge facing UK farming

The UK food system faces changes and productivity pressures that compound environmental demands, placing the sector's resilience under strain. In recent years, farm resilience has been tested by factors such as the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and increasingly variable weather patterns - all shining a spotlight on how important resilience truly is.

These challenges have partly contributed to declining production and made improving productivity even more critical. For example, broiler meat production fell 11% between 2021 and 2024, cattle numbers have dropped 15% over two decades, vegetable production is down 13% in two years, and wheat yields have fallen 13% since 2004.

All of this is happening alongside increasing challenges for farmers to meet environmental improvement targets. It is believed that, for the dairy sector alone, meeting upcoming environmental legislation will cost over a penny per litre for the next decade - just to stand still.

The declines in food production point to a weakening food system at a time when demand is set to rise. Population is projected to increase by at least 10% in the coming years. Farming is not a tap that can simply be turned on again. Loss of capacity means years lost, along with the loss of knowledge and skills from the industry.

This raises a fundamental question for government: what does a resilient food system look like? Can it be both healthy, sustainable, and affordable while supporting resilient trade - or must the vision for the food system first be clearly defined? The round table concluded that without a shared vision and agreed principles, building resilience will be harder.

Defining resilience

The round table underlined that resilience is not just about surviving change - it is about adapting to thrive. Achieving this requires moving away from siloed approaches towards a systems-based strategy that requires whole sector collaboration.

Industry leaders agreed that shared metrics and a common understanding of sustainability are essential. There is a need to define what matters most, to streamline the complexity farmers face, and to develop a collective roadmap that accelerates action.

This includes agreeing on a clear framework that farmers can follow and avoiding continued debates about methodologies that delay progress.

And farmers must be at the heart of these discussions. Resilience will not be achieved without engaging those who are farming the land. Practical solutions and the right incentives are essential to encourage investment and preserve capacity, knowledge, and skills.



The role of data in driving change

Trusted, high-quality, and consistent farm data is the foundation for both resilience and environmental progress. The round table identified three core challenges: duplication of effort, inconsistent metrics, and unclear ownership of data. Speakers highlighted that a wealth of data is already being captured on farms but called for better use of this existing information. Harnessing technology such as AI, they said, could help simplify processes, cut emissions and take some of the hassle out of data management for farmers.

Industry consensus was that the sector must define common metrics for sustainability and build systems that ensure data is actionable for farmers. This requires a trusted, central, and independent place to govern farm data - something that would help build confidence and encourage wider data sharing across the industry.

It was agreed that farmers should be central to discussions about emissions data collection and that they shouldn't be dictated to on which standards to follow. Instead, they should have the opportunity to set their own standards and drive their own agenda.

Farm data is increasingly valuable for improving farm performance, meeting sustainability targets, and securing financial support. But farmers need to ensure they understand who is requesting their data, why they need

it, how it will be managed, and, above all else, that their data is safe. Farmers need to feel confident in how their data is being used, with clear benefits for those who engage with trusted partners and take a proactive approach - having farmers' trust is fundamental.

By ensuring strong data governance is in place, it was agreed that farmers would have more confidence to unlock valuable insights and financial benefits while protecting their business information. In light of the sector's pressing challenges, leveraging proven technologies is a strategic move that avoids unnecessary delays and costs associated with developing new tools.

The discussion also emphasised that data must translate into practical actions that deliver measurable benefits for productivity, the environment, and overall farm resilience. Data on its own is valueless unless it is brought together, analysed collectively, and used to inform change. Farmers need to know there is a purpose - and a reward - for contributing their information.

However, without the right frameworks, data collection risks becoming an administrative burden rather than a tool for positive change - and that is where collaboration is central.



Collaboration as the cornerstone of resilience

Resilience cannot be built in isolation. Collaboration between farmers, government, industry, and finance is essential.

The round table identified three priorities:

1. Defining clear sustainability goals.
2. Building shared data systems with farmer data control at their core.
3. Creating incentives to support long-term investment.

Unity across the supply chain is fundamental to unlocking support and improving productivity.

The Dairy Roadmap was highlighted as an example of success in driving environmental progress across the sector. It was agreed that the more the industry can work together and help farmers to become more resilient and efficient, the

more secure their businesses will be in the face of change - as seen in recent years with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

It was also agreed that the financial sector has a critical role to play, with data and metrics increasingly important in unlocking finance for farm businesses. To do that, the industry needs clear, consistent metrics that give confidence to lenders and ensure farmers are rewarded for the improvements they are making.

By working together, banks, retailers and processors can collectively support farmers and, concurrently, minimise the burden placed on them for constants requests for more data, and different, unaligned data.

The sector must agree on principles for action and move quickly to implement them. There is a window of opportunity to build a resilient, sustainable farming future - but speed, as much as agreement, will determine success.

Call to action

A resilient and sustainable food system is possible, but it will require action from all stakeholders. Government must provide leadership by setting clear frameworks and funding innovation. Industry must collaborate to define common metrics, share data effectively, and ensure data security is clearly communicated. Farmers must be engaged to ensure solutions are practical and beneficial.

Without collaboration and shared metrics, progress will be slow and fragmented. The sector must act now. The tools, knowledge, and technology exist - what is needed is the collective drive to deliver change.

By working together, the UK farming sector can deliver measurable environmental outcomes while building businesses that are profitable, productive, and resilient for future generations.

Want to learn more?

If you have questions, ideas, or simply want to explore how we can work together, please get in touch.



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