

Importance of farming is high and on the increase

PUBLIC opinion of farmers and growers is high and on the increase according to a new survey published by the NFU this week.

Results from the survey show that 84 per cent of the British public agrees that farming will become increasingly important in the years to come with food security high on the agenda.

Overall, favourability of farmers is also on the increase with 73 per cent of people describing their view of farmers as favourable or very favourable, compared to 67 per cent in 2005.

People also have strong views about the role of farm-

ers and growers with the majority saying high priority should be placed on producing high quality food, providing the country with a secure food supply and looking after the welfare of livestock rather than the environment. A massive 96 per cent said growing crops was more important than maintaining footpaths which scored just 49 per cent.

NFU Director of Communications Liz Falkingham said: "These figures demonstrate that the continued availability of fresh, quality food is high on everyone's agenda and that they expect our farmers and growers to do the job and do it well.

"We have seen a growing number of people show they have a favourable view of farmers and those with an unfavourable view is on the decrease registering just six per cent this year compared to 10 per cent in 2005. These views come as no surprise. The NFU has regularly raised the importance of farming in its Why Farming Matters campaign which emphasised the role of farmers and growers not only in terms of producing food but through their contribution to the national economy and as custodians of the countryside."

She added: "We are working hard to show that farmers and

growers can be part of the solution to many of the challenges that lie ahead and more than half of the people interviewed say they think farmers can help in the fight against climate change, with the benefits offered by a variety of on-farm renewable energy, carbon sinks and other innovative green projects. We can help by producing more food while having less impact on the environment.

"The NFU is asking its members for views on a neighbour reassurance scheme as we know using pesticides safely is a big priority for the public, demonstrated

by the 89 per cent who rated this as a priority, over and above protecting birds and wildlife, which scored 74 per cent."

She concluded: "Across the country people know that farmers are working hard to fulfil a multitude of obligations and consumers are starting to vote with their shopping baskets. Those buying British produce is on the increase at 46 per cent - up

from 38 per cent in 2008. There is also a strong message to retailers - with 84 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that farmers are being driven out of business by supermarkets - that consumers are aware of, and dislike, poor treatment of suppliers.

"This chimes very much with the clear need for an ombudsman - something that the NFU continues to push hard for."

Alan re-elected as chairman of Dairy UK

MARK Allen has been re-appointed Chairman of Dairy UK, following a year of strong progress. He was re-elected unanimously at Dairy UK's board meeting, held in London.

Mr Allen, CEO of Dairy Crest, became the first industry chair at Dairy UK in Autumn 2008. He has overseen integration of The Dairy Council, the re-invigoration of the Dairy UK Farmers Forum and the development of new relationships with DairyCo and the Food Standards Agency.

Speaking after the meeting, Mark Allen said: "Despite the challenging trading circumstances that our sector is operating in at present, it has been a successful year for Dairy UK.

"We have given our Farmers Forum a new lease of life, and it is now grappling with a series of really important issues. We continue to work closely with interests from across the whole supply chain, including the farming unions, government and a range of NGOs. And we are working hard on the environment and nutrition agendas.

"In the coming year, Dairy UK will keep developing initiatives and positive messages on behalf of the sector. We are fully conscious of the many difficulties being faced by dairy farmers and processors of milk and dairy products at present."

Also this week Robert Wiseman, CEO of Wiseman Dairies, and Peter Humphreys, CEO of First Milk, were reappointed Vice Chairman of the Dairy UK board and Roger Evans Honorary Treasurer.



Ballymoney Agricultural Show Secretary Anne Morrison, right, was delighted to receive the Davy Lafferty Trophy from his daughter Mrs Ellen Mullan at this year's event. The splendid new trophy will be presented to the exhibitor of the best Old English Game Bantam at Ballymoney Show in memory of Mr Lafferty, a great poultry enthusiast, who with his wife Una, exhibited at numerous shows across the province including Ballymoney.

PICTURE: Gary Jackson

Advisory group is formed

A JOINT industry and government working group has been set up to advise on how best to develop the body which will oversee responsibility and cost sharing.

Announcing the new advisory group at the Royal Show in Stoneleigh, Food and Farming

Minister, Jim Fitzpatrick, said: "It is vital that Defra and the farming industry work together to ensure that industry knowledge and experience is at the heart of disease control and eradication. The group will be chaired by Rosemary Radcliffe.

More money with Durapak slatted rubber

DURAPAK Agri, the Cork based agri wholesalers, claim that their Durapak Slatted Rubber will bring between two and five times more benefits to farmers who install their three piece product over and above their competitors.

According to Seamus O'Callaghan, the company's Managing Director, Preliminary Trial data from Teagasc research facility in Grange, Co Meath shows that Durapak came out on top in the combined Teagasc Studies on slatted rubber for

2006 and 2007. Teagasc carried out a very extensive trial using 360 Beef Bulls and they compared three different makes of slatted rubber with out-wintering pads and bare concrete slats.

The Durapak mat came out on top and produced animals with an increase in carcass weight at 14 kilo over and above bare concrete slats which is worth about £40-£45 per head of animal (386 kilo carcass weight - 372 kilo = 14kg extra). In addition the Durapak mat (as well as out-wintering pads OWP) produced ani-

mals who achieved a higher carcass classification worth possibly £5-£10 per head of animal.

Briefly it means that where farmers install the Durapak Slatted Rubber they will be able to make an extra £45-£55 per head of animal.

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