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May 2022

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Editor's Note

Rules, red tape and bureaucracy



Firstly, may I say what an honour it is to join *Meat Management* as its new editor. I know the magazine has an excellent pedigree for clear and concise opinion and reporting, in addition to supporting this great industry. I am delighted to become part of an outstanding team of professionals that work hard to serve our readers and advertisers.

As I get my feet firmly under the editor's desk and review much of this month's content, one theme seems to be coming through loud and clear. Our government must do more and do it quickly to deal with the myriad of red tape slowing down business; it must prioritise on improving food security, and in-particular, stop ignoring the current trade imbalance.

Many of our highly esteemed contributors are coming together with this type of message – quite independently of each other.

It would seem that free trade under the TCA is simply not happening, British business is being damaged because of unfair controls and this government makes a lot of noise about taking action, but in reality, does not a lot! Empty vessels? Ministers Eustice and Prentis are hardly being endorsed by our writers and a 'head in the sand' approach by government is often referred to in the articles I have read, both past and present.

In his final and most excellent column for *Meat Management* (before his pending retirement) Peter Hardwick of BMPA asks – is the government listening? It's a good question and many might well answer no! JP Garnier talks about feeble and worn excuses at a time of crisis. Kerry Maxwell expresses concerns about the worsening export situation for poultry. And so it goes on.

We expect better and we must have better. One also wonders what sort of influence Defra actually has these days. Be assured, however, that *Meat Management* will remain in the vanguard and will bring to book those that need to account for how they support this industry (or do not support it). Feeble and worn excuses will not be accepted!

Enjoy the read.



Liz Hendley
Editor

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STORY**



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So you can also find out more about them, here is a useful link:

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Market intelligence



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Industry bodies slam government for inaction in response to EFRA report

Industry bodies from across the UK meat sector have welcomed the latest report from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) covering ongoing labour shortages, but underlined the need for more action.

The new report calls for a “radical rethink” of labour strategy, including a review of the skilled workers visa scheme.

Commenting on the report, Neil Parish, chairman of the EFRA committee, said: “The government’s attitude to the plight of food and farming workers was particularly disappointing.”

The Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS), the National Pig Association (NPA) and National Farmers’ Union (NFU) have joined the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA) in voicing their concerns.

According to BMPA, the new report from the EFRA committee highlights the damage that government inaction is having on the UK food sector. CEO of the BMPA Nick Allen said that it was a concern that, over the past few years, the government has consistently taken a ‘wait and see’ approach to looming labour shortages.

He added: “We would urge government to use their newfound control over our immigration system to solve the chronic labour crisis that is currently impeding the whole economy.

“Yet again, we find ourselves imploring government on behalf of British food producers and consumers to listen.”

A spokesperson for AIMS Tony Goodger said: “The publication of EFRA’s fourth report on labour shortages in the farming and food sector suggests that no one in government appears to be taking any notice of their recommendations.”

The NPA has called on the government to learn from the recent crisis and work with the industry to address the



• Nick Allen, chief executive of the BMPA.

labour issues that have crippled the pig sector over the past year. According to the Association, EFRA’s report highlighted “the desperate problems the shortage of butchers in processing plants have caused the pig sector and accused Ministers of not taking them seriously enough.”

Commenting on the publication, NPA chief executive Dr Zoe Davies said: “The report is clear that labour shortages, brought about in part by changes to government policy, have had a huge impact on the pig sector, which is still fighting for its survival.”

NFU president Minette Batters said that the EFRA committee’s report backed up the NFU’s long-standing call for a more enabling immigration policy which mitigates against the labour shortages and structural issues that have existed throughout the food supply chain for months. The NFU president explained that farm businesses are trying to recruit staff domestically, but rising wages have had little impact because the labour pool is so limited.

She added that the industry was currently facing rapidly rising costs on farming and continued global uncertainty caused by the Ukraine crisis.

AHDB data confirmed that lamb prices remained stable over the Easter holiday period. Estimated slaughter was at 201,600 head, down 16% on the week before due to a short week.

This year's date for the much anticipated Women In Meat Industry Awards ceremony and black-tie dinner has been confirmed as Friday 11th November by organisers YPL Exhibitions & Events. TV celebrity chef Rachel Allen will host the ever popular dinner and the organisers expect a sell-out occasion.

In the week ending 16th April, the average all-prime deadweight cattle price rose by another 4p to average 436.3p/kg. This meant the measure stood 33p above the price recorded in the same week a year ago. An estimated 479,000 prime cattle have come forward this year.



BPC asks government to help poultry producers build sustainable labour plan

To tackle the challenges of the ongoing labour and skills shortage of meat industry workers, the British Poultry Council (BPC) is calling for financial support from government-backed loans. This will help businesses accelerate investment plans to automate and upskill the British poultry meat industry as quickly as possible, in order to 'level-up'. The BPC is also asking that vital food production be kept at the heart of skills and education programmes.



Asda and Morrisons cut meat prices to win customers

Asda and Morrisons have cut prices across a range of meat products as supermarkets face a fierce battle for customers amid soaring inflation. Morrisons said it would offer an average 13% price cut on more than 500 goods including beef, chicken, sausages and ham. Meanwhile, Asda announced it had "dropped and locked in" prices on some products until the end of the year.

British butchers "first choice" for sustainability

Trade body National Craft Butchers (NCB) released the results this month of its first ever survey of British butchers across the UK.

The survey found that sustainability and provenance are growing concerns for consumers and British butchers alike. Reducing food miles and supporting regenerative farming practices and the rural economy are top priorities for the majority of craft butchers.

NCB said: "Red meat produced in the UK is amongst the most sustainable in the world, so consumers can be confident that British livestock production is part of the solution not the problem."

Technical manager of NCB Richard Stevenson added: "The results of our first Butchers Survey are a timely reminder that British craft butchers, like the farmers that supply them, take climate change seriously. They sell high quality, responsibly farmed British meat because they believe it's the best."

HCC report highlights global meat supply challenges

A new report published by Hybu Cig Cymru – Meat Promotion Wales (HCC) underlines how changes in supply patterns could lead to a limited supply of red meat, particularly beef, on the global market.

The report concludes that global supplies of beef will remain limited over the short to medium term, due to below average production in the EU and US specifically, solid domestic demand in the US and elevated import demand from China and the rest of Asia.

In addition, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is impacting trade flows and has led to fuel, grain and fertiliser prices rising significantly.

The report considers supply and demand factors in some of the world's key beef and sheepmeat producing regions, including the UK, the European Union, New Zealand, Australia, the US and Brazil.

Pembrokeshire farmers expressed anger at the local council, after it became public that an internal email had been sent out to all local council staff urging them to adopt a more plant-based diet. Farmers highlighted the need for the local council to be supporting the local meat industry.

Heather Kelman officially started her role at Food Standards Scotland (FSS) as the organisation's new chair. She brings more than 40 years' public sector experience, including 10 years as a dietitian, and most recently as a strategic planner and senior manager within the NHS.

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the UK, Bede Corry, addressed a Court Luncheon at Butchers' Hall, stating his enthusiasm for the latest FTA between the UK and NZ, and future trade between the two nations. Meat trade between UK and New Zealand dates back 140 years.



BMPA called for more government action on Dover backlogs

Backlogs of lorries carrying perishable goods at the port of Dover threatened to cause chaos to the meat industry as no prioritisation system was in place to allow lorries carrying meat and perishable goods to clear the backlogs quicker. Bad weather, Easter holidays and P&O Ferries routes being suspended led to congestion around the port. The BMPA asked government to put a prioritisation system in place and to adopt a more 'can-do' attitude. Backlogs are now clear.



Pigmeat producers still making substantial losses but Sainsbury's offers extra support

In the five weeks to 19th April, the Standard Pig Price (SPP) has reported some of the largest weekly rises ever recorded – but the huge increases in costs faced by producers means that pig producers are still losing substantial sums of money. Supermarket giant Sainsbury's has stepped in and offered its pork farmers an extra £2.8 million in support to help them navigate these challenging times.

Meat industry responds to further delays on import controls

Trade bodies from across the UK meat industry have responded to a government statement announcing the further delay of import controls on EU goods, with mixed opinions.

The delay announced by the government will affect the introduction of full SPS checks and the introduction of certification for imports from the EU. The government statement said that no further import controls on EU goods will be introduced this year and businesses can stop their preparations for July for now.

CEO of the International Meat Trade Association (IMTA) Katie Doherty said: "Though I know some will be frustrated about yet another delay, I know that with all the current supply chain pressures that for many this delay will be welcome."

The Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW) said UK government were "dithering" on the implementation of

Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) controls, and the decision would expose "Scotland's beleaguered pig sector to potentially devastating disease risks." The British Poultry Council (BPC) added that delaying full controls until 2023 "dances round disparity and the consequences of third country trading."

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) called the government's decision "unacceptable" and said it will result in "another significant blow" for British farm businesses already facing unprecedented rising costs.

NFU president Minette Batters said: "It is astounding that the government is taking such an unacceptable approach to critical checks for agri-food imports from the EU. These checks are absolutely crucial to the nation's biosecurity, animal health and food safety and without them we really do leave ourselves at risk."

Getting to the root of the climate issue

• Patrick Holden, chief executive of the Sustainable Food Trust (SFT).



Livestock farmer and chief executive of the Sustainable Food Trust (SFT) Patrick Holden has a 'painful but necessary' message for the meat industry when it comes to responding to consumer demand and tackling climate issues through food.

Q. What are your views on the current state of the British meat and livestock industry?

A. I don't really like to use that term – the livestock industry – only because I think it implies factories, and intensive practices. And these are terms that tend to put people off. I think we are an industry, but we're also a community.

In practice, the messages that the industry – and I use these words advisedly – have been putting out are increasingly out of tune with what the public's needs and expectation for the likes of products they eat; and I think that this poses our community enormous challenges, but also equally big opportunities.

We have to grasp the nettle and face things; and in opening up the opportunities, we cannot ignore some of the areas where the public are increasingly disenchanted with us. I think that if we don't rise to this challenge, we will see a rise in veganism and vegetarianism, especially amongst young people who don't really understand the issues, let's be honest.

We need to ask: 'what even is the vegan thing?' It's a kind of protest vote, and young people in particular think there's a lot of intensive livestock production out there; and they think 'I don't want anything to do with that.' They don't like the idea of the lives of the animals. They don't like the slaughter idea, either.

And the situation is further complicated by the so-called "eat better together coalition" and the environmental community now, ironically, joined by the Climate Change committee. Even Sir David Attenborough, who is saying we should eat less meat. And I personally think that that messaging just adds to the confusion.

I think we have to differentiate between the livestock systems which are part of the problem – which will hurt quite a few people in the industry – and those which are part of the solution. Know the difference, tell our customers the difference and move towards the one which is part of the solution.

Now, that is a seismic shift in the whole way in which we produce livestock in the UK, but also throughout the world. We've got to face that. And if we don't, we're going to lose customers, and face a disenchanted public and a science community that don't think we're part of the solution.

Q. What does the SFT define as a 'sustainable food system'?

A. We've gone a long way down the intensive road and it's going to be painful to come back up and redesign our farms and livestock systems. It's not just the infrastructure, the centralised abattoirs, the centralised meatpacking plants, all of which serve a kind of industrial client, but it's the farms as well. Farming, especially poultry, pork and even increasingly dairy production have become unbelievably focused on large scale production.

This means that farmers are mostly just platforms for imported nutrients, animal feed, and fertilisers, and they're no longer operating within the environment of the farm that they occupy. They're causing massive environmental pollution, and we must face these things. We can't just tweak the systems; we have to redesign them.

Now, that is a painful message to the industry; and I'm not saying it in some sort of angry way. I'm just saying, it's the truth. If we are going to avoid irreversible climate change, and massive pollution of our environment, which we are part of, we have to change our farming systems from the ground up; we have to live within planetary boundaries; we have to adhere to the principles of the circular economy; we have to minimise our use of non-renewable inputs and produce healthy food from the ecosystem of the farm which we are managing.



• By trade, Patrick is a dairy farmer and tends a herd of Ayrshire cows.

Livestock and meat production have a central role in that system, not a marginal role. So, if you want me to define what sustainable food system is, I would say it goes right back to many of the principles I've just mentioned.



• Patrick believes that making the food supply chain more sustainable will improve resilience and food security.

Q. What are the impacts of a sustainable food system on those at the start of the supply chain?

A. If the whole of the United Kingdom transitions to truly sustainable food systems, it's going to be a very different landscape. Grain production is going to halve or thereabouts because, if you move away from chemical to biological farming, you can't produce the yields or the acreage of grain that we've got at the moment.

I think we're going to have to go back to expensive chicken, and lamb or beef as staples. There'll be less chicken because we haven't got enough grain - same with pigs. The feed will hopefully be swill again and arable by-products. So, there'll be fewer pigs, and pork will be more expensive. It will be very welfare friendly, very delicious and a treat. And that's not where we are today.

I realise I'm giving a pretty bleak message to all the pig producers that have been suffering so much recently. I feel for them. It's really horrible what's happening at the moment.

I think the truth is, is that if we address climate change, a lot of the intensive livestock production is going to have to disappear; and livestock production is going to be much more extensive. And the animals, the staple meats are going to come from mainly grass fed animals.

Q. What about further down the supply chain? What can they expect from a sustainable food system?

A. Let's start with abattoirs. The animal's journey to slaughter should be shorter; and that's why a lot of people are giving up eating meat, because they don't like the idea of huge, factory-scale slaughterhouses with long travel distances to get there. That's the current policy at some supermarkets in the UK. I think they are hoping their customers haven't noticed; but their customers are noticing that some of the travel distances are very long.

◀ The policy that some retailers have about using a single abattoir for as much as possible per species, that must change. It has to change. When I started farming there were 3000 abattoirs or something like that. They've shrunk by 90%. The abattoir industry has to rebuild to what it once was.

I believe that retailers ought to make a claim to their customers that no animal whose meat they sell travels more than 'x amount of miles'. I want to be radical and say 30 miles, but even if it was 100 miles, that would be such a vast improvement on today.

Meat cutting plants should also be decentralised. Since travel is going to get more expensive, I think there's environmental advantages to that as well. Also, there's the abattoir waste. A lot of small abattoirs say one of their key costs is processing their waste.

"We've got to start with redesigning the whole system of slaughter and processing. That's got to be so painful, but it needs to be done."

So, we've got to start with redesigning the whole system of slaughter and processing. That's got to be so painful, but it needs to be done; and the industry is in the middle of the sandwich on that obviously, because, you know, we're slaves to the retailers, but the retailers in turn are slaves to their customers.

Q. How do you think the current industry challenges – widespread labour shortages and price inflation due to Brexit complications, Covid-19 and the Ukraine conflict – are hindering the transition to a more sustainable food system?

A. In term of labour, what we've done - and I'm saying this with massive respect – is we have denigrated working in food factories to an economic underclass, mainly Eastern European workers; and how ironic is that? We've created a sort of economic underclass because people don't want to work in our own food factories, or pack houses, and that has to change. We have to reinstate the social and cultural economic status of working with food. And I think there's a lot of young people who get that, that's why these micro-dairies and craft butchers are popping up all over the place.

Ukraine has reminded us about food resilience and the urgency of this. Ask yourself this question: what keeps a population from migration? The answer is secure supplies of local food. So, to become fully sustainable, we need to think about that.

A lot of British farmers are wondering what they're going to do at the moment without with nitrogen fertiliser at £1000 a tonne. There's a simple thing they must do: move back to mixed farming. And that means reintroducing a rotation with a fertility building element of probably about 50%. If they bring in great animals, cattle and sheep, they can turn the grass into money; and those same animals will build soil and inoculate it with friendly bacteria.


That's what has to happen but at scale. Now, to make that happen, we have to harness the power of the consuming public to buy that meat; and that will come from challenging how we educate the public.

Q. What can the meat industry do to tackle misinformation about the sector?

A. I think it comes down to the fact that we have to work out what our message is to begin with and make it consistent. I think that the tech community [which produce plant-based proteins], particularly those with billions of pounds of investment, which have been generated by these investment coaches, they think of the product as a new investment or a marketing opportunity.

Personally, I'm suspicious of these fake meats. I don't think we [as a country] want to replace farming in harmony with nature with laboratory-produced protein. I also think it may not have such a good environmental footprint as they're claiming. I think that its carbon footprint may be higher than we think; and I'm not convinced of its nutritional integrity.

You cannot have sustainably produced plant foods without livestock. That is my view. I think livestock form a central part of the sustainable food system, because they alone can come convert the grass or the pastureland.

However, [plant-based protein] is the bandwagon. That's the train a lot of people today have gotten on, which has left the station. So, we need to think about what our messaging is; and we can't just say 'meat is good'. I'm afraid that is not going to cut it anymore. 



Volker Fahldieck

Sausage Specialist Alginate Expert



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Wildlife friendly meat



Jeannine Williamson speaks to Farm Wilder founders, Tim Martin and Luke Dale-Harris, about their West Country based venture that provides high welfare meat whilst supporting struggling British wildlife species.

Fritillary butterfly beef might sound like a new take on the technique of cutting through meat to prepare it for cooking, however for Farm Wilder it has a very different meaning.

Along with cuckoo friendly beef and lamb, it is part of a far-reaching initiative to promote sustainable farmers that go the extra mile to conserve and encourage wildlife on their land and provide consumers with high welfare meat that comes with additional environmental credentials.

Funded by grants, produce sales and donations, Devon-based Farm Wilder is a non-profit community interest company that was founded in 2019 following a conversation between two like-minded individuals concerned about the damage being caused to Britain's countryside by intensive farming.

In addition to selling 100% pasture-fed Devon beef and lamb to West Country butchers and meat, poultry and game nationwide through a new online shop partnership, Farm Wilder also supplies beef to fellow ethical company Ember, that produces salami-style steak slice snacks sold in Sainsbury's.

"To encourage wildlife we need to encourage farmers to look after it, so if we can separate out food that is from farms with endangered wildlife I thought that would be a really good step in the right direction."

“I wanted to try and set up some way that you could, as a shopper, buy food that you knew would be helping wildlife,” explained founder Tim Martin, a former BBC Natural History Unit executive producer, an award-winning film maker and passionate naturalist.

“That was my starting point. And to encourage wildlife we need to encourage farmers to look after it, so if we can separate out food that is from farms with endangered wildlife I thought that would be a really good step in the right direction. It was about making the connection between buyers and farmers and wildlife.

“While I was mulling all that over I spoke to a friend who is a filmmaker and has made a lot of environmental films, and he said he knew someone who was really interested in that whole area and I should talk to Luke.”

The mutual friend was Luke Dale-Harris who, like Tim, was also working in Bristol at the time. Now a fellow Farm Wilder director, the former investigative environmental journalist also provides farm and policy advice for the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

Tim said: “We clicked straight away. We both wanted to do a similar thing and were very interested in how you work with farmers and support them to be better for the environment and for wildlife, so that’s how it all started.”

Initially the pair looked at a broader range of foods before deciding to concentrate on meat.

“We were quite keen to look at all types of farming,” said Tim. “To start with we thought about whether we could we have wildlife-friendly beer, could we have wildlife-friendly cereal, could we have flour, could we have bakers baking wildlife-friendly loaves?”



• Luke Dale-Harris.



• Tim Martin.

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“The more we looked at it the more we realised that the most urgent area to address was meat production and that was the area where there was the most ability to increase wildlife. Fundamentally when you’re growing arable crops or vegetables you clear the ground of all else and you grow a crop and wildlife can live around the edges, but wildlife doesn’t generally directly benefit from those crops. Whereas with grazing you’ve got thousands of years of evolution of grazing animals alongside plants. It’s all about that connection between the grazing animal and what they eat. So much of our wildlife is grassland wildlife, and so much endangered wildlife is grassland wildlife. It felt like the biggest way to make an impact on the biodiversity of Britain was to change the way we manage grasslands.”

From that springboard they identified two iconic species, the cuckoo and the marsh fritillary butterfly, that could be used to help market the meat and then sought out partner farmers that raised traditional breeds and actively encouraged biodiversity through their farming methods.

The call of the cuckoo has long been the symbolic herald of spring, but in recent years they have vanished from much of Britain, with most now confined to uplands in the north and west where they lay their eggs in other bird’s nests; mostly meadow pipits. Farm Wilder works with RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to help farmers maintain the mix of grass, heather and scrub that encourages wildlife including meadow pipits. The native cattle that thrive on these meadows and moors include Ruby Reds, South Devons, Belted Galloways and Welsh Blacks; all slower growing than modern breeds and producing tasty meat.

Similarly, Devon lamb producers, rearing native sheep such as Scottish Blackface, Welsh Black Mountain and Dorsets, can maintain the habitat that cuckoos need by creating open areas where meadow pipits feed.

“Too many sheep can reduce the heather and scrub where pipits nest, so we make sure stocking densities are low,” added Tim. “Most of our farms produce both beef and lamb, which can make the pastures more diverse, because cattle and sheep graze in different ways. Cattle pull up large clumps of vegetation while sheep nibble the whole pasture short.”

Farm Wilder selects and labels the produce from the farms and the meat is sold through high street butchers including MeatBox in Bristol, P&K Meats in Street and Bill the Butcher in Nunney and Bruton. Ember beef is supplied from regenerative farmers across a wider area in Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire.



• The preservation of the cuckoo is a subject of interest for the company.

“It was really interesting at the outset as some butchers completely got it and they wanted to come on board, but for some butchers it’s all about price,” said Tim. “One of our founding principles is that the farmers who have got exceptional wildlife and are working more sustainably should get a slightly higher price than standard, because that’s one of the key ways we can encourage them to do more for the environment and more for wildlife.

“We think there should be a small premium for farmers who are really going the extra mile for wildlife and we want to find consumers who are prepared to pay a little bit more, not a lot more but more like organic prices. But some butchers didn’t feel they had the right kind of people in their catchment area and felt that it just wasn’t possible and they really needed the cheapest meat they could possibly get. So it was really a question of finding butchers who believed in this enough to be prepared to pay a little bit more and then to be able to tell the story to their consumers. The crucial thing is that we need to be able to make that connection between the farmers and the people buying the meat. The butchers are a key part in that, so we need butchers who are prepared to do that and be part of the conversation.”

In addition to providing meat to selected butchers and Ember, an online shop was launched last year in collaboration with M.C. Kelly, a long-established business with family roots that is a butcher and fine foods supplier to the catering and retail industries. The company’s CEO, Andy Gray, farms in the heart of Devon, which allows Farm Wilder to use M.C. Kelly’s master butchers and online sales platform to deliver meat to customers’ doors.

In addition to beef and lamb, the wide selection of different cuts and products sold through the online shop includes slowly-grown free-range chicken and venison from Forestry England sites in the South West. Meat boxes are also available.

“It’s a really good partnership,” said Tim. “M.C. Kelly really believes in what we’re doing, and they’re helping us to build it up.”

• Farm Wilder believes that there should be a small premium for farmers who are really going “the extra mile” for wildlife.

The range is constantly evolving and with summer around the corner, the latest products are geared for the barbecue season. They include beef koftas and kebabs, lamb and mint burgers, lamb neck fillets, chicken eights - a whole chicken cut into eight portions - and venison steak.

“Many people like eating meat but are uncertain about what to do [...] We’re trying to talk directly to them and say you can eat higher quality meat with a clear conscience.”


By reading the label, customers can see exactly where the meat has come from and the wildlife it is helping to save. Farm Wilder is also actively helping farmers to adopt regenerative farming techniques, including transitioning to raising 100% pasture-fed livestock as part of the Pasture of Life certification scheme.

Tim said one positive benefit of Covid-19 was that people had to reassess their shopping habits, leading to many becoming increasingly aware of food supply chains and looking to shop differently.

“There are many people that like eating meat but are uncertain about what to do and feel guilty about eating meat,” he said. “We’re trying to talk directly to them and say you can eat higher quality meat with a clear conscience.”

For consumers looking to reduce meat intake Farm Wilder’s product development also includes looking at ways to combine meat with other ingredients and utilising it as a condiment or flavouring rather than the main focus of the product.

“We’ve got quite a few exciting new products that will be launching in the next few months,” added Tim.

For now it’s a case of watch this space for the organisation that is working in harmony with nature for the mutual benefit of wildlife, animals, farmers and consumers. 



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Cream of the Cropper



A change of scene led to exciting new opportunities for Croppers Butchers in Accrington, as Meat Management discovered.

The old saying that when one door closes, another one opens certainly applies to Clare Cropper and her father George, who was one of the longest serving traders at a Lancashire market – clocking up 62 years – before circumstances changed and their business took an all-new turn.

George started helping out on a market stall at the age of 14 and worked at a butcher's shop for 15 years before starting his own business with his brother, G&D Cropper Family Butchers, in Accrington Market Hall. In recent years he was joined full-time by Clare who literally grew up in the trade from soon after she could walk.

"I helped out for as long as I can remember," said Clare. "From when I was four or five, we used to turn a box upside down and I would stand on it and serve a few regulars. Then I made sausages and burgers, I used to do all the boring jobs but I used to think they were brilliant then."

Despite the wealth of early experience, it wasn't always a given that Clare was going to follow in her father's footsteps.

"I absolutely loved school and at one time it was my ambition to be a vet, which fitted in with the farming side of things as my father always ran a farm alongside the butchers," she said. "I got A stars in all 12 GCSEs and had an interview at Cambridge and got a place at the University of Liverpool to study to be a vet. My dad had always said: 'You're not being a butcher, you're not being a farmer, you're doing something more academic,' so I suppose that's why I decided I wanted to be a vet."

“But then I just decided against it as I really don’t think I’d have enjoyed it. Then my dad needed a hip replacement. He had 13 weeks off work, which allowed me to take over and without that we would have had to close. So, in hindsight it was probably a good thing.”

Entering a new market

George sold home-produced beef, lamb and other meat to customers that he first served when he was a teenager, but he ended his six-decade association with the indoor market following disagreements over issues including management and parking.

“Times change and things change and I said to my dad that we needed to do something different,” explained Clare. “Our lease was coming up and there was a shop across the road that I went to view one night. It was totally derelict and it needed a lot of work and with eight weeks to run on our lease that obviously wasn’t going to be a possibility. Then the estate agent said the shop on the next corner was coming up for sale. So, I viewed that, put an offer in the next day and within eight weeks we turned it from a sunbed shop into a butcher’s shop.”

On the opening day in July 2019, it quickly became apparent that George and Clare weren’t the only ones to leave the market.

“We are literally just across the road from the market and that’s what really benefited us as all our regulars built up over all the years came too. I would say around 95% stayed loyal to us. The location was definitely one of the major considerations. I had looked at a shop in Clitheroe, which is about ten miles away but we felt we couldn’t do that. We had to think of our regulars and stay loyal to our customers and in turn hope they stayed loyal to us, which they did.”

- Croppers Butchers are well known for their Christmas offering.

The new Croppers Butchers premises have also enabled George and Clare to considerably expand the business, which in turn has led to new customers.

“In the market we were very restricted and my dad only sold meat,” said Clare. “But here we have room to incorporate things into the shop that we could never do on the market, so now it’s more like a mini farm shop. Of course, meat is our priority and takes up the most space, but we’ve got a deli counter and we do cooked meats, sandwiches and make all our own pies. We also do fruit and vegetables and bread, we do a bit of everything. I have also just got a rotisserie and we are going to sell cooked chicken and have a hot counter.”

“Times change and things change and I said to my dad that we needed to do something different. [...] 95% (of customers) stayed loyal to us.”

A family affair

Traditional meat remains a bestseller and it has now been supplemented by produce from Clare’s husband, John Mellin, who is also a local farmer.

“He’s not into the butchery side of things but his family has always had a farm, at one time having a milk round, and now they farm sheep and beef cattle,” said Clare.

Long before the farm to fork movement started, the Croppers have always sold their own meat and what cannot be provided from the family farms is sourced from other local farmers.

- Croppers believes that its customers deserve the best, prize winning meat.





• A restaurant that will exhibit the shop's produce is also in the works.

“We have started doing ready meals such as stir fries, cottage pies and lasagne, and customers know what has gone into them and that they have been made with good ingredients,” said Clare. “A lot of people now say they source things from farms but might not have much idea of which farm. We know it's from our farm and we know the background of every animal on our farm and we know where they've all come from. We aim to source and buy locally wherever and whenever possible as that ensures we can guarantee both the quality and provenance of the meat, as well as helping keep food miles to a minimum.”

In addition to the regular walk-in customers, the business attracts people from outside the area, including Cleveleys and Fleetwood, which are more than an hour away on the coast.

“They tend to come by once a month or so to fill up their freezers,” said Clare. “We have only ever concentrated on retail and don't do any wholesale.”

Family members George, Clare and John now run the business with three full-time staff and two part-time employees.

A positive effect of the Covid pandemic was attracting a new generation of consumers, many of whom had never been in a butcher's shop before.

“A lot of people have gone back to shopping locally and are making a different lifestyle choice,” said Clare. “We now have a lot of new younger customers. They would come in and order what they would normally buy from a supermarket and when you would say: ‘That's £21,’ they would reply: ‘Is that all?’ as they had a perception that butchers are expensive. They would come in and see all they could get for the same money they would pay in a supermarket, along with the quality that we provide.”

Only the best for customers

Over the years Croppers has built up a reputation – and a very popular Christmas tradition – for buying in prize animals from Skipton Auction Mart's annual festive fatstock shows. Last year they bagged a trio of prize lambs, which was a first for a regional retail butcher. Despite often paying well over

triple what a single prime lamb would fetch on a normal market day, the resulting meat is all sold at normal shop prices.

Clare explained: “Once again we made a major investment in our Christmas offering and we're more than happy to make the outlay, as our customers fully deserve the best meat that money can buy at this special time of the year and after what has been such a difficult year. We like to look on it as our annual Christmas treat for our customers. We know the customers really enjoy it and will come in to ask what we are planning to buy.”

Recently Clare and her husband John paid a record price of £5,500 for the supreme champion at the annual Craven Champions cattle highlight held at Skipton Auction Mart. The Limousin-sired heifer won the haltered show class before being judged female and overall supreme champion. John's family members are familiar faces and multiple show winners at the local mart, predominantly with home-bred prime cattle, and their new top price purchase is set to have a promising future on the local and national show circuit.

Back at the shop, there are more developments in the pipeline with the opening of a restaurant showcasing steak from the Cropper and Mellin family farms.

“Above the shop there is an area that used to be a cafe,” said Clare. “We have just done a total refurbishment up there to turn it into a 40-seater restaurant and there's also a bar and we have just got it licensed. We're planning to open in the summer and because we now do sandwiches and lunchtime food in the shop, the idea is to open in the evenings as a steakhouse with a limited menu. Customers can pick the steaks, knowing they've come from the farm, and then they will be cooked for them so they can see the process the whole way through.”

The enterprise will mark the opening of another door on one of only two remaining, truly independent family-run butchers in Accrington. 

• Clare and George Cropper with Jack Rushworth, who works at the shop.





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Why the Ukraine crisis is adding to world meat trade uncertainties

Bob Bansback OBE provides an update on the global meat trading picture as it is now and explores the factors that are contributing to ongoing concerns.



In my article last year on global meat trading (*Meat Management* September 2021), I referred to the slowing down of growth in international trade in meat due to four key factors: supply constraints in major exporting countries; growing evidence of major trade barriers; increased costs - partly Covid-related; and the peak having been reached in imports of pork into China following the African Swine Fever outbreak. Three further factors have appeared on the scene since then:

- The Ukraine crisis, which has had major reverberations not merely for those trading with Ukraine and Russia but is providing a major jolt to worldwide geo-political relationships.
- Food and feed price inflation on a global scale which has partly been linked with the Ukraine situation but had already been developing in recent months. World meat prices are at their highest ever levels and are almost 20% higher in March than a year earlier; feed and fertilizer price increases are even more marked.



- The outbreaks of Covid in China following the continued adoption of the government's 'zero-covid' approach – particularly developments in Shanghai, the world's largest seaport.

This month I will be re-focusing on the global meat trade and also assessing the situation for UK exports now we have a full year of post-Brexit experience.

'Ukraine conflict puts global trade recovery at risk' - WTO

The prospects for international meat exports and imports need to be understood in the context of overall world trading conditions. The latest report from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in mid-April issued by the WTO secretary general, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, warned that the Ukraine conflict was 'putting the global trade recovery at risk'. Although the WTO is forecasting growth in overall world merchandising trade at three percent in 2022, this is well below the average rate in the 2010 – 2018 period and substantially down on their forecast earlier in the year. The key message for the food and meat trade sectors is that there is much more uncertainty about the future than usual.

Table 1: Global Meat Exports (a) (Million tonnes)				
	2020	2021	2022(b)	% Change(c)
Beef	11.2	11.4	11.8	+5.4
Pork	12.6	12.2	11.7	-7.1
Chicken	13.1	13.3	13.4	+2.3
Total	36.9	37.0	36.8	-0.3

a) Beef, Pork and Chicken only
b) Forecast
c) % Change 2022 compared to 2020

Source: USDA Livestock and Poultry April 2022

No growth in world meat trade forecast for 2022

The April 2022 Livestock and Poultry report from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) shows that overall meat exports are unlikely to grow in 2022 (see Table 1). Total exports of beef, pork and chicken (which together account for 90% of all meat trade) in 2022 are forecast to be slightly lower than in 2020. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in the previous decade when meat exports rose by over three percent per annum.

However, there are some important differences in the situation for the various meat categories. Pork exports in 2022 are expected to be seven percent less than in 2020 – essentially because import demand from China has been steadily reducing since the first quarter of 2021. Following the drop in Chinese domestic production after the African Swine Fever outbreak in 2018, pork imports into China had shot up to over five million tonnes by 2020; however, Chinese production in 2022 is now forecast to rise to 51 million tonnes – an astonishing 42% increase compared to the low point in 2020 with the consequence that China can now supply 95% of its domestic consumption requirements.

Trade in poultrymeat is forecast to increase by only two percent in 2022 partly due to the fact that Ukraine, which sent over 400,000 tonnes in 2021 to the Middle East, Africa and EU countries, will not be in a position to export for the time being. Exports from the EU, the world's third largest exporter after Brazil and the US, are also forecast to decline for the second successive year. Nevertheless, increased poultrymeat exports from Brazil, Turkey and Thailand should more than fill this gap. By contrast, strong import demand is contributing to increasing trade in beef. Total exports are forecast to rise by over five percent in 2022 with imports into China, Japan and the US all expected to be higher. Some major export growth is forecast from Brazil (+ 13%) and Australia (+ 14%) but lower volumes are expected from the US and Canada.

Brazil increases its share of global meat exports

An important development to observe is the growing importance of Brazil in world meat export markets. If the USDA forecasts are correct, Brazil will increase its exports by eight percent in 2022 at a time when world trade is relatively stagnant. Table 2 shows that Brazil's export performance has been strong for all meat categories. Its beef exports are forecast to rise by 12% this year helped by greater cattle availability and improved meat plant profitability.

It is also well positioned to fill some of the import gap in poultrymeat markets previously supplied by Ukraine, which help to explain the nine percent forecast increase in chicken exports. Despite lower world pork trade, Brazilian exports are still expected to rise.

One reason for the success of Brazilian exports has been its greater ability to supply different markets; this was shown earlier this year, when confirmation of two BSE cases resulted in temporary lack of access to the Chinese beef market in September 2021. Brazil was in a position to supply higher quantities of beef to the US and other markets during this period. Another important factor has been the relative weakness of the Brazilian Real in 2021, although its value has strengthened significantly since the beginning of 2022 due to rising commodity prices and tightening of the money supply. ►



Table 2: Brazilian Meat Exports (Million tonnes)			
	2021	2022(a)	% Increase
Beef	2.3	2.6	+12
Pork	1.3	1.3	+1
Chicken	4.2	4.6	+9
Total	7.9	8.5	+8
Percent Share of Global Exports	21.3%	23.2%	

a) Forecast

Source: USDA Livestock and Poultry April 2022

Marked drop in UK exports to the EU

Turning to UK exports in the first full year since UK's exit from the EU, the figures, at first sight, have not been encouraging (see Table 3) – principally due to the drop in UK meat exports to EU countries. (The figures in the Table for 2021 are compared with 2019 so as to get a truer comparison with the most recent year unaffected by Covid). Peter Hardwick's article in *Meat Management March 2022* explained very clearly the additional costs and time delays for UK exporters and it is important that these issues are resolved. However, there are some positive signs emerging as well. Firstly, the growth occurring in some non-EU markets, which were highlighted at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Export Conference in March; secondly, unit values of UK exports are steadily rising; finally, the export trade in edible offals showed a rise in 2021.

Brazil will increase its exports by eight percent in 2022 at a time when world trade is relatively stagnant.

Contrasting producer reactions to the UK/NZ FTA

Finally, the major development in recent months on UK Trade with non-EU markets has been the signing at the end of February of the new Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the UK and New Zealand. As in the case with the UK/Australia FTA, there have been major concerns expressed by beef and sheep producer interests throughout the UK, not least because it is coming at a time when important domestic policy changes are being introduced. Many of the comments echo those from Martin Kennedy, President of the Scottish NFU, who said:

Table 3: Per cent Change in Total UK Exports in 2021 (Volume comparison with 2019)

	%
Beef	-24
Pigmeat	-21
Sheepmeat	-26
Poultrymeat	-8
Edible Offal	+ 5
Total Meat	-14

Source: HMRC UK Trade

“Our fears that the process adopted by the UK government in agreeing the Australia deal would set a dangerous precedent going forward have just been realised.”

It seems unlikely that there will be any flood of imported products into the UK in the near future – particularly when the Chinese market provides such valuable returns. It is interesting to note, though, that both Australian and New Zealand beef and sheep producers have warmly welcomed respective FTA agreements. This is likely to be partly because it would provide access to an important market in future years if China were to limit imports due to some trade disagreement or even a geo-political development. ■



We are monitoring the situation!



JP Garnier discusses how there seems to be a lot of talk from government on food trade and security, but not much action.



Last month we discussed a favourite government ploy, “when one does not want to take a decision, create a commission”. Here comes another one, the overused catchphrase “we are monitoring the situation closely”, a feeble and worn excuse to do little in times of crisis.

Food security back to the fore

With the Ukraine war affecting the UK food trade and security, the much anticipated but belated meeting to re-convene the Food Resilience Industry Forum (FRIF) has finally taken place. Secretary of State George Eustice commented: “It’s going to be meeting weekly but we’re also having lots of additional one-to-one conversations with key players. And there’s a sub-group of some of the key producers and key manufacturers that are also a separate group so we can make sure we’ve got the best intelligence.” So, translated into colloquial English, “no action but we are monitoring the situation”, the usual chorus line.

To that effect, this month’s Golden Tripe award goes to minister Victoria Prentis for her answer to a question in the House of Commons on 18th March: “Defra does not expect significant direct impacts to UK food supply as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” five days before the recall of the forum on 23rd March as the country faced major supply issues with bread, eggs, animal feed (and by extension all animal products) and vegetable oil.


Trade figures do not lie

Speaking at the House of Commons Liaison Committee, the Prime Minister said: “There is no natural impediments to our exports; there is just will, energy and ambition”, a hollow statement to discharge responsibility on industry. Despite the blame game, the results are all too clear:

- The trade deficit on goods in January smashed its own record, ballooning at £26.5 billion (£16.2 billion when services are included).
- Trade deficit in goods reached a dizzying £155.4 billion in 2021 (we had a trade surplus in the early 1980s). Goods exports are now 15.9% down in volume from pre-Covid levels.
- World trade in goods and services grew by a substantial 9.3% in volume in 2021, according to the International Monetary Fund. Yet, UK exports of goods and services fell by 1.2% and goods by 2%.
- According to the Office of Budgetary Responsibility, UK trade intensity is down by 15% in 2021 against 2019. This will lead to a costly loss of productivity “of four percent after a 15-year period.”

Positive results despite the odds

We truly have fantastic exporters, active across the world. However, they are not getting the support from government they deserve, particularly when the help on offer is compared to what our rivals are doing in terms of promotion. They also face many more hurdles that our foreign competitors do not have, notably staff availability, veterinary costs and red tape. Of course, meat exporters are benefiting from the support of the levy boards. Nonetheless, the continuing reduction of budgets of levy boards particularly at AHDB (e.g., VAT costs) which has a central position in export promotion may start to affect trade outcomes.

To be continued (unfortunately). 

Jean-Pierre Garnier has more than 35 years of experience in the meat sector, most recently working as head of livestock exports for AHDB.



Everest People Solutions

How Skilled Worker visas are plugging the labour gap

• Everest's mission is to provide a highly-skilled workforce for UK businesses.



Recruitment specialist Everest People Solutions spoke to Meat Management about how it is helping companies in the meat and food sectors navigate the 'perfect storm' of ongoing labour shortages.

According to the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA), the British meat industry, along with many other frontline sectors, has lost around 15% of its workforce to a combination of new post-Brexit regulations and the impacts of Covid-19. Operations manager at Everest People Solutions Simon Simfield told Meat Management that the situation across production, warehousing and logistics for the UK food manufacturing and processing industries was no better. He said: "There are huge holes in some processors' labour profiles. We're not talking about shortages of one or two people; in some cases, it's hundreds of workers that these companies are short of."

Everest works with recruitment partners across the world to attract talent to British businesses struggling to recruit locally. With the aim of sourcing a committed, stable and consistent labour force for UK businesses, Everest helps companies identify and employ candidates on contracts facilitated by the UK's skilled worker visa route.

Current legislation governing the skilled worker route means that successful candidates can live and work in the UK for up to five years, after this period candidates may be eligible to apply for settled status and remain in the UK indefinitely. In order to obtain a visa, candidates must possess a high standard of verbal and written English (accredited) and be equipped with the appropriate skills on entering the country. As recruitment agents, Everest works hard to ensure British businesses have access to this highly skilled workforce through its compliant recruitment routes.

Simfield explained that finding labour is only part of the food industry's current problems; candidate retention commitment and quality are equally concerning issues that the sector is facing.

He said: “Normally, employee turnover can be high within the food processing industry because of the nature of the work offered [...] One of the advantages of the skilled worker route is that it offers companies a stable, committed and consistent labour force and a platform to build from, with staff through the route being offered long-term contracts of employment. Businesses may no longer need to rely on temporary staffing solutions, which can add costs to their business. Our customers tell us that building stable and consistent teams is fundamental to the success of their businesses moving forward.”

Support from start to finish

Everest aims to ensure that businesses are fully supported throughout the recruitment process, from start to finish; and therefore, works to make the procedure as streamlined as possible despite the enduring challenges of doing so. Simfield said that one of the biggest challenges for businesses considering using this route for recruitment, apart from the impacts of the Ukraine conflict and other external factors, was a general lack of understanding of the process due to it being relatively unexplored by many businesses in the sector to date.

He explained: “There are a lot of internal and external factors that can slow things down. Generally, an initial delay in the process may be the result of not having a sponsorship licence, which is the key document businesses need to hold in order to operate the skilled work visa. If you don’t have that in place, it can add several weeks to the process.”

He added: “But despite those interruptions, it is still possible to get people into the UK within 10 to 12 weeks of starting the process.”

As part of its service to UK clients, Everest works with a team of immigration specialists that help guide businesses through the visa application process and remain on hand to offer support throughout the recruitment process.

Simfield said: “There are a number of factors that contribute to the process and it’s important that each step is monitored closely to ensure that the process is as streamlined as possible. As with any government administration it’s important to ensure the information is right first time to allow positive results in the soonest time.”

“We’re refining our practices and making investments in technology and people to help make the recruitment process less painful for businesses in the food sector.”

Skills grading for butchery

Finding the right person for the job is Everest’s top priority. The company does this by evaluating candidates’ skillsets against the needs of its customers’ businesses. For the meat sector specifically, Everest employs a skill grading system that allows the company to thoroughly assess the capabilities of potential candidates.



• Candidates are assessed across a range of core meat handling and processing skills.

The company’s technical team, who wield years of experience in the world of butchery, liaise with clients to determine their skills requirements and then match them with candidates possessing an equivalent or better skill standard. As part of the evaluation process, Everest’s consultants assess skills in knife-handling and technique, de-boning and trimming amongst others, to ensure that each worker’s skillset is correctly identified.

More work still to be done

Everest continues to work with some of Britain’s largest pork, beef and poultry processors to supply labour, and whilst there are reports that there is more labour on the market today, Everest maintains that the labour crisis is far from over and expects sourcing labour in 2022 to be a challenge and for these challenges to increase as the year goes on.

A one-stop shop

Everest strives to offer a ‘one-stop shop’ for skilled worker recruitment, offering clients access to immigration advice, personalised skills assessments and a technology platform that underpins the whole process.

Simfield explained: “With resources in business being at a premium, we offer customers a transparent service that ensures clients know which stage in the process they are at. We continue to refine our practices and make investments in technology and people to help make the identification, assessment, administration and onboarding of skilled candidates less time consuming for clients and individuals alike.”

To find out more about how Everest can help your business, please contact their team on 01603 570646 or email skilledworker@everestps.co.uk

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COVER
STORY

Why Irish eyes are smiling



JP Garnier looks at how some well thought out planning and marketing has stood the Irish meat industry in good stead to weather these trying times.

When Irish eyes are smiling” was the title of a 1912 song. Some 110 years later, the high prices for livestock and the cogency of grazing as an economic and environmental choice are bringing new smiles. With the world grappling with the explosion of prices of grain and soya, the green grass of the Emerald Isle is keeping Irish bovine and ovine products competitive, particularly at a time of relative product shortage.

Current beef prices are up 23% against one year ago according to Meat Industry Ireland (MII). The consistent and long-term promotion of Irish produce including the Origin Green campaign also benefits the product image. Exporters are now reaping the benefits of their preparation for Brexit, their marketing investment in foreign markets and their uncompromising commitment to export. After all, 90% of Irish beef and lamb is exported. However, this favorable situation would not have occurred without the quality of Irish lamb and beef.

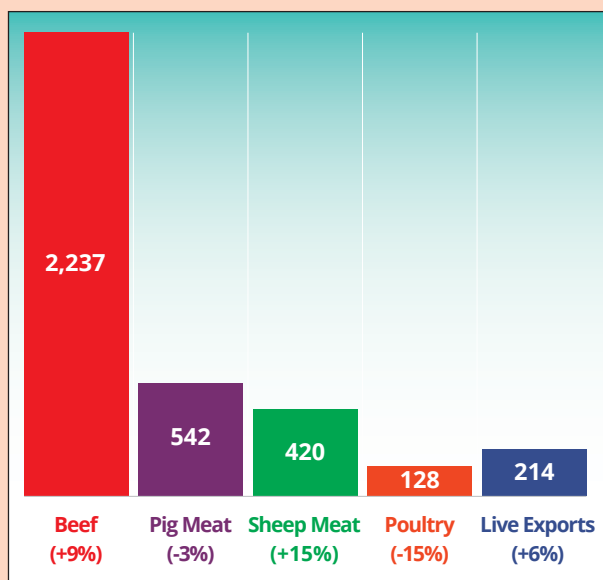
The Irish meat sector is of course, not immune to the turmoil affecting the world commodity markets including, the Ukrainian crisis with the pork, poultry and egg sector directly affected. Market prices do not yet reflect the huge increase of production costs. The rise of fertiliser and energy prices is also affecting land-based agriculture. In a new report, agriculture research organisation Teagasc warns that beef and lamb producers must expect a drop of income in 2022. Yet, sheep farmers experienced a record income in 2021 and, for beef farmers, despite a predicted drop of income of 13% for suckling enterprises for 2022, this, again, follows a very successful year.

The processing sector too is highly focused on cost inflation. Cormac Healy, the chief executive of MII is concerned. He says, energy, transport, packaging and deep-sea shipping rates have all increased substantially over the last year. Labour costs too are rising and staff availability continues to be a daily challenge for the sector.

Strong export performance despite Brexit and Covid

In 2021, Irish exports of food and drink broke a new record at €13.5 billion, four percent up on 2020 and two percent up on 2019 pre-Covid. Meat exports accounted for €3.5 billion, up four percent on 2020 and seven percent on 2019 mainly driven by higher prices for beef and lamb.

Irish meat exports 2021



Source: Bord Bia.

◀ Total Irish primary beef exports in 2021 reached a value of €2.1 billion, up ten percent on 2020 figures, mostly driven by higher farmgate prices. This was on the back of total Irish cattle throughput declining by six percent while carcass weight declined by one and a half percent in 2021. Beef production has now rebounded with volume up 12% in the first quarter of 2022.

Pork exports were again dominated by Chinese shipments, although the lower international prices affected export values. Exports to Australia rose to €54 million in 2021 whilst they fell to the EU. Tellingly, Irish pork prices continue to outperform EU average prices.

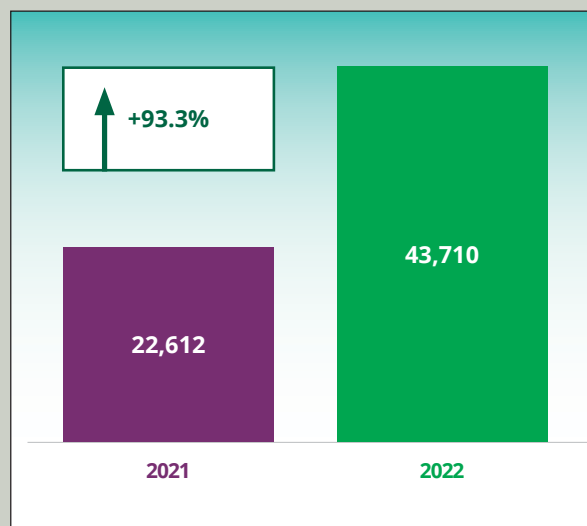
The European sheepmeat market remains very tight and Irish exporters benefited from record prices. Lamb throughput reached 2.8 million head in 2021.

Irish beef maintains a dominant position in UK imports

The split of Irish beef exports by destination saw EU exports increase by 13%, equating to 43% of total Irish beef exports. The UK declined by 13% in volume terms, however as an export destination the UK still accounted for 45% of Irish beef global exports. Finally, the rest of the world accounted for the remaining 12% of volume exports, with destinations such as Hong Kong, Japan, Philippines and USA.

In the UK, Irish beef continues to have a preferential position accounting for 80% of UK imports in both 2021 and 2020. In the first two months of 2022, imports from the Republic of Ireland accounted for 78.4% of total UK import volumes of fresh and frozen beef. They have staged a remarkable recovery from the traumatic start of

UK imports of Irish beef January-February 2021 and 2022 (tonnes)



Source: HMRC.

2021 as shown in the figure above. These high figures demonstrate how interconnected the British and Irish beef sectors are, particularly on the processing side.

Irish beef's strong market share is also built on decades of close strategic partnerships with key customers across retail, wholesale and foodservice. Irish beef is seen as a trusted source of high quality, traceable, farm assured beef, which can be delivered in a just in time supply chain.

Irish beef is widely seen as 'local' for British consumers and 87% of UK shoppers are open to purchasing it.

Furthermore, Irish beef is widely seen as 'local' for British consumers and 87% of UK shoppers are open to purchasing it. Key drivers for consumers for Irish beef include trust, taste, quality and grass fed (2021 Irish Beef UK Brand Health Check). Further, Bord Bia's research highlights that UK beef shoppers are looking for value for money, but also for a product that delivers on quality, traceability, grass feeding and animal welfare. Value for money doesn't just mean cheap, rather shoppers want to see it is worth paying for the product, especially a more expensive protein such as beef. As inflationary pressures persist, the beef industry is working in partnership with trade customers to communicate the product benefits.

Relentless marketing

In October 2020, Bord Bia launched its first ever Irish beef television campaign in the UK with the aim of leveraging the 'local' perception of Irish beef to target UK grocery shoppers. The 'It's All Right Here' campaign aired again in the autumn of 2021, reaching over 29 million UK consumers.

Alongside television advertising, Bord Bia champions Irish beef across its social media channels - Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Activity runs all year long, targeting grocery shoppers with recipe inspiration, chef inspired dishes, Irish provenance stories and user generated content from British consumers cooking with grass-fed beef.

Irish beef was showcased to over 30,000 people at the Lord Mayor of London's official St. Patrick's Day consumer event at Trafalgar Square in March with Irish beef ambassador, chef and TV personality, Anna Haugh, serving an array of beef dishes.

The focus on foodservice has evolved to the successful launch of the Irish Beef UK Foodservice Academy in February of this year. Larger high end steak operators have access to Irish beef resources to further educate staff and their customers. The first of these events was held at high end steakhouse chain Smith & Wollensky in London.

During March, Irish beef promotions took place in major grocery retailers in Italy, France, Luxembourg, the Nordic countries and Spain. The largest campaign in Europe happened in Germany with the involvement of 4,000 Netto and 2,000 Edeka stores across the country. Other events presented Irish beef in Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines and the USA with a noted promotion in Whole Food Markets. In addition, the Irish beef sector benefits from the EU co-sponsored campaign *Working with Nature - European Beef and Lamb* in China, Japan, South Korea and the USA worth €4.8 million.

Environmental progress

Ireland's Sustainable Beef Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) has been adopted by 51,000 Irish beef farmers accounting

for over 95% of total Irish beef exports. Beef farms are independently audited on their animal welfare, grass and land management, biodiversity initiatives and carbon footprint. The scheme has helped deliver a six point three percent average reduction in Co2 per unit of beef.

Genetics is at the core of the progress to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and has the potential to deliver much more in the years ahead. Targeted nutrition is another area of investigation. With the price of fertilisers now exploding, it makes economic and environmental sense to reduce their use and Teagasc, the Irish agricultural research agency, is actively looking at practical solutions to achieve it.

Still, more progress can be made on sustainability, including soil health and carbon capture as well as the use of metrics such as Global Warming Potential for methane. For memory, the Republic of Ireland plans to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

Irish eyes are smiling in 2022

With a very good start of the year in terms of availability and international prices, there are of course some hurdles on the way, particularly inflation both for inputs and at consumer level that may affect demand. Nonetheless, most indicators are showing (grass) 'green' for a strong year that may set new records for the Irish meat sector.

Meanwhile, processors will focus on progress in international market access across the meat categories. The Covid pandemic was extremely disruptive to progressing market access files as it prevented both outward trade missions and inward inspection audits said Cormac Healy. The continued exclusion from the Chinese market for beef is a real disappointment after the great progress made in achieving access to that market some years ago. The industry hopes to see Irish lamb in the US very soon and progress is being made on lamb access to China.

Expect smiles across the Irish sea this year. 



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KERRY

Kerry opens development and applications lab



The Taste and Nutrition company unveiled its facility for new product development (NPD) in meat and poultry, located at the company's site in Portbury, UK.

Kerry believes that its investment in the new site will enhance the company's capability to deliver on-trend, NPD innovation in savoury taste for the UK meat and poultry market at a greater speed than previously achieved. The investment is part of a strategic extension of personnel and expertise from Kerry's Global Innovation and Technology Centre (GITC) situated in Naas, Ireland, to help service the UK meat and poultry market.

Portbury's new development and applications facility will be supported by Kerry's Global Chef Network and consumer insight resources based at the GITC.

Europe CEO, Thomas Ahlinder and vice president - UK and Ireland, Alison Wilkinson officially opened the new site during a ceremony held at the beginning of April. Commenting on the facility's opening, Wilkinson said that the site "will enable expertise from our Global Centres at a local level, allowing Kerry to be more agile and flexible to the needs of our UK customers."

She added that having an applications facility in the UK means Kerry is now "expertly positioned to collaborate and partner more effectively with UK-based processors, manufacturers and retailers."

Operating more sustainably

In line with the company's sustainability strategy, *Beyond The Horizon*, Kerry said that the investment will also support the company's vision "to deliver sustainable nutrition by co-creating locally to deliver better outcomes for consumers and the planet."

Kerry's Europe CEO emphasised the positive impact the investment will have on both the environment and the sustainability of Kerry's operations. He said: "With less travel of products and personnel between Ireland and UK, localised sampling and being geographically closer to major retailers, we are strategically placed to collaborate and do business more sustainably."

With the impact of Brexit, Covid-19 lockdowns and ongoing labour shortages still being felt throughout the industry, the recent investment by Kerry marks a move by the company to tackle any disruption by localising its approach. Wilkinson said: "Given the complexities with Brexit, it is crucial to ensure we demonstrate our expertise locally and service our customers quickly."

Kerry said that despite the challenges faced in recent times, the company remains optimistic. Wilkinson added: "The UK is a fast-paced market. It is leading the way in terms of product development and taste innovation in meat and poultry products." 

• The opening ceremony was officiated by Kerry's senior management team.



When is locally sourced not locally sourced?



Norman Bagley of AIMS explores how a plant-based buffet for a local council meeting became a contentious issue for local Oxfordshire residents.

At 10:30am on 14th December 2021, there was a full house at a meeting of Oxfordshire County Council. Item 92/21 on the agenda was a motion by councillor Middleton (Green Party) which said:

"This council recognises that meat and dairy production is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and global deforestation and that reducing consumption of these foods is a key part of tackling climate change and improving health outcomes."

One of the five points the Cabinet were asked to consider was to: *"Ensure that food provided at all council catered events and meetings is entirely plant-based, preferably using ingredients sourced from local food surplus organisations."*

In short, the councillor was suggesting that surplus food donated by businesses for the mouths of the poor and needy, be diverted into the tummies of elected members and officials at council meetings.

On 15th March 2022, as war raged in mainland Europe and the increased cost of living was starting to be felt, the cabinet at Oxfordshire CC passed a motion to: *"Ensure that food provided at full council meetings and all civic events is entirely plant based and, where possible, sustainably and locally sourced."*

The cabinet's decision included comments from the director of finance who concluded that:

"There may be some minimal financial implications in relation to the sourcing of locally supplied, plant-based food but this will be managed within existing budgets."

Surely, as a council, they should have also considered the financial implications to Oxfordshire's farmers, meat processing businesses, butchers and the rural and local economy that supports the employment of residents.

Furthermore, what constitutes 'locally supplied'?

Is it, as I fear, that the supplier is in Oxfordshire but what they supply can come from anywhere across the globe?

The answer was provided in a tweet from cllr Middleton in early April showing the new plant-based buffet in all its glory.

Catering was provided for 50 people (there are 63 councillors in Oxfordshire, so maybe the other 13 made their own arrangements) with the food sourced from a local caterer in Woodstock.

Platters of melon, kiwi, orange, mango, blueberries, raspberries, grapes and strawberries were served along with a chocolate cake cut into eight slices and some trays of sandwiches made with what looked like 'bog standard' white sliced and some anaemic looking pasties.

Cllr Middleton's picture montage included his take on the 'meal':

"...very enthusiastically received. Some saying it's the best food that has ever been provided by the council. Thanks to officers for organising it. An absolute triumph!"

Of course, the good residents of Oxfordshire weren't having this, quickly pointing out that much of the spread was out of season and imported.

So much for 'sustainably and locally sourced'.


At this point cllr Swampy surpassed himself, tweeting: "It was all sourced from a local catering company in Woodstock" and "the ingredients were also sourced from local suppliers as far as I know."

He then went on to mount a defence of "the catering was rather last minute."

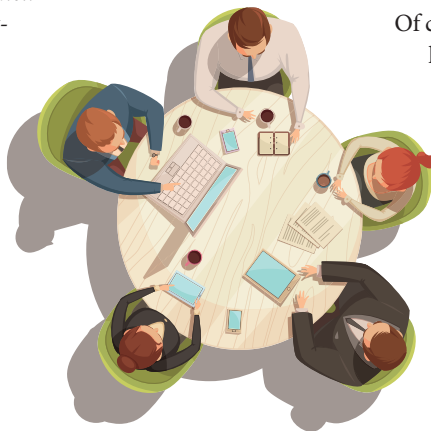
Last minute? It clearly stated on the bottom of the minutes from their last meeting that they'd next be meeting 5th April. They'd had a couple of months to plan!

I could go on. The tweets for and against the buffet read like the script from a sitcom, and that's saying something considering we are used to politicians misleading the electorate on a regular basis. But I will leave the last word to the councillor and member for Kidlington East as we all look skywards for pigs over the dreaming spires of historic Oxford.

"But overall, the climate impact of this food was still lower than if it had included meat and dairy."

Like *~\$#! 

Norman Bagley is the head of policy at the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS).
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The Efra report and the training gap

In April 2022, the government's committee for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published its long-awaited survey of the UK food sector's workforce and its chronic labour shortages. The report called for a "radical rethink" of the UK government's labour strategy, including a review of the skilled workers visa scheme, and for the seasonal workers pilot visa scheme to be made permanent.

While the report largely focuses on how immigration policy can help the food and farming sector meet its labour needs in the short to medium term, its recommendations for long-term action centre around attracting and nurturing British-based talent. Investing in technology and enticing more UK workers into the industry, the Committee said, would reduce the sector's dependence on overseas labour.

According to the report, at present, many British workers are not strongly attracted to roles in the food supply chain, particularly seasonal work. Ian Wright, Food and Drink Federation (FDF), told the committee that when people did join the sector "they tend to stay. They like it" but added "we have to make the careers more attractive" and in particular "we have to provide much better training."

The Association of Independent Meat Suppliers highlighted that there was an "educational void" between GCSEs and degree level, and the recent report of the independent National Food Strategy said that "without an A-level to go on to, the number of children taking the food GCSE has also declined."

Wright added that the sector's "own schemes and careers in business" also had a role to play, such as apprenticeships and vocational training. In response, the Secretary of State for Defra George Eustice said that "getting the right kind of apprenticeships and skills in place to support a new generation is going to be really important" in order to address long standing negative perceptions of working in the sector.

An investment in tech = an investment in people

Automation and new technology were repeatedly linked to potential plans for attracting British labour into the industry. Tom Bradshaw, National Farmers' Union (NFU), said that "exciting" new technology would "supplement rather than replace labour."

Food processor Cranswick plc told the Committee that it had invested over £100 million in the past 10 years, therefore "reducing the labour need and the skills required for some of our cutting operations."

Graeme Dear, British Poultry Council, said that investment in automation would mean "we have new skills to train people in" to operate the machinery.

However, Bradshaw also cautioned that, at a farm level, "we are probably seven to ten years away before [technology] is really transformational."

All plan, no action

According to the Committee, in order to consider how technology and automation, education and training, and new skills could together affect future labour needs, there was strong support for the government to produce a long-term labour strategy.

Kate Nicholls, UK Hospitality, said that such a strategy was needed to understand "what we are looking for in terms of skills, training, development, jobs, the economy, how we get from here to there and what short, medium and long-term interventions we need to help support that."

Overall, it was agreed by witnesses and the Committee alike that more work was needed to produce a long-term strategy, setting out how technology and labour will together meet the evolving needs of the food and farming sector. The Committee stated that this work must be cross-departmental in nature and closely engage those within the sector "who will be vital to achieving its successful implementation."



• Ian Wright, former chief executive of the FDF.

New butchery apprenticeship given green light for development

◀ The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IATE), the government body responsible for British apprenticeship standards, has approved a project to develop a brand new, “future-proof” butchery apprenticeship scheme.

Six years on from the launch of the Level 2 Butcher Apprenticeship Standard, the meat industry is to have an all-new butchery training programme that incorporates the latest methods and technology.

The scheme will be created by the ‘Trailblazer Group’, with the development process expected to take around six months.

The Group is chaired by Cranswick operations director Darren Andrew, supported by vice chair David Lishman of Lishman’s of Ilkley. All the core sectors within butchery are represented within the Group, which includes: ABP, Karro, Morrisons, retail butcher John Mettrick’s Butchers, catering butchers Aubrey Allen and wholesale butchers Bookers.

Andrews said it was imperative that butchery apprenticeships keep up with the technological advancements happening in processing plants today. He said: “Going forward, process butcher apprentices will need to develop more technical skills than the standard currently reflects.”

IATE will assist by ensuring correct processes are followed and produce occupational standards with sufficient detail for industry consultation.

Skills charity the Food and Drink Training and Education Council (ftc) will be providing secretariat services to the group, having helped design the original L2 Butcher Standard, which was hailed as ‘exemplar’ by government when launched in 2016.



• Christine Walsh, chief executive of the ftc.

According to ftc, the new occupational standard for the butchery apprenticeship is likely to contain “one core pathway” with up to four sector specific options. Although yet to be finalised, the sector specific options being considered are:

- Retail and craft butcher
- Process and manufacturing butcher
- In-store butcher
- Catering and wholesale butcher

‘Designed by employers for employers’

The ftc is calling on industry employers to get involved with the new project by adding their expertise to the curriculum.

New chief executive of the ftc Christine Walsh said: “The whole point of apprenticeships today is that they are ‘designed by employers for employers’ and so deliver the skills, knowledge and behaviours employers need. The butchery apprenticeship has achieved that aim to date, but the world has moved on.

“Our task now is to design the next generation of butchery apprenticeships that meet the diverse needs of all butchery employers today, and tomorrow. We can only do that with input from the people that will be using it – meat industry employers.”

Those interested in getting involved in the project can take part via the following channels:

1. Download and review the content of the current Butcher Standard on the IATE’s website
2. Email suggestions to christine.walsh@foodtraining.org.uk
3. Apply to join the trailblazer group – email jean.sawdon@foodtraining.org.uk





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◀ Leeds apprentice becomes youngest female to obtain their Level 2 qualification in the UK

Seventeen-year-old Amelia (Millie) Dayson from Leeds has completed her Level 2 Butchery Apprenticeship, supported by Crosby Management Training and Firths Quality Meats, making her the youngest female apprentice to do so.

Millie began at Firths, a butcher's shop in Boston Spa, as a cleaner working weekends whilst she was still at school. After a month or so, she joined the company on a full-time basis, beginning her apprenticeship in July 2020.

Commenting on her achievement and her future career prospects as a female in the butchery industry, Millie said that seeing women in positions of power within the industry had really made a mark on her.



• Dayson now works full-time at Firths in Leeds.

She said: "Seeing people like Margaret Boanas, Master of The Worshipful Company of Butchers, so high up in the butchery industry definitely encourages me, especially in such a male dominated industry."

Since completing her Level 2 qualification, Millie has expressed her interest for the Level 3 Advanced Butcher Apprenticeship and wants to continue building her skills and knowledge.

Harper Adams University voted World Number One for employer reputation



• Harper Adams University campus in Shropshire, UK.

The University has improved on its standing in the QS World University Subject Rankings metric for employer reputation, standing out as a leading institution for agriculture and forestry.

Harper Adams University continues to develop new curriculum to support the whole food supply chain, and this year is developing new apprenticeships supported by the School of Sustainable Food and Farming, with courses awaiting final validation approval for Vet Technician (Livestock) and Food and Drink Engineering at Level 5.

The University works with large and small companies across England to deliver block-release courses that meet the apprenticeship standards from Level 4 (first year of degree/Cert in HE) up to Level 7 (Master's level).

Its Food Industry Technical Professional apprenticeship applies to various roles within the sector, including quality manager, hygiene manager or product innovation and development technologist. Women count for 59% of those on the programme and they work across a range of employers, from poultry and beef production to pizza and bread.

Pilgrim's UK tackles negative industry perception through training initiatives

Joanne Collins, human resources business partner at Pilgrim's UK, told *Meat Management* that the company is working to combat negative perceptions of the meat industry through its training programmes, by encouraging those early on in their careers to become ambassadors for the business.

The company partners with local colleges to arrange residential learning courses to attract new talent. Pilgrim's UK also transfers up to 25% of its levy to external business and community

partners, such as farmers, who can use the funding to offer apprenticeships within these subsectors of the meat industry.

Collins said: "Working in the meat industry is often perceived as a career which lacks opportunity for progression, but that is far from the truth. There is a diverse range of pathways for people looking to take the first steps into the food and drink industry, including in farming, production, maintenance and engineering, business management and much more." 



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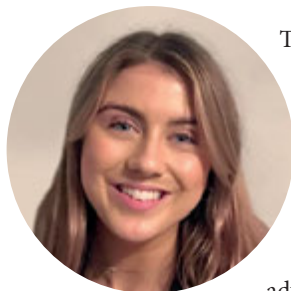
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FDQ are part of the Food and Drink Training and Education Council (ftc).
Ftc champion skills training at the highest levels to increase professionalism, raise standards,
and boost productivity in the workplace.

Queues, controls and competition

Kerry Maxwell of the BPC argues for reciprocity of controls between UK and EU poultry exporters to level up the field.



This makes no sense; a good portion of 'supply chain stress' derives from the burden of unreciprocated controls. Perishable poultry meat and breeding stock face enough problems when they land at the port, with unfair certification and inspections.

It's fair to say that recent queues of lorries trying to get to Dover have demonstrated that British food security has not been prioritised. In 2021, the poultry meat industry lost £85 million in chicken meat exports to the EU. Clearly something is not working in EU-UK trade.

The UK government's stubborn refusal to acknowledge unfairness in the system has given the EU a commercial advantage since 1st January 2021, having had over a year to prepare for the Brexit this government wanted to deliver.

British poultry meat businesses were given seven days – and then were blamed for a 'lack of preparedness' when things went wrong. If we delay controls again, our businesses – paying the price of Westminster's 'head-in-the-sand' approach – will not recover. Until there is a level playing field, all the burden is on British exporters.




There are lots of questions here; the one at the top is where is the political will to help struggling businesses? BPC has reached out to the UK government and the European Commission to urge action but politicians on both sides continue to ignore the problem. The EU will not jeopardise their advantage – why would they? – and the UK enable it by refusing to engage with the commercial realities of Brexit. That leaves our members stuck in the middle, suffering the consequences of a sheer lack of action: absorbing costs, bearing burdens, and now stuck on the M20.

The imbalance in EU-UK trade means loss of value for poultry meat businesses, but delays to Dover are a vivid illustration of the sort of barrier we have placed upon ourselves. Priority lanes for valuable breeding stock have been removed. These need to be restored immediately given the worsening situation on the M20. If breeding stock cannot cross borders without delay, it compromises world-class British breeding companies. Alongside that, if perishable poultry meat cannot be exported on time because of queues, businesses face losses before they reach the port checkpoint, where even more problems lie. Perishable items must be prioritised along with breeding stock.

Mr Eustice has argued prioritisation is 'too complicated' to restore but in reality the problems grow in complexity the longer they are left to stew. Ignoring a problem until it goes away does not work; it just points to an effort to normalise unfair trade with our most important trading partner. The longer the UK government lets British businesses suffer under unfair controls, the longer they concede to the EU to avoid admitting there are huge problems with trade, the more entangled and entrenched issues become, and therefore the more difficult they become to solve.

Queues to Dover are yet another example of how just-in-time supply chains are unable to thrive under these trading conditions. Disruption is expensive for businesses already absorbing costs and navigating red tape, damaging for global Britain's reputation and proves that, until we introduce some reciprocity into EU-UK trade, Britain's food security cannot be assured.

When one side can trade freely, and the other is penalised for trying to, it cannot be considered 'free trade' under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). At this point our focus must be on reciprocity. If controls must exist, they must be fair: either remove them entirely or match them. Our members understand that reciprocal application of full controls is lose-lose but they are willing to accept a mutual disadvantage for the sake of fair competition. The one thing they cannot do is wait beyond July. 

But rather than recognise the problem and correct it, we hear reports that full controls may be pushed back (again), citing 'supply chain stress' as reasons to delay.

Kerry Maxwell is a communications officer at the British Poultry Council (BPC).
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It's time for real science to wake up

National Craft Butchers technical manager Richard Stevenson discusses how credible scientific research can benefit the meat industry, and a new direction that will see the FSA growing a scientific evidence base to support fact rather than fiction.

A recently announced five-year strategy has introduced a new focus for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on food being healthier and more sustainable. This new direction will be underpinned by FSA plans to grow the existing scientific evidence base on healthy and sustainable food.

Previously the FSA's main mission has been to ensure that food is safe and what it says it is. This is a clear aim for a regulator and so I will be interested to see how they manage a new emphasis that will inevitably force them into a more political arena.

At National Craft Butchers (NCB) we have cautiously welcomed this development. We contacted FSA chair Susan Jebbs and CEO Emily Miles, encouraging them to concentrate on countering the misleading anti-meat propaganda based on unsound or mis-reported science under this new direction. NCB told Jebbs and Miles that we are very concerned that if this situation remains unchecked, it will damage the meat and livestock industry and adversely affect the health of millions whilst doing nothing to reduce carbon emissions.

The FSA has always been, quite rightly, proud of their strong science credentials, so we are hopeful that in time there will be some credible and proper science to oppose some of the more ridiculous claims that have caused even supposedly intelligent institutions like councils and schools to ban meat.

Another scientific battle has recently broken out after an international group of eminent scientists strongly challenged data released in a 2019 study from the Global Burden of Disease. This GBD study linked meat-eating to a huge increase in chronic disease and was widely referred to and cited in many other scientific papers.

The group of leading professors has pointed out that according to their analysis, the GBD claim was not credible and is unsupported by evidence or peer review. The GBD authors have failed to engage with the professors or respond to the serious criticisms.

The group's leader Professor Alice Stanton said: "It is of considerable concern that the GBD 2019 study provides little or no evidence regarding the scientific basis for the assumption that moderate consumption of red meat results in sharp increases in risk of cancers, heart attacks and strokes.



Given the substantial influence of GBD reports on worldwide, nutritional-policy decision making, it is of considerable importance that the GBD estimates are subject to critical scrutiny, and they continue to be rigorously and transparently evidence-based."

NCB has brought this situation to the attention of the Food Standards Agency as a typical example of unsound science that often gets picked up by the anti-meat brigade and repeated a thousand times until everyone believes it must be true.

There are parallels in the sustainability debate as well. For example, many people mistakenly believe that meat and dairy is responsible for more carbon emissions than transport. This is of course, more nonsense but it doesn't stop climate campaigners using it as a justification for using disruptive tactics and focussing attention on the wrong targets.

In my opinion it is about time that independent, real science woke up and urgently started to identify the correct threats to food health and sustainability. We must all hope that the new stance from the FSA will begin this process. ■



Richard Stevenson is technical manager at National Craft Butchers (NCB).
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The MM Meat Industry Awards, the biggest event in the UK meat industry, returns for 2022, with voting and product nominations in full swing ahead of the ceremony to be held on 15th September at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole.

Each year the MM Meat Industry Awards recognise the best manufacturers and producers, suppliers, retailers, individuals and organisations in the UK meat sector. Voted for by the readers of *Meat Management* magazine and meatmanagement.com, plus various product categories judged by industry experts, the initiative reflects all that is best in the meat sector at all levels.

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The Catering Butcher Award
Manufacturer of the Year
Supermarket/Multiple Meat Retailer of the Year
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Product categories

Best Bacon Product
Best Beef Product
Best Free From Product
Best Lamb Product
Best Pork/Pigmeat Product
Best Poultry Product
Best Red Meat Product
Britain's Best Burger
Britain's Best Meat Pie
Britain's Best Sausage

To nominate a product for entry, visit
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This year the awards ceremony will be staged at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole, near to the NEC, on 15th September. First-class ventriloquist and America's Got Talent winner Paul Zerdin has been announced as the awards host for 2022.

Events organiser Sharon Yandell said: "I can promise everyone a night to remember on 15th September when the industry comes together for its biggest single annual event. We are set for a sell-out occasion." 



To buy tables or tickets and take advantage of an early bird discount, visit meatmanagement.com/awards-tickets

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The awards ceremony is subject to ongoing government rulings on public assembly and therefore the organisers reserve the right to make appropriate changes if required affecting the date or venue, or the type of presentations made, at their absolute discretion.

Bizerba invests in market-leading printing plant



• The Mayor of Milton Keynes Cllr Mohammed Khan was in attendance.

Weighing, cutting and labelling specialist Bizerba has announced that it has opened new offices and a label manufacturing facility in Milton Keynes, UK.

The opening of 'Bizerba House' in Milton Keynes is an important milestone for the global player to expand its business in the UK and to be able to offer holistic solutions to customers from industry and trade.

The new, ultra-modern printing plant is fully equipped with a ten full-colour EFA 530 printing press from MPS, in another first for the company. This means that Bizerba can produce all kinds of labels which can be processed with Bizerba systems. Decorative labels, thermal labels and linerless labels are just as much a part of the portfolio as specialist labels that are tailored to its customers' requirements. According to Bizerba, the company owns a diverse and expansive portfolio within the UK market.

The new building also accommodates office space, in which the main offices of Bizerba UK are now located. In a new, fully equipped showroom, customers and partners can experience the broad portfolio and smart interaction of Bizerba hardware, software and labels solutions.

Investment in integrated solutions

Bizerba pursues globally a holistic approach and offers the right software, full-service support and a large portfolio of high-quality and individual labels for all Bizerba installations. An in-house print shop was necessary to be able to deliver labels faster and more easily in the future. In particular, the demand for the patented CleanCut® Linerless solution is increasing rapidly in this market. This solution prevents soiling of the label applicator and does not require any liner for the labels.


Andreas Kraut, CEO and shareholder of Bizerba, visited Milton Keynes to officially open the new facility. Speaking ahead of the unveiling ceremony, he said: "This is an incredibly exciting new development for Bizerba UK, and we could not be more proud of what we have achieved with this new facility. We have invested heavily in some of the best, market-leading printing equipment. The incredible printing press is installed and ready to go."

"Bizerba Labels & Consumables is a growing and dynamic business, and our new facility is the beginning of something very important for the UK."

Growth for label business in the UK

The business unit Bizerba Labels & Consumables continues to grow and is always looking for solutions to serve its customers in a more efficient way. Sourcing Bizerba Labels locally or as close as possible to the production locations will give a lot of advantages: communication, transportation, flexibility and also stock management will be much smoother.

Charles Pullen, managing director of Bizerba UK, added: "Bizerba Labels & Consumables is a growing and dynamic business, and our new facility is the beginning of something very important for the UK. It has been long-planned and the equipment carefully chosen, to ensure we become leaders in this field.

"I am extremely proud of what we have achieved to date and look forward to sharing this very special development with our most valued customers." 



The importance of Trade Associations at this time of change

Katrina Walsh of IMTA discusses the crucial intermediary role that trade associations play, bridging the gap between business and policy makers.



It is important for trade associations to have a good understanding of the situation on the ground in order to best advocate for members. If we don't understand what is taking up members' day-to-day, or even keeping them up at night, we cannot best serve their interests through our information provision and advocacy.

Trade associations can play a crucial intermediary role between business and government. We aggregate and anonymise information to give government a solid picture of what issues companies within our membership are facing. This helps to ensure government has a thorough and up to date understanding of what is happening in a sector, before making policy decisions or changes that will impact that sector.

At a recent meeting with our members, we ran a poll to ask what their biggest current concerns are. We presented several options for them to choose from. When the results came through on the screen there was a bit of an awkward pause, as the vote was pretty much equally split between all the options we gave. Whilst it wasn't the most useful exercise in terms of prioritising the issues, it did tell us two important things – one; we were on the right track in terms of what we thought the issues might be and two; the sector is facing a myriad of challenges, all of which are important and time consuming.

The issues most evenly split were inflation, cost/availability of labour, global shipping issues, 1st July changes coming in on imports from the EU, impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and road fuel prices. This is a lot to contend with while trying to go about the regular business of buying and selling meat. I must commend members on their continued engagement and efforts to handle all of these issues.

With members so busy at the moment, we don't want to add to that by scheduling long meetings taking them away from their desks for too long. For over a year now we have been

running regular online breakfast briefings. These are a quick download of all the latest news and FAQs in the sector we think will be relevant to members. We've covered the plastic packaging tax, updates on Free Trade Agreements and sustainability themes to name just a few. We schedule these at 8.30-9.15am so that members have a chance to join before the working day gets kicked off and have found this works well. We've also started producing short videos on key topics for members, this allows them to watch in their own time rather than having to schedule a meeting to discuss.

On a final note, it is heartening to see efforts being made across the food industry to contribute to humanitarian support for Ukraine, be that through providing transport or food parcels or through other means. Ukraine plays a vital role in the food sector and has been the central topic of discussion in many of the government forums that the industry participates in, reflecting all of the different dependencies of the food sector.



Katrina Walsh is the policy manager at the International Meat Trade Association (IMTA).
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A less politically dogmatic approach is needed for meat exporters to survive

Peter Hardwick of BMPA shares his thoughts on the barriers facing meat exporters and how a more pragmatic approach would support UK businesses.



I make no excuses in this, my final article for *Meat Management* as I enter retirement, in returning to the subject of how meat exporters, indeed all exporters, continue to face increasingly crippling costs and trade friction, damaging competitiveness and profitability.

It all comes back to a fundamental problem, and that is the huge bureaucracy that businesses face in trying to export. This is a major disincentive and, even for those companies that can overcome that hurdle, it is a significant cost burden.

What surprises me is the entrenched, dogmatic position of government in the face of a consistent message from businesses, that this is not sustainable. In theory, the burden will increase further as and when the full panoply of checks applies to imports from the 1st of July 2022.

I gave evidence at a hearing organised by the UK Trade and Business Commission at the end of March on the impact of these new import checks. This Commission was launched in April 2021 to scrutinise the impact of the UK's new trading arrangements with the EU and the rest of the world; Co-Convened by Hilary Benn MP and Peter Norris of the Virgin Group. It brings together parliamentary colleagues from all nine Westminster parties and leading business voices from a range of sectors such as manufacturing, services, the fashion industry, higher education and legal services. The meetings follow the style of a Parliamentary Select Committee.

The meeting I attended, as well as looking at import checks, also sought to understand the extent to which export procedures and checks had affected businesses, and to consider the likelihood of there being a comparable effect on imports.

There was a real spread of business interests at the hearing with BMPA representing the larger end of the scale, and one thing rang out loud and clear: the administrative and cost burden was

totally unsustainable for smaller and medium sized business and a major challenge for bigger operators. For many of the smaller companies moving consignments in pallet loads or less, exports had become impossible, and a significant amount have just given up. What was most notable is that there was not one participant who felt things were better in the new post-Brexit environment and indeed, I cannot think of any business anywhere that has said that EU trade has consequently improved.

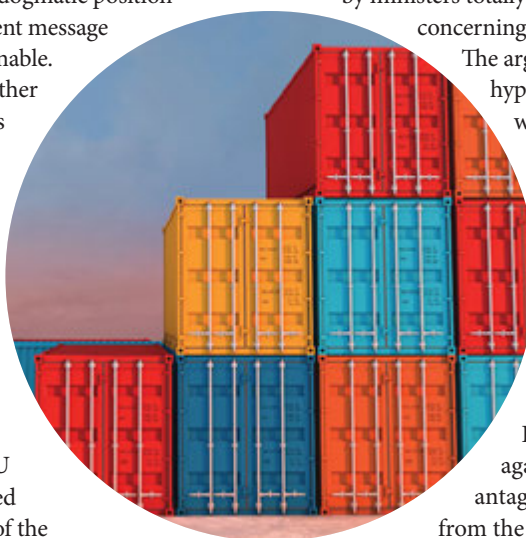
What was clear, was that there is a universal plea to address the bureaucracy and cost of trading with the EU, most of it linked to SPS controls, which a veterinary agreement based on alignment would resolve. There was also a plea to further postpone the 1st July introduction on checks on imports and a warning that these would have a similar effect on the cost and delays as those already experienced by exporters, adding to inflationary pressures. The reality is, that while a delay helps, it won't stop the impact of these checks when they come.

Is the government listening? Perhaps the impact of import checks will sharpen minds. All talk of SPS alignment is treated as heresy by ministers totally bound up by political dogma rather than concerning themselves with how this affects business.

The argument against seems to be based on some hypothetical constraint on doing trade deals with other countries. It doesn't seem to have stopped our EU neighbours from doing so. Exactly what bit of our current SPS rules, which we should remind ourselves, are still pretty well identical to the EU's, are we planning to drop to get a deal? The use of hormones in beef production perhaps? I have yet to find a minister to tell me.

In fact, the overwhelming argument against is pure dogma and founded on an antagonistic view of anything that emerges from the EU. Yet such an agreement would instantly liberate UK business from unnecessary costs and with the added benefit that, at a stroke, it would resolve most of the issues surrounding the workability of the NI Protocol for all concerned. Let's hope that pragmatism eventually prevails.

I do hope my readers have enjoyed my articles over the last few years and I bid you farewell. 



Peter Hardwick is trade policy adviser at the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA).
www.britishmeatindustry.org



And another thing...

By Mike Britain.

The good news?

And now for the good news...

According to new studies by researchers at Cambridge University, Anglo-Saxon kings were mostly vegetarian before the Vikings settled here (and no doubt brought over vast quantities of Danish Bacon). And, not to my surprise, this fascinating revelation made headlines recently in the food section of the BBC News website. Of course, anything with the words vegetarian or vegan is big news for those at Auntie who take every opportunity to denigrate meat eating. It also raises the question in my mind as to how the money spent on such research can be justified?



I gather (and I credit the BBC for this info) Cambridge University bioarchaeologist Sam Leggett drew her conclusions after analysing chemical signatures of diets preserved in the bones of 2,023 people buried in England from the 5th to 11th Centuries. Fascinating stuff. According to the Beeb, the findings surprised Cambridge University historian Tom Lambert, because historical studies suggest that Anglo-Saxon royals and leaders did eat large quantities of meat. I wonder if the veggie society was around at the time? No doubt, if so, they would have put out a yet another survey to show that the veggies were taking over the world.

A dog's dinner


If Anglo Saxon eating habits are not your thing, then why not spend your valuable time considering what you feed your dog! Presuming of course that you have a dog. According to a science correspondent writing in the Daily Telegraph, dogs that are fed plant-based meals are fitter and healthier than those fed on tinned food. At least another (yet another) study suggests this is the case!

Vegan friendly diets for Fido or Rover are allegedly increasingly popular and favoured by so called celebrities such as Sir Lewis Hamilton and Joaquin Phoenix. No surprises there then. The article I read, with some incredulity, claimed that evidence appears to support their somewhat 'off the wall' views that a meat free diet is best for pet dogs. Personally I think they are barking up the wrong tree. And of course, Fido and Rover have no say in the matter and are subjected to the views and diet preferences of the owner.



However, at least the authors of this report said the study of the dogs, particularly those on a raw meat diet, were considerably younger and therefore more likely to be in better health. Has the world finally gone mad? My two dogs were fed on meat and mixer and lasted around 15 years each. Both had a great life and were happy. That's enough of a study for me. Can we not find better things to do or to research? The mind boggles!

Counting the calories

I see that new rules on calorie counting have come into effect in England for some restaurants and eateries and that a similar move is being considered in Scotland. A public consultation on the idea of mandatory calorie counts on menus has actually been launched by the Scottish government. Do these people honestly believe that those consumers going out on a Saturday night for a slap-up meal or perhaps those taking the opportunity to pick up a Big Mac at a drive through because they are hungry are going to read about the calories? Deep fried Mars Bar anyone? What a total waste of money and yet another bit of unnecessary bureaucratic red tape. I have one word for this sort of thing – bonkers! 



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