

# FARMERS FIRST

Issue 63 | Spring 2022



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# KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IS KEY IN TESTING TIMES

**We edge towards the second quarter of the calendar year at a very testing time, not only for the agricultural industry, but for everyone. Our thoughts go out to those in Ukraine, as the conflict continues to disrupt and devastate the country.**

The actions of Russia have sent wheat prices rocketing to new highs as uncertainty stalks the commodities market, while rising gas, fuel and fertiliser prices puts additional pressure on production costs, leading to inevitable food price inflation.

Whilst Fram Farmers cannot influence these turbulent global markets, everybody in the team is working hard on behalf of all members to combine their knowledge, skills and expertise with suppliers to minimise the adverse impacts for members at much as possible.

On a more encouraging note, the Suffolk Farming Conference was a huge success, welcoming over 200 delegates to Trinity Park, where a range of speakers presented on what the future holds for the industry.

In this issue, our news pages bring celebration of staff qualifications in the crops and livestock teams, as Fram continues to strengthen the level of service provided to members. Sticking with a positive news, we announce two new board members who joined us at the end of January – both Michael and David bring a huge amount of knowledge and experience to the

board, and their addition to the board comes at an exciting time for us.

Also on the news pages, two staff members Hollie and Tim share their experience of the Oxford Farming Conference, an opportunity awarded through two separate scholarships.

Elsewhere, we are pleased to report many exciting updates in this issue, with news of exclusive offers and products for Fram members from the finance and fuel teams - see pages 19 and 21 respectively.

Providing member insight, we chatted to arable farmer member Ed Nesling at Winfield Farms in mid-Suffolk, who shares with us how the Fram team has assisted with his Countryside Stewardship projects – see page 19.

The Business Services Team continues to go from strength to strength, as the grants service continues to help more members; on page 11, we provide our latest grants update, outlining the process for applications.

Exploring industry advances, we bring members insight into modern technology in farming, speaking to two knowledgeable suppliers on page 9. Continuing to strengthen the Fram



*Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO*

Farmers membership experience, members can find information on the Root Crop Growers Group on pages 6 and 7, which will be led by David Wilson, who joined Fram in August with a seasoned background in the fresh produce and root crop sector. Following the success of the Fram Farmers Pig Group, a new Poultry Group hopes to bring like-minded independent egg producers together to provide further benefits and efficiencies – see page 21.

We have recently added to our Membership Development Team with the appointment of Tom Lee, who joined us in January to work alongside Dan Cox, Becky Bower and John Hood to assist members across the country. A full introduction to the team can be found on pages 14 and 15.

The whole Fram team is looking forward to seeing members at more events this year, both internal and external, as the events calendar returns to its former glory.

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# THE OXFORD FARMING CONFERENCE: A FIRST-HAND SCHOLARS' EXPERIENCE

In 2021, two Fram Farmers staff members were awarded scholarships to attend the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC) – Hollie Lister, Arable Administrator in the Crops Team, and Tim Gilbert, Business Analyst.

Hollie, who is currently studying with the Open University towards an open degree in Business Management and Environmental Management, successfully won an application through the Woodbridge-based Deben Farmers Club, and Tim was the second-ever winner of the Suffolk Agricultural Association's Rising Star Scholarship in 2021.

Sadly, the decision was made in December to move the three-day conference online due to Covid concerns but it did mean both Hollie and Tim were able to attend more seminars than if the event had taken place in-person.

A series of fringe events took place over the course of the first day of the conference, including a session on net-zero farming from Tesco and WWF-UK, and a presentation from Jeremy Moody, Secretary and Adviser to CAAV, on economics, technologies and climate and their effects on land-use.

The second day of the conference included some heavy-hitting seminars on global trade, policy updates and plans,

"I have a personal interest in the areas of sustainability and food security, and the event gave me the opportunity to develop my knowledge and enhance networking opportunities.

"Despite not being able to attend in person, the conference was still a thoroughly enjoyable experience, and I would recommend it to anyone starting out within the industry".

Hollie Lister



and George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, gave an update on the much-anticipated government policy around replacing CAP. A notable seminar was 'Lessons from science – routes to resilience' presented by Dr Catherine Nakalembe from NASA, who discussed how satellite imagery is being used to predict crop yields, which encouraged much discussion.

The third and final day of the conference saw a panel of UK farmers discuss the 'Farm of the Future', focusing on the concept of family within agriculture around

the world, which featured Fram Farmers member John Pawsey of Shimpling Park Farms.

Conference attendees had been given a group task ahead of the conference to give a five minute presentation on the future of farming in the UK, which, had the conference been in person, would have been presented to Princess Anne. Excitingly, Hollie's group won the best presentation, and she is awaiting her prize in the post.

Both Hollie and Tim also attended a Scholars orientation day at the McDonald's headquarters ahead of the conference, which included a presentation from McDonalds, as well as seminars from multiple speakers, including Dunbia (McDonalds' beef supplier), a McDonald's beef producer and Karl Williams of FAI Farms, as well as a workshop on equity, diversity and inclusion and a multi-media training webinar hosted by Tom Levitt from Farmers Guardian.

"The OFC is an internationally recognised event, and the programme provided a diverse mix of speakers and topics.

"I have taken away a lot from attending the conference, and I am looking forward to engaging with my fellow scholars and delegates in person in 2023, as we have the opportunity to attend again."

Tim Gilbert



## SUFFOLK FARMING CONFERENCE

On Thursday 3 March, the Suffolk Agricultural Association and Fram Farmers, in partnership with Scrutton Bland, welcomed over 200 delegates to the Suffolk Farming Conference, which took place at Trinity Park.

The event, which was exclusively open to members of both organisations, focussed on the topic of 'Getting to Grips with the Future', covering a number of topical issues to help members of both organisations plan ahead for their farming businesses.

We will be publishing a full event summary in the Summer Issue of Farmers First (Issue 64), which will reach members at the end of June, and will also be available at The Suffolk Show on 31 May and 1 June.

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# NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are pleased to announce two new additions to the board – Michael Muncey and David Sheppard. Officially welcomed onto the board at the end of January, both Michael and David have recently stepped down from major industry roles, bringing with them a wealth of commercial excellence.

Michael Muncey brings over thirty years of ag-chem experience to the board, having served a number of UK roles within Bayer Crop Science, including agronomy, sales, marketing, and product management. He moved back to the UK in 2017 to take on the role of Managing Director for the UK Bayer Crop Science business before stepping back at the end of August 2021.

Now semi-retired, Michael sits on the board of AIC in a Welsh Policy Manager role, and Albert Bartlett as a non-executive director, and is also a part-time consultant at property consultancy Bidwells.

David Sheppard has over 25 years' experience in the grain trade as Gleadell Trading Director from 1997-2005, before serving as Managing Director from 2005-2019.

From February 2019 to January 2020 David

was joint Managing Director of ADM Agriculture and was the lead in joining Gleadell, Dunns, ADM Direct and ADM Arkady into one business. From January 2020, Norfolk-based David remained as a Director of ADM Agriculture before stepping back at the end of last year.

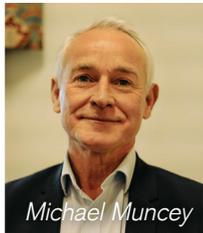
“Michael and David both bring a huge amount of knowledge experience and commercial pedigree to the board, particularly for our growing number of arable members,” explains Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO.

“They have both recently stepped down from key senior industry commercial roles, and their addition to the board is an important step as we seek to develop and grow Fram Farmers; staying faithful to the cooperatives ethos and values that have served members so successfully over the past 60 years, but ensuring our performance is unparalleled with the leading commercial agribusinesses.

“Investing in talent, expertise and ambition not only applies to the staff of Fram Farmers, but also within the mindset of the board. I am looking forward to working with Michael and David, as well as other recent new board members, and our growing membership,” he adds.



David Sheppard



Michael Muncey

# STAFF UPDATES

After a year in the accounts department, Stacey Bond made the decision to leave Fram Farmers and take up a new challenge with Suffolk MIND. Stacey will be missed by the team and we wish her all the best with her new venture.

In January, Joe Cullen stepped down from his role as IT Manager. With the company for 3 years, Joe was vital in managing the day-to-day running of IT for the Fram team as well as developing Project Merlin. At the end of March we will welcome Richard Snelham as our new IT Manager, who joins us from John Grose Group Ltd where he was Head of IT.

January also saw two new additions to the team – Kirtsy Winspear who joins us in the position of Supplier Accounts Administrator, and Tom Lee as Membership Development Manager for the East Anglia Region.

With covid restrictions now easing, Katia Cardin is leaving Fram Farmers at the end of March to progress with her plans to travel to Australia. Despite only being with the Fram team for a few months, Katia has been a valuable contribution to the Business Services team and we hope she has an excellent time on her travels. We are in the process of recruiting for a new Business Services Administrator.

# HARD WORK PAYS OFF FOR FRAM STAFF

In recent months, members of the Fram Farmers livestock and crops teams have been studying behind the scenes to strengthen their knowledge and expertise.

**Bex White, Animal Health Specialist R-SQP**

Bex, who joined the livestock team since October 2020, has recently passed her AMTRA RAMA qualification, becoming a fully qualified Registered Animal Medicines Advisor and gaining the letters R-SQP after her name.

Bex began her studies in January 2021, and after initially being disrupted by Covid, she sat the Farm, Equine and Avian modules online in May 2021, along with the Viva (a one-to-one 10 to 15 minute oral examination). The final set of exams, for Companion Animal module took place in October, completing Bex' full R-SQP qualification.



Bex White

Being a registered RAMA means Bex can assist Jessica Frost in ordering and selling POM-VPS medicines to members, which includes fly control, wormers, flukicides and vaccines for all species. Previously, when members would contact the office, Jess would be the one advise, but now Bex can do this too, providing greater flexibility within the team.

With spring turn-out on the horizon Bex will support members with their requirements for the next few months especially as well as assisting members with quotes on veterinary medication. This has doubled the prescribing team, reducing the timescales in ordering and getting medicines to members.

As Bex develops in her role she will take on more responsibility for her own product areas within the livestock team.

**Rachel Cooper, Seed Product Manager**  
Rachel, who has been at Fram Farmers since September 2019, is the lead

contact for members on seed advice and expertise. She recently passed the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection IPM (Seed Sellers), covering the knowledge required to advise on seed variety treatments.

Following two full days' training and a period of revision, Rachel completed the online examination and subsequent Viva with an independent appointed chairman and an expert practitioner from within the seed industry.

Encompassing disease and pests in cereals, pulses and OSR, and the use of integrated pest management and disease resistance, the qualification will enable Rachel to provide even more detailed and thorough advice and expertise to Fram Farmers members, helping to add further value to their crops.



Rachel Cooper

# COOPERATIVE ETHOS THE ROOT TO SUCCESS

New team specialists and a dedicated group can help benefit root crop growers at Fram Farmers

With around 340 members growing approximately 25,000ha of root crops, the Fram Farmers Root Crop Growers Group aims to bring like-minded members together, facilitating knowledge exchange, best practice and exploring opportunities for improved efficiency.

David Wilson joined the crops team at the end of August last year as Arable Inputs Manager, covering for Annie Buckingham who is currently on maternity leave. David's impressive background in the root crop sector, together with the winding up of AHDB Potatoes following the vote against the continuation of the statutory levy last March, has led to the formation of this new members' group, hoping to fill the gap for collaborative discussion and research.

The group itself is a made up of around fifteen Fram Farmers members, and headed up by Andrew Williams, farm

director at Home Farm Nacton, an organic and conventional estate growing leeks, brassicas, onions, red beet, potatoes, fodder beet, sugar beet and cereals across 1940ha.

Keeping the group member-led and member-driven is an important factor, ensuring the group delivers for everyone. Members farm across the country, growing a variety of root crops, with a cluster of members in East Suffolk.

## FIRST MEETING

Fresh into the role, David has spent time visiting members from an arable inputs point of view, also taking the opportunity to discover whether there is an appetite for a group of this nature for root crop growers.

On 20 January, the group held its first meeting via Teams, with 15 members in attendance. The group aims to hold two



in-person meetings per year; the first meeting will take place in May in order to give the group a useful kick-start ahead of this year's potato season, with a second meeting planned for September.

"The first meeting was an insightful discussion," explains David. "It allowed us to consider the value in benchmarking and peer review, and for everyone in the group to understand how it may work for them. "With the last staff leaving the AHDB Potatoes office at the end of December,



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the sector is heading for a tough time – growers are no longer in a demand market, rather a supply market,” he adds. “Acting now, and planning ahead for our first in-person meeting in May will help us to make a difference by working together. Some members are not used to working so closely, but I believe there’s strength in numbers.

“It’s the same cooperative ethos, though more concentrated, so the advice and discussion is even more relevant - consider it a group within a group.”

## ALIGNING KEY INPUT REQUIREMENTS

There is no additional charge to join the group, it all being part of the cooperative membership model. Members would benefit from all existing services and divisions already in place but, based on the discussions that take place in the meetings, the hope is that the experts at Fram would be more acutely aware of members’ needs.

“The element of difference is the expert advice and key account management,” David says. “Members shouldn’t be afraid to allow Fram to be the experts – that’s what we’re here to. Being more in-tune with what members require means we can pool resources to be even more efficient.”

With David acting as the representative across the entire cooperative, this brings the departments more closely together to the benefit of group members. For example, the business services team may recognise grants available to members and could work with the machinery team to source items through their suppliers. Orders of the usual inputs such as seed and fertiliser can be better aligned to achieve more competitive prices. When it comes to gas for stores, and machinery purchase and hire, these are often less predictable so could be better pooled with the help of a more collaborative approach. “When Fram staff are working closely with suppliers, being able to marry up orders can provide real results. Members of the group will be running large numbers of machinery at seasonal times, so forward buying fuel will be another rallying point for group members,” adds David.

“This isn’t something that Fram has done before on this scale, involving so many different departments, but there’s many opportunities to be seized. Fram is more than just an extension to the busy farm



office, and it’s the direct insight into grower requirements that allows Fram to deliver.”

## PLUGGING THE RESEARCH GAP

AHDB ceased production of potato market intelligence on 2 July 2021, as part of the decision to wind down all potato activities, leaving a £1.5m gap in knowledge exchange and trial work.

The new growers’ group may have a place in plugging the hole in some of this research, the benefit being that the results would stay within the group, bringing direct advantage to membership.

One Suffolk-based Fram member James Foscett Farms Ltd, a 1500ha business in the Deben Valley growing potatoes, onions, sugarbeet, carrots, cereals and organic vegetables, is a past AHDB ‘SPot Farm’ - a ‘Strategic Potato Farm’ that was part of

a network of potato growers throughout the UK hosting scientific research on their farms. Mike Shapland, Farm Manager and Director at James Foscett Farms Ltd is eager to continue hosting trial plots. This could provide an opportunity to help fill the knowledge gap left by the discontinuation of AHDB.

Well connected, and with his ears close to the ground, David is aware of commercial trial work launching elsewhere this Spring, so will be positioned to bring information back to the group for discussion and further evaluation throughout the year as the sector continues to evolve post-levy board.

**If you would like to know more about joining the Root Crop Growers Group, please contact David Wilson: 07879 980144 | 01728 727 715 | david.wilson@framfarmers.co.uk**

## DAVID WILSON

Born and raised in the Scottish borders, and with a degree in Agriculture from SAC in Edinburgh, as well as a BASIS Diploma in Agronomy, David moved to East Anglia in 2006 and started out in a farm management role at Frederick Hiam Ltd in the Fenlands. Following this, he spent time managing a family farm in West Norfolk.



David’s impressive CV also features leading food manufacturer McCain UK plc, where he worked with potato growers across East Anglia, as well as agrochemical firm Syngenta, where he was area manager and potato specialist for nearly six years, covering North Suffolk and East Norfolk. His most recent role before joining Fram Farmers was Knowledge Exchange Manager at AHDB Potatoes.

You could say David knows a fair bit about root crops, which positions him perfectly to be the lead Fram contact on the Root Crop Growers Group, already being well-acquainted with many growers throughout the country.

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# EVER-EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY IN FARMING

As technology in agriculture continues to reach new possibilities, we speak to two key Fram Farmers suppliers about the progression of GPS systems.

Founded by four Cambridgeshire farmers over 15 years ago, RTKFnet was initially developed on a Trimble based radio network, covering the arable areas of the eastern counties. As technology has evolved, the network has recently been extended to cover the entire mainland UK using the latest internet SIM card-based delivery system called NTrip, providing a repeatable 2.5cm accuracy.

Using a non-bias roaming SIM card, it automatically locks onto the most dominant network in that area without the need to adjust frequencies, providing a more consistent robust signal, especially in challenging rolling countryside.

Jeff Stephens, Dealer Liaison Manager at RTKFnet explains how reliability and accuracy is an essential requirement with machine positioning.

“The NTrip service enables remote monitoring of the vehicle, with most problems being resolved over the phone by the in-house team, reducing any potential downtime,” explains Jeff.

“Flexibility is also key when it comes to GPS systems - the network is compatible with most agricultural vehicles and their associated hardware, a particular benefit to businesses’ operating mixed fleets. RTKFnet are also able to provide a tailored subscription to suit most usage, including short term hired machinery.”



“Whilst we maintain and support our existing radio network, our new Ntrip solution provides significant benefits and cost savings to owners and operators, and presents increased opportunities in industries outside agriculture,” he adds.

Mark Griffiths, National Sales Manager at Vantage ASC, tells us how the demand for RTX satellite based mapping has increased as average farm sizes have grown.

Predominantly supplying Trimble Ag products, Vantage ASC has been working with Fram Farmers for nearly 18 months, after Strategic Partnership Manager Gordon got in touch in order to widen the services offered to members.

Satellite based, the RTX network runs off a private network of ground-based radio stations, removing the requirement

for individual farm businesses to install their own infrastructure. Customers pay an annual subscription for access to the network.

“Correction signals have moved on a lot as farming has progressed,” explains Mark. “Farmers’ expectations have changed, and as masts are coming up for renewal, we are seeing more interest in RTX than in traditional RTK.”

“There is still demand for RTK signal, but for some, the advantages that come with RTX, such as the ease of use, repeatability and the removal of the requirement to change frequency are more advantageous.

“The way customers are using products has changed too – ten years ago, technology and display systems would be specifically designed to do certain jobs. Now, with a tablet-based system, farming has moved over to the app-based philosophy which is much more flexible.

“Commercially, this has made things easier, and we can now cater for a broad spectrum of customers. An entry level system means farmers can grow into the technology, making incremental investments through time,” Mark concludes.

**If you have any questions about GPS systems and machinery related technology, please contact the Fram Farmers machinery team, who can put you in touch with their network of specialist suppliers: 01728 727719 | [machinery@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:machinery@framfarmers.co.uk)**

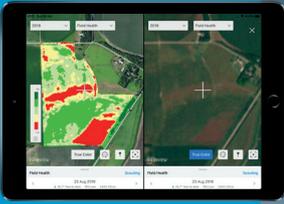
## PREVENTING THEFT

**With theft of GPS equipment on the rise, Vantage ASC has developed a number of improvements to products to not only prevent theft, but the inconvenience that comes with it.**

New in February 2022, the quick release brackets make the products easier to remove at night, and partnering with SmartWater means valuable assets will now be forensically marked, making them uniquely identifiable and therefore less attractive to thieves. If devices are stolen, the cloud-based data back-up means farm data and configuration is not lost entirely, and can be downloaded straight onto a new in-cab display.

The new breakthrough comes with the Trimble Nav 900 receivers, which can be configured to provide in-built GPS tracking, which can be tracked internationally in the event of theft. After two years the service will be due for renewal, which includes a welfare check of the receiver.

# SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE



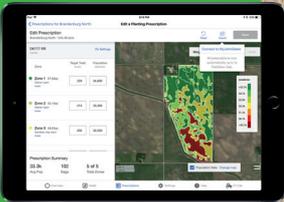
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# GRANTS UPDATE FROM THE BUSINESS SERVICES TEAM

In the last issue of *Farmers First*, we provided a summary of the latest grants available from Defra. The applications window for one of these grants, **The Farming Equipment & Technology Fund**, closed at the beginning of January, after achieving 5,624 eligible applications worth a total overall value of just over **£53.5 million**.

Of these applications, 4,376 Grant Funding Agreements (GFAs) have been awarded, and successful applicants now have until midnight on the 1st April 2022 to accept these agreements.

The deadline for buying and installing these items and submitting the claim for payment has now been extended by just over a month, until the end of October 2022, in order to ease pressure on suppliers and to give farmers more time to install kit.

If you were successful in this first round, please speak to the following contacts for assistance in sourcing any of the equipment listed in this grant:

## LIVESTOCK RELATED ENQUIRIES:

Bex White – 01728 727716 |  
bex.white@framfarmers.co.uk

## ANY OTHER EQUIPMENT:

Harry Nesling or Gordon Cummings – 01728 727719 |  
machinery@framfarmers.co.uk

Please note, Defra plans to launch a second round later this year, so we would encourage those who weren't successful this time to apply again.

## EXPLAINING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

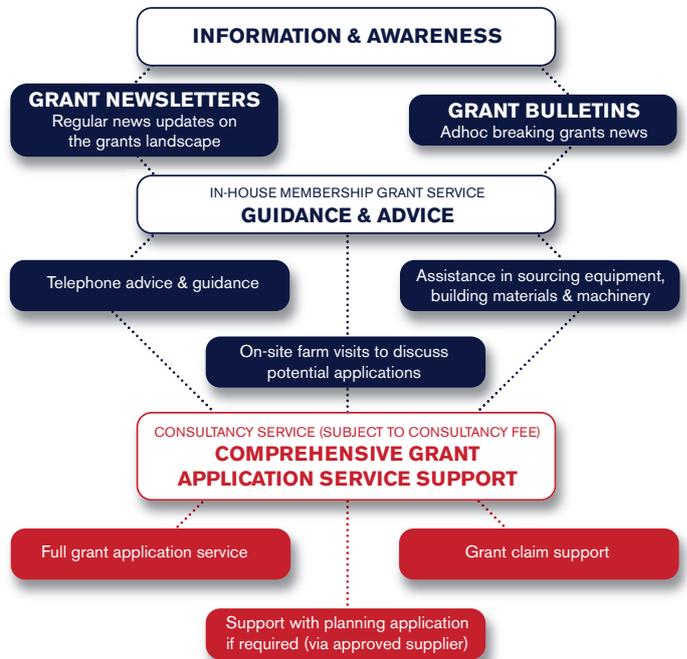
The application process for each grant can differ significantly, and the process may seem a little daunting. We have received some positive feedback on the grants newsletters and bulletins, with a number of members contacting Dan Cox in the Business Services Team for guidance and advice.

Fram Farmers will continue to keep members informed with regular communication and, in order to help explain the process in more detail, alongside how Fram Farmers fits into the picture, we have outlined the process with a diagram (see above).

We strongly recommend talking to Dan Cox in the Business Services Team before attempting an application. Dan has a great deal of experience in applying for grant funding and can help members in putting together an application.

Please speak to the Dan Cox in the Business Services team for further information: 01728 448207 |  
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# FRAM FARMERS LAUNCHES BRANDED RANGE OF MINERAL BUCKETS

New own-brand mineral buckets add to the vast range of livestock feed and animal health products available to Fram Farmers members.

The Fram Farmers livestock team, made up of Jodie, Jessica, Bex, Josh and Lorraine, works with nearly 250 different suppliers, offering a huge range of products, from animal medicines, breeding supplies and feed, to chemicals, sundries, and equipment.

Each year, Fram Farmers members purchase 193,400 tonnes of feed products through the cooperative, including straights, blends, compounds, molasses, milk powder, fats and in-feed minerals. Alongside this, animal health products, including drenches, vaccines, flukicides and fly and worm control, amount to an incredible £4.84 million.



Each member of the team specialises in a different product area, carefully sourcing a huge range of livestock related products, ensuring they are available at key times of the year, are cost-efficient and perform well. The teams' knowledge and experience means they are aware of seasonal demands, and are able to plan ahead and negotiate good prices on behalf of members ahead of time. For example, in recent months Jess and Bex have been negotiating on early worm and fly control ahead of turnout.

## NEW MINERAL BUCKET RANGE

Working with a reputable company which specialises in manufacturing quality mineral buckets and feed supplements, Fram Farmers has created its own branded range of mineral buckets for dairy, beef and sheep.



With Jodie's diploma in nutrition, the new buckets have been developed to Fram Farmers' own formulation, which has been tested and benchmarked on performance against other well-known brands.

The range consists of five core products:

- Pre-calver – a high specification mineral lick for dairy and suckler cows during the dry period.
- Cattle Optimiser – designed to supplement dairy and beef cattle throughout the year
- Cattle Mag High – a high specification mineral lick for dairy or beef cattle at risk of grass staggers
- High Energy Sheep – For ewes, lambs and rams, providing essential nutrients throughout the full grazing season
- Special Sheep – With elevated levels of vitamins, minerals and trace elements to support flock performance all year round

On top of this, the range can also offer bespoke formulations for cattle or sheep; understanding that every farm is different, at times, a completely bespoke approach may be needed. For this reason, Fram Farmers can work with members to create customised formulations suited to individual feeding systems and complement forage available.

"We firmly believe nutrition is key in maximising livestock performance," explains Jess Frost, Fram Farmers

Livestock and Animal Health Specialist, who has been working closely with the manufacturer to bring the new range to members, alongside Jodie.

"Being part of a cooperative means members, understandably, expect to have access to a wide range of products, and our new buckets provide our members with a strong balance of performance and value for money."

"Being available directly from us means the lead time between ordering and delivery is only 7 days, compared to the lengthier lead time of some brands, which are usually sourced from distributors," she adds. "This is effectively enabling us to provide a more streamlined service and a good value option."

The new range will be available alongside the usual brands, which will still be available through Fram Farmers' trusted suppliers. They are not designed to act as a direct replacement, only as an additional option to those members looking for a more cost-effective product, or perhaps a bespoke solution.

**The new Fram Farmers range of Feed and Mineral Buckets for dairy, beef cattle, and sheep are available now. Please contact Jessica Frost and Bex White in the Livestock Team: 01728 727 716 | livestock@framfarmers.co.uk**

# INTRODUCING THE MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Over the years, the Fram Farmers membership has expanded to include members in many regions across the UK. Here, we introduce the membership development team, so, no matter where our members are, they have a familiar point of contact.

## DAN COX

Membership Development and Business Services Manager



Dan heads up the membership development team, having joined Fram Farmers in April 2020.

Managing overall strategy and service delivery, he oversees the team and works directly with members in East Anglia, alongside the business services division which also launched in the same year.

In his role, Dan has outlined steady growth targets, enabling the cooperative to continue to grow and bring benefits to members in a changing industry.

“We’re working towards sustainable and healthy growth,” Dan explains. “Delivering the same level of service for all members is vital while we achieve this, but at the same time, we need to make sure we remain relevant in the industry.”

Dan is looking forward to having more touch-points with members this year, with the return of industry events, including the likes of The Suffolk Show and The Royal Norfolk Show, as well as technical industry events, including the Low Carbon Innovation Show and LAMMA, where Fram Farmers will be exhibiting.

“We pride ourselves on knowing our members, so it’s important for that to remain true. We will be able to converse with members in-person much more this year, and we have plenty of our own events planned in various locations,” Dan adds.

“We have a really strong team in place now, alongside our specialist teams, and everyone is well-placed to ensure members feel like they’re part of the cooperative, no matter where they are in the country.”

**Dan can be contacted via email or mobile: [dan.cox@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:dan.cox@framfarmers.co.uk) | 07515 716180**

## BECKY BOWER

Membership Development Manager (South)



Becky has been the point of contact for Fram Farmers members in the South since the cooperative joined forces with Lewes Farmers in 2007, which means that she has known some members for over 25 years! She is a familiar face for every member South of the M4, plus Gloucester.

Day to day, Becky generally spends time following up on new membership enquiries and organising regular follow-up meetings with current members, ensuring they’re using their membership to its full potential, receiving a good service and value for money.

Located around 4 - 4.5 hours from the office, Becky is on-hand for Fram members who feel that much more remote, visiting members on-farm and acting as the additional communication between office staff and members. She also spends time ensuring the supply chain is strong to serve the predominantly mixed livestock and arable businesses in the area, recommending local suppliers and engaging with potential new suppliers.

“My role also involves organising physical meetings with members of the Fram team, sorting logistics to make it time efficient for staff members to visit the area,” she explains. “This enables them to meet and talk to fifteen members in one visit, rather than just a few.”

“I’m also putting together member events for each of the areas - Kent, Gloucestershire, Cornwall, Wiltshire and West Sussex. It’s important for members to have something tangible where they can meet together and feel like part of a group, so we’re restarting the popular ‘Pie and Pint’ meetings and arranging some farm walks hosted on members’ farms.”

**Becky can be contacted via email or mobile: [becky.bower@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:becky.bower@framfarmers.co.uk) | 07768 835343**

## JOHN HOOD

Membership Development Manager (Northwest)



John Hood, an established independent agronomist, joined the Fram Farmers team in the role of Northwest Membership Development Manager in 2021.

Alongside his agronomy business, John provides support to members throughout Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and North Wales, assisting them to make the most of their Fram membership.

His day-to-day activity generally involves visiting and speaking to members while on the road, dealing with any potential issues, and being the point of contact for the area. He is listening to feedback on how membership can be improved, and helping members to utilise the membership to its full potential. In addition, he is working on growing the membership in the area.

“My career to date means I have been working closely with a large portion of the farming community in the Northwest for many years, mainly in a client/business capacity, a number of which are also Fram Farmers members,” explains John. “So it makes sense, with this overlap, that I am well-placed to tie the two together.”

John has a long-standing history with Fram Farmers, as he was involved when Fram initially expanded into the Northwest area in the nineties, so his role continues to build on that many years later. He is keen to ensure there are a number of accessible events in the region, and is in the process of organising some farm walks to get members together.

John will also be spending time working with suppliers and potential suppliers, ensuring that Fram Farmers is working with the right businesses in the Northwest, making sure they are a good fit for the cooperative, and that members have access to the best deals.

“No doubt there are members in the region whose paths haven’t yet crossed with mine, so I urge them to give me a call,” adds John. “Or if a neighbouring farmer who isn’t yet a member would like to learn more about the benefits of Fram Farmers membership, then I am always keen for a chat. Please do pass my details on,” concludes John.

**John can be contacted via email or mobile: [John.hood@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:John.hood@framfarmers.co.uk) | 07879 685296**

## TOM LEE

Membership Development Manager (East Anglia)



Joining Fram Farmers in January this year, Tom is the newest member of the team. Having grown up in Suffolk, studying at UEA in Norwich, and covering much of Norfolk and Suffolk in his role as Farm and Land Management Contracts Manager at Natural England, he knows the area well.

Covering Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, which totals approximately 900 members, Tom’s role involves building and maintaining relationships with members, ensuring they are using their membership to its full potential.

He is currently shadowing Dan in his role, engaging with new and current members and taking them through the full range of services available, knitting the departments together and making introductions to the specialist teams. This includes introducing members to the new business services division, which, due to Tom’s background, is familiar territory.

Based in the head office in Framlingham, Tom’s role also encompasses internal comms, expanding membership information out to Becky and John in the South and Northwest, keeping them up to date with any changes or important updates within the cooperative.

“Farming didn’t stop through Covid and neither did Fram Farmers. That commitment is what drove me to join the team,” explains Tom.

“We understand that members value face-to-face interaction and I’m looking forward to seeing members at more events this year, particularly the local shows in my area. The Suffolk Farming Conference was a huge success for everyone involved and I hope it really sets the tone for this year’s events in the East.”

**Tom can be contacted via email or mobile: [tom.lee@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:tom.lee@framfarmers.co.uk) | 07436 790611**



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# HABITAT AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS BRINGING KEY BENEFITS TO MID-SUFFOLK ARABLE FARM

Fram Farmers member Winfield Farms reaps rewards from Countryside Stewardship projects

Fram Farmers has played a key role as part of a range of projects that have included creating new woodland, wildlife habitats and wildflower meadows on Ed Nesling's 375ha arable farm in the heart of mid-Suffolk, in doing so helping to transform the local environment.

The raft of improvements and new features include 13ha of winter bird food, 19ha of flower rich margins and plots, and the planting of 4ha of new woodland, all under the Countryside Stewardship grant scheme.

"We have planted nearly 4,500 trees, including Oak, Lime, Beech, Hornbeam, Field Maple, Norway Spruce, Hazel, Crab Apple, Hawthorn, Holly, Silver Birch, Wild Cherry, Western Red Cedar and Scots Pine," enthuses Mr Nesling.

"We also have 5ha of various options including bumblebird mix, nesting plots for lapwings, beetle banks, scrub and grass strips," he adds.

Elsewhere, the farm has de-silted a couple of existing ponds to rejuvenate them, and dug two new ones, with plans to create a lot more wetland habitat in the future by doing some flood prevention measures on farm upstream of Debenham village.

Having been encouraged and assisted to introduce more habitat and conservation improvements following discussion with hedgerow and woodland management expert Richard Negus, Mr Nesling is now enjoying the benefits of the various options he has implemented.



Hedges are very important to the farm and its scheme. Over 1000 metres of hedges have been laid, 250 metres coppiced, and 400 metres of new hedges have been planted.

"Richard's knowledge and contacts have been invaluable in a lot of the work we have carried out, and we are already seeing the benefits of what we have done," continues Mr Nesling.

For example, in the recent Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) big farmland bird count, Winfield Farms had good numbers of many red listed birds, including yellow hammers, linnets, grey partridge, lapwing, skylark, green finches

and field fares.

"We also have a peregrine falcon that comes to visit regularly, as well as barn owls, little owls and kestrels," he adds, "Hopefully as the trees, margins and hedges get more established then we will see more and more of these species and a raft of others too."

Mr Nesling believes the beetle banks, bumblebird mixes as well as the wildflower plots should greatly improve insect numbers on the farm, which will not only go to feed a lot of the birdlife around the place, but also predate on aphids and other crop pests and help to pollinate the farm's arable crops too.





The family owned and run operation, growing winter wheat over 210 ha, all going to local mills for animal feed, 60 ha of OSR and a further 60 ha of spring beans, has also been grateful for the support of Fram Farmers, particularly in helping source trees, stakes and guards for the new woodland areas.

“We have been members since we reorganised our business in 2007 but the previous family farms had been using Fram for many years before that,” says Mr Nesling.

“They were very helpful to me when I wanted to get quotes for the 4,500 trees, stakes and guards. I told them the numbers and species I was looking for and they came back to me in less than a

week with prices and options from three different suppliers,” he adds.

This meant Mr Nesling could make an informed decision on what to purchase, as he had to try and make sure the cost of the trees, guards and stakes allowed some of the grant money to be left over to help cover the cost of the planting too.

“Being a member of Fram Farmers is hugely beneficial to me and my business...”

“Being a member of Fram Farmers is hugely beneficial to me and my business, as it helps to simplify the whole ordering and billing process, saving me a huge amount of time. This can be very precious, especially at certain times of the year. “The app on my phone is particularly useful as I can order products to be delivered the next day from my tractor cab,” says Mr Nesling.

Mr Nesling runs and manages Winfield

Farms with one part-time employee, alongside his father Richard who helps to run the grain store at harvest time. A full-time lorry driver also undertakes haulage of cereals from local farms, much of which is sold through Fram Farmers to local mills and ports.

His wife Bev and mother look after the books and run the back-office operation, giving Ed the support to embark on his conservation work. With the help of Fram Farmers, they are now enjoying the benefits that will only increase as the new habitats develop.



## THE IMPROVED LLOYDS COMMERCIAL CARD NOW AVAILABLE TO FRAM MEMBERS

**Fram Farmers are pleased to inform members of the opportunity to take advantage of the Lloyds Commercial Card, now with the improved service of data management. Designed to save you and your business both time and money this card can help streamline administration and automate the reconciliation of purchases.**

Purchases made via the card are collated and paid in full as part of your monthly Fram Farmers statement; the Lloyds Commercial Card is used as an alternative to a debit or credit card. Free with your Fram Farmers membership, the card can be used across any Fram Farmers or non-Fram Farmers suppliers wherever Mastercard is accepted. You can view transactions online to help keep track of spending and you can set up multiple cardholders and limits to suit your business needs.

The Lloyds Bank CCDM mobile app is also a great tool to streamline the administration elements of receipt capture, coding and approvals. Never worry about losing paperwork - the app allows you to photograph receipts, uploading them to attach to transactions on the go.

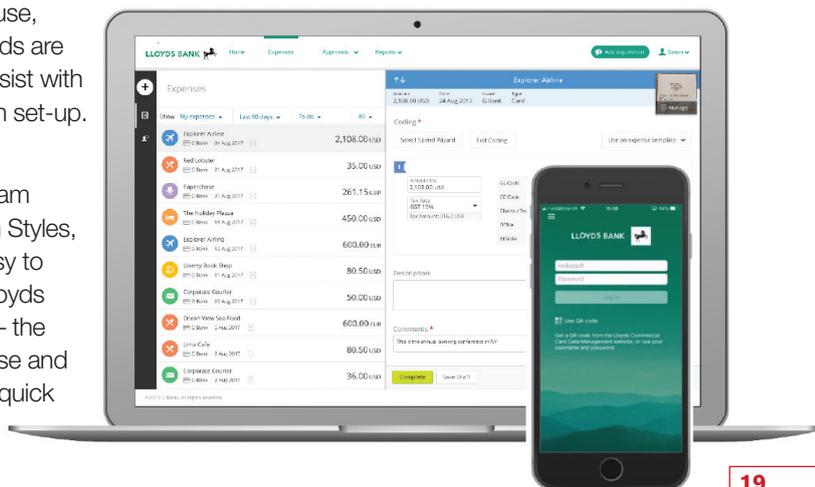
Available to download on both Apple and Android devices, the app is very straightforward to use, or the team at Lloyds are also available to assist with training and system set-up.

Used internally by members of the Fram Farmers team, Tim Styles, COO, says “It’s easy to recommend the Lloyds Commercial Card – the apps are easy to use and make the process quick and simple”.

For more information regarding the Lloyds Commercial Cards or would like to register your interest in acquiring a card please contact the team by email: [members@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:members@framfarmers.co.uk).



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# HATCHING A PLAN...

## INTRODUCING THE FRAM FARMERS POULTRY GROUP

**Fram Farmers in early stages of developing a group to bring further benefits and efficiencies to the independent layer sector.**

For several years, Fram has operated a pig group for its members based a feed manufacturing agreement with a feed mill partner and independent nutritionist-led diet specifications, with Fram Farmers procuring raw materials for feed and sourcing and prescribing animal medicines.

Chaired by a pig-producing member, the objective of the group is to lower the overall cost of pig feed for all group members, and minimise the risk to volatile commodity markets.

Fram Farmers is uniquely placed in terms of the range of skills, knowledge, and capabilities, regularly providing market intelligence on the raw materials markets and making recommendations to the group. The group then determines their risk appetite and Fram manages the overall procurement of raw materials using a range of hedging tools.

### LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Feed makes up approximately 50% of total production costs in the sector, and is by far the largest single cost in egg production. A large number of independent egg producers are currently sourcing feed direct from

feed companies without access to raw materials risk management tools to help reduce the volatility of feed markets and, subsequently, their production costs.

Based on the success of the pig group model, and the similarities to be drawn between the raw materials used in the production of layers' feed and pig feed, Fram Farmers is in the early stages of developing a poultry group, bringing the benefits of this approach to its members within the independent layer sector.

Fram Farmers member Toby Rush of Rymer Farm near Bury St Edmunds is an independent egg producer with 32,000 laying birds. He is one of the first members to join the group and was keen to join the group when first approached by the cooperative.

"The key concept of this group and what makes it work, is trust," Toby explains.

"I am able to stand back from the day-to-day worry of trying to buy at the best prices and quantities, knowing that the task is being managed by a professional team with our best interests at heart."

"It's early days as yet, with four members, but I hope that the group will be able to bring considerable benefits to independent egg producers in the same way the pig group has been helping members for years, not only through managing costs, but also by connecting like-minded members facing similar challenges."

**If you are interested in joining the group, please contact the Fram Farmers office: 01728 727700.**



## NEW BOILER SERVICE OFFER EXCLUSIVE TO FRAM MEMBERS

**Fram Farmers is pleased to announce that a new service plan from Certas Energy, the UK's largest distributor of oil, is exclusively available to Fram Farmers members.**

Certas Energy, which has a long-standing relationship with Fram Farmers, and has been providing Fram Farmers members with fuel since the conception of the cooperative, is offering their new 'Boiler Shield Plus' plan to members at the

discounted rate of £270 per year, or for a monthly £22.50 direct debit agreement.

The recently-launched comprehensive plan covers an annual service, parts, labour and breakdown for oil-fired boiler owners and is not available to any other farming cooperative.

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# FARMERS ARE AT THE HEART OF INNOVATION

## EXPLORING THE JOURNEY AND BENEFITS OF AGRI-TECH E

**From predictive crop models to match supply and demand, to facial recognition for animal welfare, and technologies developed for the shipping industry being used in greenhouses, 'agri-tech' is transforming farms globally. Fram Farmers is a long-standing member of the UK's leading agri-tech ecosystem connecting farmers and tech developers, and we caught up with its founding Director, Belinda Clarke.**

Agri-TechE is the UK's longest established and largest membership network organisation of its type. Funded by member subscription and with its roots firmly in the east of England, it brings together an increasingly international network of growers and farmers, technology developers and researchers, investors and entrepreneurs, as well as technical and commercial services providers for agri-tech (such as agronomists and agricultural business consultants).

Farmers, innovators and future thinkers (both on farm and in workshops or laboratories) come together to help advance current practices, tools and technologies, while researchers gain real world insights into the major challenges facing the industry which need some of the UK's best brains to tackle them. And exciting new technologies – either in development, or already on the market – find end-users to trial, test and implement on their farms.

Defra is increasingly keen to engage farmers in R&D, encouraging adoption of new technologies, and participation in trials, so the political will to help connect those developing new tools and exploring new practices – with those who will be implementing them – is central to future policy.

Belinda Clarke, Founding Director of Agri-TechE, tells us more: "As a research technician at the John Innes Centre, I thought it was crucial to talk to farmers about our science. I was studying take-all disease of wheat, and black rot of

brassicas and it struck me that there were few structures in place to help those conversations happen frequently and effectively with the ultimate beneficiaries of our research!"

Reinforced by a Nuffield Scholarship, Belinda did a global tour exploring knowledge exchange between farmers and innovators and found many places did it better than the UK.

Fast forward to 2014 and the opportunity emerged to harness the new political energy around agri-tech, resulting from the UK's national agri-tech strategy. A conversation between scientific and farming leaders across the east of England led to agreement of the need to better join up the research, technology development, and farming communities. The result was Agri-TechE, formerly known as Agri-Tech East, but as the scope and membership grew beyond the east of England geography, the name changed to reflect this.

"Farmers are at the heart of the journey of new innovations and practices in the field," explains Belinda.

"Too often, technology is developed in isolation, with the ambition to then 'sell it to farmers', but Agri-Tech E's 'Farmer First Innovation Group' provides a way for farmer members to be introduced to new technologies, offer feedback to the developers – and help inform and accelerate its journey to commercial practice (and hopefully leading to competitive advantage for the early-adopting farmer)."

Through this group, innovators are guided through the challenges facing



*Belinda Clarke,  
Founding Director of Agri-TechE*

the industry via farmer-led hackathons, business plan competitions and events where farmers are able to discuss and describe their challenges, feeding ideas and practical context into the innovation journey. The network also helps farmers, researchers and businesses to find funding for projects, provides the opportunity to post job vacancies, and free, discounted or exclusive attendance at many events (2021 saw 37 events).

From participating in showcase events at Cereals, to discussions with policy-makers at the House of Lords, Agri-TechE has also led study tours of technologists and farmers to the USA and Canada, and holds an annual conference in Cambridge.

"Members are diverse and range from those developing diagnostics for livestock diseases such as TB and Johnes disease, to those supplying staple and speciality crops, and Universities to weather forecasting innovators. Farmers have always been innovators, and Agri-TechE provides the opportunity to explore how innovation can benefit farming businesses," Belinda concludes.



# Agri-TechE

**For more information and to find out how to become a member, please visit [www.agri-tech-e.co.uk](http://www.agri-tech-e.co.uk)**



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