



FARMING'S NORTHERN POWERHOUSE

Agriculture in the North West contributes £726 million to our economy. Help us to protect and grow this essential sector



INTRODUCTION



Farming's Northern Powerhouse

When it comes to food production in the United Kingdom, a staggering 15% of the industry is based in the North West.

Despite the region being the home of major cities such as Manchester and Liverpool, which have world renowned reputations for

heavy industry and commerce, our 12,815 farming and growing businesses in the North West quietly go about their business collectively producing a wealth of food commodities and contributing more than £726 million to the economy.

These farmers and growers are world leaders in food safety, animal welfare, traceability, and environmental enhancement, with these values reflected through our annual food and drink export value of £2 billion.

The region is also home to some of the world's best-known food brands and manufacturers, such as Warburtons, Kellogg's and Heinz as well as a wide range of high quality, independent local food companies like Nelstrop and Flavourfresh.

From Michelin star restaurants to a plethora of cosy country pubs serving local seasonal produce, the North West region is a culinary hotspot, with iconic dishes such as Eccles cakes, Cumberland sausage, Lancashire hotpot and crumbly Cheshire cheese being firm favourites in the nation's heart.

This report explores the value, diversity, and importance of these North West farming businesses, celebrating the very people behind the region's farm to fork success story.

Throughout this document, you will meet the farmers and growers providing produce to McDonalds, Carling, and major UK retailers. You'll also learn about their role in the vibrant agri-food supply chain.

Farming's Northern Powerhouse highlights some of the issues we face and calls on politicians, businesses, and other industry stakeholders to back us.

Ian Bowness

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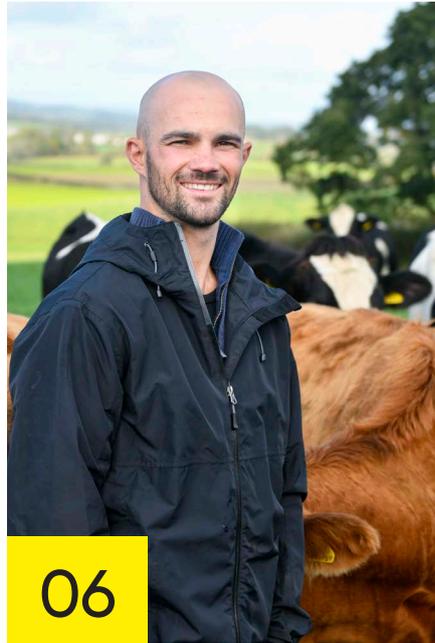
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DID YOU KNOW?

15% of the United Kingdom's food production industry is based in the North West

A fundamental contribution to the region

Made up by the counties of Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and Cheshire, the North West corner of England may be the home to a large percentage of the country's food processing sector, but it's far from a world of factories and chimney pots.

The region is home to seven million people (13% of England's population) and attracts many walkers each year who explore the region's farmland as well as England's largest national park, the Lake District, and three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Bustling livestock auction marts and grazed fells are images you'd instantly associate with the region.

Livestock farming is crucial with 20% of England's sheep flock and over 30% of England's total grazing livestock being found in the region.

There's also a small pocket of West Lancashire historically referred to as the 'salad bowl' of England, its peaty soils making it perfect for growing.

All of the farming and growing businesses in the region are major employers and job creators. They help underpin and support the 94,196 people working in the North West food and drink industry - from professional services such as veterinary specialists and land agents to those working in processing and packaging, contributing a total of £4.5 billion GVA to the economy.

FOOD FOCUS

More than 80% of the land area in the North West is designated as rural, with all sectors represented in the region – especially livestock and dairy. Here we look at the vital importance of them all.

LIVESTOCK

The North West has a thriving livestock sector with 17.2% of England's livestock production worth £1.6 billion.

Home to three million sheep and 426,780 beef cows, the region has the infrastructure, the skills, and natural resources to cater for global red meat demand efficiently and sustainably.

The hills of the North West are home to 30% of England's Less Favoured Areas (LFA) grazing flock and 20% of the country's sheep breeding stock.

High altitudes, extreme climates, shorter growing seasons, and low soil fertility add to the complexity of farming in these areas, with land marginal and limited in its use, with diversification opportunities rare.

North West hill farmers must be equipped with the tools to run profitable, productive businesses.

Most of the North West's sheep breeding stock are sold through the region's 16 auction marts. Sales figures from Shearwell Data, a leading expert in visual and digital animal identification, reveals 145,780 North England Mule Sheep Association (NEMSA) lambs were sold in 2019. Yet, this figure is undervalued as it does not acknowledge unregistered lambs, lambs sold privately, or lambs retained for flock improvement.

The region produces 21.5% of England's lamb worth £138 million and 16.5% of England's beef worth £239 million.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the North West there are 44 red meat abattoirs and processors employing 3,000 people



HORTICULTURAL

Running highly capital intensive, scientifically progressive, technologically advanced, and environmentally responsible businesses, the North West's 331 growers produce an abundance of safe and nutritious fruit and vegetables, catering to a range of dietary requirements.

Growing 7% of the nation's spuds and 13% of our glasshouse and protected crops, the North West horticulture industry has an economic agricultural value of £116.9 million.

Highly dependent on water usage, a strategic approach to water infrastructure is needed to ensure businesses have the tools to balance surplus and scarcity in order to continue producing food.

A total of 6,270 people work in the manufacturing of potatoes, fruits, and vegetables in the North West.



DAIRY

Producing enough milk annually for 77 billion cups of tea, the North West is home to 25% of England's dairy herd with more than 480,000 dairy cows.

These 1,500 dairy farm businesses are efficient, sustainable operations, providing a range of delicious dairy products worth £713 million to the economy.

Recent years have seen dairy farms across the country suffer from a shortage of permanent labour, with farmers employing EU and non-EU nationals to fill these highly skilled positions. Future immigration policy must therefore consider the needs of the industry.



NORTH WEST FOOD STATS

THE NORTH WEST HAS A THRIVING LIVESTOCK SECTOR WORTH £1.6 BILLION

THE REGION IS HOME TO 3 MILLION SHEEP

NORTH WEST HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY HAS AN ECONOMIC AGRICULTURAL VALUE OF £116 MILLION

THE REGION PRODUCES 21.5% OF ENGLAND'S LAMB

EACH YEAR, AN AVERAGE OF 864 MILLION EGGS ARE LAID IN THE REGION

NORTH WEST WHEAT AND BARLEY GROWERS CONTRIBUTE A TOTAL OF £87.3 MILLION TO THE ECONOMY

39% OF BARLEY GROWN IN THE NORTH WEST IN 2019 WAS APPROVED FOR MALTING

ARABLE

The North West grows 33,741 hectares of wheat and 40,426 hectares of barley, contributing £40.9 million and £46.4 million respectively to the economy.

The region's cereal crop is predominately destined for high protein livestock feed (64% of wheat and 61% of barley) rather than human consumption. This helps to support the North West's integrated livestock supply chain.

3,530 people work in the North West's livestock and pet food processing industry, representing 25% of the UK total.

The region is home to multi-million-pound feed companies such as Massey Feeds, North West Farmers, Carrs Billington and Dugdale Nutrition Ltd.

Remaining wheat is milled to form key ingredients in globally recognised brands such as North West based businesses Warburtons and McVitie's.

Arable farmers in the region go to extensive lengths to take care of the countryside through Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a practice combining farming techniques to manage pest, disease and weed pressures.



DID YOU KNOW?

Regionally, 5,450 people work in the manufacture of beverages, making up 14.7% of the UK's total



POULTRY

The North West poultry sector is diverse, with a broad range of production systems complementing customers' needs to provide affordable products for all.

9 million birds in the region contribute £326 million to the economy via meat and egg outputs.

Poultry meat contributes £274 million and 1,000 people work processing these birds in the North West.

Each year, an average of 864 million eggs are laid by more than 2.7 million hens in the North West, representing 11% of England's total laying flock.

Eggs are a natural source of protein, vitamins and minerals and form a stable ingredient in regional recipes due to their versatility.

Poultry farm workers need on the job training and experience. Research reveals the sector needs access to a competent workforce to continue producing safe affordable poultry products. Across England and Wales, 61% of those employed in permanent positions in meat processing and 35% in egg processing are non-UK nationals.

MEET THE NORTH WEST'S **FARMERS AND GROWERS**

As part of Farming's Northern Powerhouse, we wanted to focus on some of those busy over the hedgerow growing crops and rearing animals. The farms and the associated businesses they work with help make the North West the vibrant and diverse region it is.

Alongside managing the working countryside, environment and contributing to our health, well-being, and communities, farmers also give support to the wider supply chain by buying feed, fuel, fertiliser, and they have vets and farm advisers.

They also engage rural accountants, solicitors, and others in the land-based sectors as well as other allied services like feed merchants, machinery dealers and agronomists.

NFU North West members underpin a wider number of other businesses, and we asked our farmers and growers to name some of the suppliers they regularly trade with, to help showcase the vital link between our farms to surrounding jobs, communities, and the local economy.



The Towers family

Lancashire

A project now led by third generation family member Ed Towers; Brades Farm in Farleton near Lancaster is the first agricultural business in the world to successfully produce carbon credits via reductions in methane emissions.

This is achieved by feeding the herd of 170 Jersey cows and 270 Holstein Friesians a garlic supplement which reduces methane by 30%.

The Towers family have been in partnership with the company that supplies the supplement since 2018, when the farm was the first in the world to take part in a commercial stage trial. That company is now able to claim back the carbon credits Brades Farm produces.

Contributing to the agricultural industry's target of being Net Zero by 2040 will only be achievable if the farm is profitable, which is why the Towers family have seized the market opportunity to maximise value from their produce, developing the UK's first barista milk specifically designed for pouring into coffee.

All year-round calving ensures the consistent protein levels required by specialist coffee baristas for flavour and long-lasting latte art. Milk is hauled by S J Bargh of Lancaster to Creamline Dairies in Manchester for distribution to coffee shops in London, Manchester, Leeds, and Liverpool.

Baristas who source their milk from Brades Farm can visit the cows anytime they like, Ed has even built a viewing gantry.

Neighbouring farmers Malcolm and Judith Sanderson rear all of the Towers family's young stock from three months old, usually 220 cows in the summer and 180 in the winter months.

Brades Farm employs five full time local staff on top of Ed and his mum and dad.

Ed manages 380 farmable acres with 20 acres dedicated to woodland and hedges which provide habitats and food sources for local wildlife. Collaboration with Lune Valley Rivers Trust saw Ed fence Farleton Beck to improve water quality.

He's also keen to give the next generation an opportunity and is always on the lookout for school leavers who want to learn the skills needed for successful dairy farming.

Who does the Towers family do business with?

Processing well in excess of 1,000 invoices a year, Ed estimates he is doing business with 90 different companies annually, most of which repeatedly. He counts Malcolm and Judith Sanderson, Carrs Billington, HJ Lea Oakes, Advanced Nutrition and NWF Agriculture as those he exchanges the most money with.



MEET THE FARMERS

Richard Fair

Cheshire

A third-generation dairy farmer in Poulton, Cheshire, Richard Fair milks 950 cows on a rotary parlour system.

Aiming to maximise cow comfort and welfare Richard spent £4 million in 2015 on a project to amalgamate his three separate dairy herds into one.

Richard supplies Muller, Britain's seventh biggest food and drink brand, with 10.3 million litres of milk annually. His milk is processed either for liquid milk or for Muller branded desserts and yoghurts.

Richard spends £230,000 each year on permanent and part time labour, employs five full-time EU nationals and three full time UK nationals and three more part time staff.

As cow health and welfare is at the heart of the business, he works with Lambert, Lennard and May, a specialist dairy veterinary practice.

Calving all year round, Richard uses the global company World Wide Sires to select artificial insemination (AI) straws suitable for the farm's breeding plan.

Every year £41,000 is spent on sexed semen to breed herd replacements and beef calves to meet market demands.

Richard spends £289,000 per annum to rear his female calves off site.

Richard's farm is home to one of England's largest rural collection of archaeological finds, ranging from Stone Age, Iron Age through Roman to Medieval times.

He has established a charitable trust to preserve and investigate the large amount of skeletal material, in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University and Wrexham Glyndwr University, local historians, trainee forensic scientists and international experts. Domestic animal remains suggest the land has always been a thriving agricultural hub, and as very little is known about Bronze and Iron Age settlement sites in Cheshire, these discoveries play a crucial part in rewriting and furthering historians' understanding of prehistoric Cheshire.

Who does Richard do business with?

He hires three local contractors, Dutton's Agricultural Contractors Ltd, Pete Ravenscroft and R C Goodwin, for seasonal machinery field tasks to the value of £220,000. Approximately £871,000 per annum is spent on bespoke feeds and minerals from Duynie Feed UK, Europe's largest procurement company, and North West Farmers, a business supplying more than 4,750 UK farmers with ruminant animal feed.



Cheshire in focus

Cheshire is a county that is well known for its dairy production, with its temperate climate and ability to grow grass well, it has become the home of some of the country's leading dairy farms as well as leading dairies. For example, Grosvenor's Eaton Estate in Cheshire produces over **35 million** litres of fresh milk a year – enough for half a million people every day and award-winning cheese makers Joseph Heler in Nantwich that have been producing award winning cheese for more than 100 years.

Agricultural land quality across the Cheshire area is generally good, with more than **70%** being of Grade 3 or above. The spread of livestock across the county clearly demonstrates the change in land quality as you move across Cheshire with **77%** of the sheep being in the east of the county.

More than **7,000 people** are employed on **2,804 farm holdings** covering nearly **160,000 hectares** of land. **55%** of the land mass in Cheshire is in Cheshire East, with **41%** in Cheshire West & Chester and **4%** in Warrington.

Looking across the North West, Cheshire is the only county to have more cattle than sheep with their populations being very similar in number.

Cheshire has **17%** of the land mass of the North West region and is home to circa **229,000 cattle** which is **25%** of the region's cattle herd. This is in comparison to Cumbria where the sheep outnumber cattle over 4:1 which shows Cheshire's agricultural capacity for beef and milk production.

The Peak District to the east of the county is a protected landscape and Cheshire West does not currently have any land with protected status, but the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge, a diverse, distinctive, and celebrated landscape located in the heart of Cheshire has been nominated to be an Area of Outstanding Beauty.

Covering **230 square kilometres**, the Sandstone Ridge is less than one hour from Liverpool and Manchester, and is rich in heritage, archaeology, wildlife, and culture.

Reference

Defra June Survey and Cheshire West & Chester local plan

The Kelly Family Cumbria

Supplying the Co-op with premium Hereford beef are the Kelly family from South Cumbria. The Kelly family run one of England's biggest Hereford herds, calving 300 pedigree Hereford cows plus followers with 750 in total on 900 acres of grass pasture land.

Noticing consumer demand for high-quality beef, the Kelly's diversified into Herefords, a native English breed renowned for their quiet temperament and ease of calving.

Each year 50 two-year-old bullocks are processed by Dunbia, a red meat processor sourcing and manufacturing products for retail, commercial and food service locally, nationally, and internationally.

The beef is aged for 28 days to develop its rich flavour before it arrives on Co-op's supermarket shelves.

Heifers are sold for breeding. Genetics and estimated breeding values are important to the business as the Kelly's sell bull semen to dairy and beef farmers globally.

Every year, pedigree Hereford buyers travel from all around the UK to purchase 60 to 70 home bred bulls which the Kelly family advertise via social media.

To continue improving the genetics and carcasses of their herd, they import semen and embryos from Australia and America.

Who do the Kelly family do business with?

Yearly, nearly one hundred local businesses are paid by the Kelly family for essential services needed to keep the farm business running efficiently.



David Brass

The Lakes Free Range Eggs Company in Cumbria

Cumbrian based 'The Lakes Free Range Eggs Company' was established by David Brass in 1997.

With 70 farms and 140 flocks totalling 2 million laying hens supplying the company with eggs, David retains the company's original ethos to provide the best habitats for the hens, striving for high environmental and welfare standards alongside profitable production.

Across the farms and packing site, 110 people are employed with salaries amounting to £3 million each year. Four people work within the company's agriculture team liaising with suppliers, and St David's Poultry Team vets are kept on retainer, costing David £10,000 each year.

To reduce reliance on staffing, £840,000 has been invested on several packing robots and egg laser technologically and a further £515,000 on developing and installing a custom-built bird performance management system to monitor real time data on farms.

Reducing energy usage and carbon emissions is at the forefront of David's on-farm innovations. With a focus on range enrichment, the company's suppliers must plant 20% of their ranges with trees. As a result, 214,000 trees have been planted following guidance from the Woodland Trust.

Solar panels in fields provide shelter for the hens and 200kw of solar energy.

500kw of ground source heat and 200kw of biomass further the environmental credentials of the company and the energy produced is used to power the egg packing facility, creating a circular climate friendly approach.

MEET THE FARMERS

Mark, Louise, and Christopher Forster Cumbria

Rearing 4.8 million chickens each year across two farms in Cumbria for the supermarket and fast-food sectors are Mark, Louise, and Christopher Forster.

They produce for the 2 Sisters Food Group which supplies the business with day old chicks and feed.

With an annual turnover in excess of £8 million, Greengill Foot and Beaverlodge poultry farms in Penrith, have 26 sheds in total housing approximately 25,000 birds per shed. The birds are reared from a day old and leave the farm after 38 days. A new batch comes to the farm 51 days later.

The health and welfare of the birds the partnership rear is of paramount importance. Working with Will Gorton at Agri Vets, the business buys a lot of probiotic, prebiotic, and natural remedies to improve gut health which reduces antibiotic use.

Mark employs six full time staff across the two farms. Local housing in the area being too expensive to buy or rent is a big problem for the business which currently house all of their workforce in bungalows on the farm.

Passionate about succession, Mark and Louise have handed more control of the business over to son Christopher who is already making significant investment changes.

He has purchased a new £300,000 Draper Vent Computer System which Mark says has revolutionised their sheds.

Touch screen 55-inch computers control and monitor every aspect of the shed including water consumption, light intensity, how far vents are open and the biomass heater. Every member of staff can access the system from their smartphones, and everything is alarmed for faults.



Mark said: "The new computer system signifies the important changes Christopher is already making. This is real succession in action."

In 2014, the farm invested £2.9 million on biomass technology to provide better heat for the chickens. To fuel these, Mark spends £390,000 per annum on sustainable wood pellets from Land Energy in Scotland.

Who does Mark, Christopher and Louise do business with?

Mark, Christopher, and Louise run two feed wagons. They invest £8,400 in a wagon repair and maintenance contract with Solway DAF depot in Cumbria, Emersons Commercial Services look after the trailers and fuel is bought from Allan Stobart Lubricants and Fuels. Per annum, he spends £200,000 on bedding from Penrith based company A W Jenkinson, a company specialising in animal bedding, wood co-products and transport.



Edd Houghton Cheshire

Producing 300 tonnes of barley each year for Carling and various real ales is Cheshire farmer Edd Houghton.

As part of the Molson Coors (UK) Carling Western Growers' Group, Edd contract grows Red Tractor assured winter and spring barley for malting, producing enough grain for 9 million pints of beer per annum.

Carling is the only mainstream lager to receive Red Tractor certification, ensuring high quality standards from grain to glass.

400 acres of Edd's wheat, oil seed rape and oats are processed by Cargill.

To add extra income to the business, Edd contract sprays for 80 local farmers and sells 5,800 straw bales to livestock farmers in the region per annum. He spends £40,000 on 150 tonnes of fertiliser and £13,500 each year on machinery maintenance and repair.

For 11 years running, Edd has hosted national trials for Home-Grown Cereals Authority winter wheat on his farm, attracting 80 farmers from across the UK each year.

Mark Jenkinson and family Cumbria

Farming 800 organic hill sheep and 40 Aberdeen Angus cattle on the John Strutt Conservation Foundation estate near Kirkby Stephen are the Jenkinson family.

Mark produces 400 North of England Mule breeding lambs per annum. Approximately 20% are sold through the H&H auction locally at Kirkby Stephen at specialist sheep sales in the autumn attracting buyers from across the country.

The remaining 80% are sold privately by Mark on farm to meet a steady demand for organic breeding replacements.

Each year Mark sells 600 wether lambs (castrated males) through the local auction or to Dunbia to supply Sainsbury's.

Eight pedigree Aberdeen Angus bulls are sold each year mainly to local dairy farmers, the steers are processed by Dawn Meats for Marks and Spencer.

Also 40 dairy bred Aberdeen Angus calves are purchased to rear and sell as stores. Surplus heifers are sold off farm to establish new herds, on some occasions sold abroad, but there has not been much interest recently due to Brexit.

For the past 18 years the farm has been in Conservation Schemes and Mark works alongside the Cumbrian Wildlife Trust and Natural England to ensure maintenance and enhancement of all farm species, rich hay meadows, high bird pastures and limestone pavement.

Many kilometres of hedgerows have been planted alongside infield trees to create shelter and habitat for Mark's growing population of wildlife.

Archaeological features such as ancient settlements can be found on the farm and Mark is keen to secure it for the future.

Who does Mark do business with?

Cattle and sheep equipment purchased through Carrs Billington at Penrith from IAE, Prattley and Ritchie.

Cars supply and maintain the machinery such as Massey Ferguson, High Spec and Can Am.

Toppings of Langwathby supply and maintain the MacHale round baler and wrapper.

Feed is purchased from High Peak Feeds of Derbyshire and Carrs Billington.

Vet meds are supplied by Pendragon Vets who are involved in the herd and flock health plans, also Carrs Billington and Eden Farm Supplies. Straw is purchased from Messrs G Atkinson, Brough.



Cumbria in focus

Farming is the lifeblood of Cumbria's economy. Livestock and dairy farming are synonymous with the county. Cumbria is the largest county in the North West with over **half a million hectares** of land making up **54%** of the region.

Eden is the largest farming area, taking up **32%** of the land area, and as part of East Cumbria contributing **£57 million** of the county's **£87 million** Non-Value Added (NVA) to the economy.

On Cumbria's **5,135 farm holdings** you'll find **56,000 head of beef** and over **2 million sheep grazing** in the fields and **108,000 dairy cows** producing **900 million litres of milk** per annum – the second largest dairy herd in the UK.

Farming in the county directly employs more than **12,000 people** on either a full time or part time basis.

Agriculture also underpins the county's vibrant tourism industry, attracting **45 million worldwide visitors every year**.

In Cumbria you'll also find hectares of open fells managed by farmers. In the Lakes you'll find the largest concentration of Common Land in Great Britain – **112,900 hectares** which makes up 16% of Cumbria's entire land mass.

References

Defra Farming Statistics

Farming in the Lake District: Lake District National Park 2018

Federation of Cumbrian Commoners

Lancashire in focus

Fruit, vegetable, and salad production in West Lancashire represents **94%** of the county's total (71% of the North West total), with the neighbouring authority of South Ribble accounting for the only other amount of note in Lancashire.

Although many of the growers in West Lancashire are huge companies supplying the majority of the UK's supermarkets and food processors, their names are not associated with their produce at the point of sale to the public and therefore they tend to have low public profiles.

Livestock and dairy farming are predominant within the county, the majority grazed on grassland. In Defra's survey of agriculture and horticulture, **83.8%** of the county's agricultural land was classified under this heading. And you'll find **47%** of Lancashire's sheep flock grazing in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Approximately **10,000 people**, or about 3.4% of the English total, make up Lancashire's agricultural workforce. The intensive land use farming in West Lancashire also leads to a high demand for regular and casual workers to supplement the farm owners and salaried managers. West Lancashire, Lancaster, Ribble Valley, and Wyre authorities account for **62.6%** of agricultural employment in Lancashire.

References

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture 2013



Flavourfresh Salads Ltd Lancashire

Growing 6,897 tonnes of unrivalled quality produce per annum from their base in West Lancashire is Flavourfresh Salads Ltd, one of Britain's leading commercial glasshouse growers.

Globally recognised for their flavoursome tomatoes, the company specialises 75% of its production capacity on 2,700 tonnes of tomatoes each year to supply the UK's major retailers: Asda, M&S, Booths, Co-op and Morrisons.

To meet growing demand a new greenhouse, one of the most state of the art in the country standing at seven metres tall, was erected in 2018 costing Flavourfresh £2.5 million.

Working in partnership with Berry Gardens, who have exclusive rights to the Driscoll strawberry varieties, Flavourfresh grows 600 tonnes of strawberries and 97 tonnes of Victoria blackberries each year.

These fruits are sold as premium products to Sainsbury's, Waitrose, and M&S. The company spends £1 million per annum globally sourcing and propagating seeds. Flavourfresh also collaborate with leading industry scientists and seed companies to plant, grow and refine up to 100 new trial

Oliver Harrison

Lancashire

Growing 1,400 acres of cereal crops on the urban fringe near Liverpool is fourth-generation arable farmer Oliver Harrison.

Across a mixture of owned and tenanted land, he grows 550 acres of wheat, 220 acres of oilseed rape, 200 acres of winter barley and 120 acres of spring beans and linseed.

He purchases seed from Openfield, the UK's largest cereals co-operative if it is not home treated by a local contractor.

To ensure his crops have the correct nutrients to grow, Oliver spends £80,000 on fertiliser per annum and an additional £90,000 on plant protection products to control weeds without destroying soils and nests.

Oliver sells his wheat and barley through Openfield to meet the demand from the livestock feed sector, moving his grain off the yard monthly for continuous cash flow.

His oilseed rape goes into Cargill's rapeseed crush plant and refinery based in Brocklebank. This is only one of two oilseed crushes in the UK to produce protein meal for animal feed and rape oil.

Approximately 400 tonnes of straw is sold per annum for £30,000 to North West Farmers through a local haulage firm - Morris Corfield at Chester.

Oliver employs six full time staff and two part time in summer.

He recycles 4,000 tonnes a year of tree waste from the local council to fuel a biomass boiler.

His renewable heat initiative is beneficial to the business since it dries grain and saves £30,000 a year on oil.

Oliver voluntarily plants five acres each year of pollinator mixes and wild flower strips as part of the 'Championing the Farmed Environment' (CFE) initiative and direct drills to protect soils.

Who does Oliver do business with?

Oliver spends £500,000 a year on machinery with various local tractor and machinery dealerships including RVW Pugh at Homes Chapel, John Bownes Ltd at Winford, Clarke and Pulman at Burscough and the Cornthwaite group in Ormskirk.



varieties for tomato flavour perfection.

Recognising that bumblebees are the perfect plant pollinators, the company spends £46,000 each year on colonies of bees from Spanish company Agrobio for the glasshouses.

The company spends £5.1 million a year on salaries for 189 full time staff and additional seasonal workers. Across the business 57% of workers are EU nationals, so continued access to the EU labour market is vital. Onsite accommodation and free Wi-Fi are available to seasonal staff, helping maintain returnee rate each year which is currently 67% but has dipped slightly since Brexit.

Embracing technology and the environment, Flavourfresh along with their energy partner invested £7 million on four combining heat and power (CHP) engines which are managed externally.

These engines generate electricity and heat to aid production efficiencies and yields with surplus electricity sold to nearby housing developments.

THE REGION IN NUMBERS

94,000
PEOPLE EMPLOYED FROM
FARM TO FORK

£2.7 BILLION
THE VALUE OF GOODS
AND SERVICES FROM
OUR FARMS

**EXPORTS £2
BILLION**
OF PRODUCE

**NORTH WEST FARMS
CONTRIBUTE
£726 MILLION
TO THE ECONOMY**

**APPROXIMATELY
10,000 PEOPLE
MAKE UP LANCASHIRE'S
AGRICULTURAL
WORKFORCE**

**2.8 MILLION
TREES
HAVE BEEN PLANTED
ACROSS THE REGION
SINCE 2010**

**PRODUCES ENOUGH MILK
ANNUALLY FOR
77 BILLION
CUPS OF TEA**

SIX WAYS WE WANT TO LEVEL UP RURAL BRITAIN

1

BUY LOCAL FOOD

Promote locally sourced, sustainable British food in all public procurement contracts, to ensure people using local services are eating climate-friendly food produced to world leading standards.

2

PRIORITISE RURAL CONNECTIVITY

Ensure that rural areas are prioritised when investing in rural broadband and mobile coverage, to boost the rural economy and allow opportunities for food producing businesses to take full advantage of new, productivity enhancing technologies.

3

PLAN POSITIVELY

Deliver planning policies which support local farmers in running profitable businesses that contribute to the local economy and the nation's food security through sustainable, productive, and climate-friendly farming.

4

HELP FARMERS POWER THE RURAL ECONOMY

Ensure local economic growth policies support farmers to deliver their dual ambition of reaching net-zero food production, alongside building back the rural economy, by encouraging farming productivity schemes alongside farming diversification projects.

5

CARE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Join the growing number of local councils who are making a safer, cleaner, greener local area a top priority. Ban sky lanterns without delay, promote responsible access to the countryside and utilise Defra's enhanced funding for councils to tackle the scourge of fly-tipping.

6

LEVEL UP RURAL AREAS

Make full use of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to make sure rural areas have equal opportunity to access to public services, including transport, health and housing.



Custodians of the landscape

North West farmers are acutely aware of their environmental responsibilities to habitat and species but also to natural resources, including soil and water, on which their businesses depend.

Living and working at the heart of our iconic landscapes there is no-one better placed to understand the challenges for our wildlife and climate.

Large amounts of the region's farm land is in active environmental management, whether on a voluntary basis or through government funded schemes.

Recognising the true economic value our regional farmers provide in terms of biodiversity preservation, carbon sinks and recreation is key to sustaining the social and economic fabric of farming across the region.

It is important that future policy decisions at all levels of government consider all of these perspectives to strengthen the region's agri-food supply chain's ability to continue feeding the nation, as well as to secure a sustainable future for the next generation of North West food and drink producers.

Much of the North West's farm land is best suited for animal grazing and regional businesses are making best use of that space to produce a great product; farming in this way, over generations, has shaped the landscape, of which we are so fond.

This farmland also conserves important carbon stocks in England's uplands.

Those working the land are also working with our water companies and others to safeguard water supplies and a variety of other organisations and regional firms to protect pollinators and improve bird numbers.

DID YOU KNOW?

20% of England's sheep flock and over 30% of England's total grazing livestock can be found in the region



A food and drink powerhouse

Food, drink, and the farming industries are vital to the prosperity of our region. Via this document and our wider campaigning, the NFU has set out an ambitious agenda to ensure decision makers at a local level are acutely aware of the economic, environmental and food security benefits our small region delivers for the entire country.

It desperately needs protecting and growth needs to be encouraged.

Future decisions made by county, city, metropolitan borough, parish, town, and community councils will have huge impacts on the sector, so we want as many elected officials and civil servants as possible to understand the importance of our businesses.

Our industry over indexes in the North West. The region only has 10% of the landmass, but we have 15% of the food and drink producing industry here and crucially we also have the people and a deep-sea port.

It's tempting to think the urbanised towns and cities of the North West have no direct link to agriculture but as this report exposes, that is very far from the truth. Our urban and rural populations are intrinsically linked by a food supply chain that contributes £726 million to the economy as well as countless jobs.

Many councils are also calling climate emergencies and I hope this report reiterates that agriculture in the region is a vital part of the solution.

With an temperate climate and an abundance of grassland, the North West is the perfect place to produce our red meat and dairy products.

The region is the second largest dairy producer in the country.

Around 65% of farmland in the UK is best suited to growing grass rather than other crops and we do it better than anywhere else.

Grazing livestock allows us to turn inedible grass into high quality, nutrient-rich beef, lamb, and dairy. And remember, greenhouse gas emissions from UK beef are about half the global average.

Councils can help by purchasing locally sourced red meat and dairy for the public institutions under their control. In turn, it will surely contribute towards our collective net zero goal.

A high standard of rural connectivity is essential to take full advantage of new technologies. Lack of digital connectivity acts as a constraint to capital investment. North West farmers need the ability to be able to do business wherever they are, highlighting the importance of quality broadband and mobile phone coverage across the whole of the country. In an increasingly uncertain and turbulent time, access to this essential infrastructure is of paramount importance.

Finally, the planning system can act to make the rural economy less sustainable – preventing farm modernisation, diversification, and home building for farm workers. In some cases, blanket environmental requirements mean that development is refused: a perverse outcome when development would make a farm business more sustainable, reduce its environmental footprint, create jobs, and promote green growth across the sector. A sympathetic and symbiotic relationship is crucial. If farm businesses are allowed to build the right buildings and do it in a way that is sympathetic to the local environment, it can reduce the impacts of production and help in our collective goal to achieve net zero.

We'd love to see you out on a North West farm soon to see first-hand the many benefits our North West food, drink and farming industry can deliver for the good of us all.

I hope to be welcoming you onto a Cumbrian, Lancastrian or Cheshire farm soon.

David Hall

NFU North West regional director



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