

FARMERS FIRST

Issue 66 | Winter 2022



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REMAINING RESILIENT DESPITE ANOTHER CHALLENGING YEAR

As another year draws to a close, I reflect on how we, as an industry, continue to produce top quality food, despite persistent volatility and high input costs. Our team at Fram Farmers is proud to support members at every step, and in every sector, helping to secure your farming business' future.

In this issue, we are pleased to bring you a number of updates on what Fram Farmers has been doing behind the scenes and share insight into new ideas and industry developments. Our usual news pages bring you a few internal updates, plus member news and activity, including new faces in the Fram team and the recent 'Arrive and Drive Day'.

We are delighted to welcome Wendy Houston as incoming Chairman of the cooperative, and Doug Inglis as Vice Chairman. A huge thank you to Andrew Read, who stood down after three years but will remain on the board. And a final thanks to Charles Packshaw and John Parkinson who both stepped down after many years' service. You can read more about November's AGM on page 5.

I was recently asked to speak at the British Free Range Egg Producer's Association (BFREPA) conference alongside member Toby Rush, where we shared how members are making savings on feed costs, and the benefits this could bring the poultry sector - see page 4.

Our NextGen group continues to thrive, and on page 11, you will find a summary of their recent tour of the Houses of Parliament and meeting with MP Dr Dan Poulter.

We also bring you a number of member case studies, demonstrating how best to make the most of Fram Farmers membership; we revisit Tim and Kim Eden five years on, to hear how the building materials team has helped them complete their barn renovation project on page 17, James Wellock shares how Fram's support has helped him to diversify his dairy farm business in the height of Covid (see page 9), and Nathan Wiffen shares how the combination of a Fram Farmers supplier, and the Fram Farmers Finance Scheme, has paid off for his mixed farm business and farm shop (pages 18-19).

Elsewhere, crops specialist David Wilson has been working with the machinery team to provide fertiliser advice and solutions on page 7 - he's done the work so you don't have to! He also brings us an update on the Root



Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO

Crop Focus Group page 22.

As an outcome of our recent partnership with soil carbon certification company Agreeena, we hosted our first ever 'Regen Day' a few weeks ago with several guest speakers. Head to pages 12 and 13 to read about regenerative farming and the opportunities in generating and trading carbon credits.

Before you dive any further into this issue, please don't forget to check the important dates for your calendar on page 5, as well as our Christmas and New Year office opening hours.

On behalf of the Fram Farmers team, we wish our members a very Merry Christmas and an enjoyable and relaxed new year. We are looking forward to seeing what 2023 has in store!

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Every precaution has been taken to ensure that the material published in Farmers First is accurate at the time of printing. For further details about anything featured in this edition please call Fram Farmers on 01728 727700, or Juliette McDaniel at Kendalls PR and Marketing on 01502 475110. If you would like to opt out of receiving Farmers First, please email mail@framfarmers.co.uk

NEW FACES AT FRAM FARMERS HQ



India Gibbons

We are delighted to strengthen the crops team here at Fram Farmers with the addition of India Gibbons. India joins Fram from the 3Ms sales team, and has on-farm experience from her time as potato manager in West Suffolk. Moving forward, India will be the main point of contact for any fertiliser queries. She will be supported by Hollie, as well as David, who will be operating across more areas of the business.

Roger Poynton

We are thrilled to announce Roger Poynton has joined Fram Farmers as membership development manager, looking after members in the north of England. You can find out more about Roger on page 11.



ARRIVE AND DRIVE DAY

On 23rd November, Fram Farmers, in partnership with Case IH, Ernest Doe Power Framlingham and Ashbrook, hosted an 'Arrive and Drive Day' at Bentwaters Parks in Suffolk.

With the exclusive Case IH and Fram Farmers partnership now in its 23rd year, this was the perfect way to showcase the benefits to members. Ashbrook also kindly brought along an extensive array of vehicles.

The day may have started with torrential rain and high winds but eventually cleared up and everyone enjoyed test driving the latest Case IH products. Members learnt

about the latest GPS technology (AFS Connect) and were able to meet and speak to experts.

For the first time, Fram Farmers also held a driving competition with a twist – the steering pipes were swapped - and the fastest driver around a course of cones would win an all-expenses-paid trip to the Case IH factory in Austria. Congratulations to Russel Abbot!

Thank you to all those involved, especially Case IH, Ernest Doe Power Framlingham and Ashbrook who put in a huge amount of effort to make this possible for our members.

The Autumn Virtual Update took place on 30th November, with updates from crops, business services & general farming inputs teams.

Members can find the recording of this event on the members portal or through an email sent out to all members.

BFREPA CONFERENCE

At the end of September, Fram Farmers Chief Executive Andrew Knowles and member Toby Rush were invited to speak at the British Free Range Egg Producer's Association (BFREPA) conference, exhibition and AGM.

This year's event, which took place on 29th September 2022, and typically attracts hundreds of farmers and delegates from across the industry, had the theme 'Building resilience in a commodity world'.



Andrew Knowles

Andrew and Toby discussed how farmers can save on feed costs, with Andrew saying that the price of feed was critical for

business' profitability, making up 55 per cent of the total cost of production, and that free range egg producers have the power to reduce the cost of raw material feed inputs if they get comfortable co-operating and collaborating together.

He used the Fram pig group as an example, explaining that they have saved approximately £2 million in raw feed material costs in one year through a risk management strategy, based on cooperation and consolidation of volumes.

Poultry producers are now invited to join

the existing group, and Toby Rush, a third generation Norfolk farmer who farms 32,000 layers and has a Lion assured egg packing centre, said he has long believed in the cooperative approach of buying groups.

With many of the raw commodities in pig and poultry feed the same, new poultry members will add to the already substantial buying power of the group, which also negotiates milling rates, a strategy which has consistently reduced costs on every tonne of feed milled.

NEW APPOINTMENTS AT FRAM FARMERS AGM

At the November Fram Farmers AGM, pig producer and arable farmer Wendy Houston, previously Vice Chairman, was appointed Chairman of the cooperative to succeed Andrew Read, who stood down from the role after three years but remains a board member.



Wendy paid tribute to Andrew's vast contribution during his time of Chairmanship, coupling his boundless enthusiasm for Fram Farmers, and an enormous amount of drive and belief that we are better together.

Wendy also welcomed the appointment of Doug Inglis as Vice Chairman, bringing with him considerable board experience and a wealth of knowledge of the arable sector from his time at Velcourt, and his continued role as an agronomist.

The AGM also saw the retirement of Suffolk farmer John Parkinson from the board following eleven years of service. John, highly respected by fellow board members, staff and fellow Fram Farmers members alike, has been an extremely dedicated and hard working member of the board.

Charles Packshaw also retired from the board following 6 years service bringing his wealth of experience from his senior career in banking and finance to benefit Fram Farmers in its governance, accounting and risk management.

David Sheppard, former Managing Director of ADM was formally appointed having been co-opted onto the board in January 2022, and existing board directors James Foskett and Robin Lawson offered themselves for re-election and were reappointed for a further three years.

CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR 2022/23 OFFICE OPENING HOURS

Monday 19th December
Tuesday 20th December
Wednesday 21st December
Thursday 22nd December
Friday 23rd December
..... Normal business hours

Monday 26th December Closed
Tuesday 27th December Closed
Wednesday 28th December .9am – 4pm
Thursday 29th December9am – 4pm
Friday 30th December9am – 4pm
Monday 2nd January..... Closed

BACK TO WORK

Tuesday 3rd January



FRAM MEMBER'S TV APPEARANCE

You may have seen Fram Farmers member Jonny Crickmore from Fen Farm Dairy on the TV a few weeks ago!

They had their very own episode on BBC One, as part of the We Are England series, which explores issues across the UK, as told by individuals in a wide range of industries. The programme is described as 'a reflection of the opinions and changing face of the nation.'

The film crew visited the farm in August, filming around the farm for a couple of weeks, and documenting the day-to-day behind the scenes activity of this busy working dairy farm and cheesemaking business, using raw milk, straight from the cows, to create a French style cheese.

Jonny told us the website crashed when the episode aired due to the amount of traffic from interested members of the public!

Those living in the east of the UK may have seen it on TV on Friday 21st October at 7.30pm, but if you live elsewhere, or if you missed it, you can catch up on BBC iPlayer.

SAVE THE DATE

10th & 11th January 2023 - LAMMA

Gordon Cummings and Chris Flatt will both be attending on foot, so make sure to meet up with them for a catch up!

7th & 8th February 2023

Low Carbon Agriculture Show

28th February 2023

We are looking to host another Regen Day with Agreeena in the south east for our members. Save the date and look out for more details on this.

2nd March 2023

SAA Virtual Farming Seminar in partnership with SAA, Scrutton Bland & Fram Farmers 'Challenge, Change & Opportunity' breakfast seminar (8.30am-10am) with speakers covering legislation, fiscal, supply chain and policy.

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ADAPTING YOUR PRODUCT CHOICE TO NAVIGATE VOLATILE FERTILISER MARKETS

The specialist teams at Fram Farmers are positioned to provide members with essential information, sharing insights from a large portfolio of suppliers. Crops specialist David Wilson has been working with the machinery team to provide members with various options when it comes to fertiliser.



In a volatile market, it is important for our members to not limit their choices, and so transparently informing members of the available options is part of the role of the cooperative. Ultimately, David has been looking at the price per kg of nitrogen, and with markets moving quickly this year, with big price swings, his calculations could be beneficial.

The industry has seen the usual price differences between liquid and solid widen at times, and early season solid fertiliser was much cheaper when calculated on pence per kg of nitrogen (p/kg N).

“It is important to know your total N requirement and assess the most cost-effective way to supply that,” explains David.

“With a difference of 40 – 60p/kg of N between liquid and solid N in the form of urea, it is important to understand the difference in price, and use that to make your decisions.”

David has put together two scenarios to help members understand how considering the bigger picture, and allowing flexibility, including application and storage options, can help to navigate volatile markets.

“I appreciate that one solution will not fit all farms,” he adds.

“For example, some farms would not want to use urea and would prefer ammonium nitrate (AN). This would be at a further premium over liquid, making scenario 1 null and void, but please do pick up the phone – I’d be happy to discuss some viable options.”

SCENARIO 1

Under scenario 1, let’s say the farmer requires 37t of Nitrogen, plus some sulphur...

In July, this would have cost upwards of **£85,000** to achieve this through liquid. In the same period, the same amount of nitrogen and sulphur could be supplied through urea and sulphate of ammonia (SOA) for a little over **£60,000**, a difference of just under **£25,000**.

If the farmer is not set up for solid application, they would need to buy a spreader – the Fram Farmers machinery team has a partnership with Amazone, one of the leading spreader manufacturers in Europe. This would enable the farmer to buy a good spec, brand new spreader though Fram Farmers for in the region of £15,000.

This means a net saving of **£10,000** in the first year alone, whilst still applying the same amount of N. If the farmer still wished to apply some liquid for precision applications, this now means they have flexibility to apply both solid and liquid, allowing them to manage the price swings between the two products.

SCENARIO 2

Under scenario 2, let’s say the farmer has the resources to apply both liquid or solid, but does not have tanks for liquid fertiliser or storage space on-farm for bags of solid product...

Cash flow may be tight through the autumn and winter, so buying solid at the best price is not always an option, even if they could store it. However, today, you could buy liquid fertiliser to be delivered in the spring and paid for in the month following delivery, for a few p/kg of N more than granular AN for immediate delivery.

Fram Farmers can supply liquid fertiliser tanks as part of the wide offering to members, and there is still time to install tanks ready for the spring. If you own your own tanks, then you will still pay the same price for the liquid fertiliser, but you may be tied into a particular supplier who may not offer the best price.

Applying liquid fertiliser is usually a one-person operation, so there will be cost savings on labour, as well as fuel, as you will not require a second machine to move bags around and fill the spreader. This option allows members to lock into a known price for the spring, ensuring that they will have supply, but not need to have the storage and cash flow in the winter months.

If you would like to speak to David about your fertiliser options, please get in touch: david.wilson@framfarmers.co.uk | 01728 727715 | 07879 980144

If you would like to know more about purchasing a spreader through Fram Farmers, please contact Gordon Cummings: gordon.cummings@framfarmers.co.uk | 01728 727759 | 07776 664030



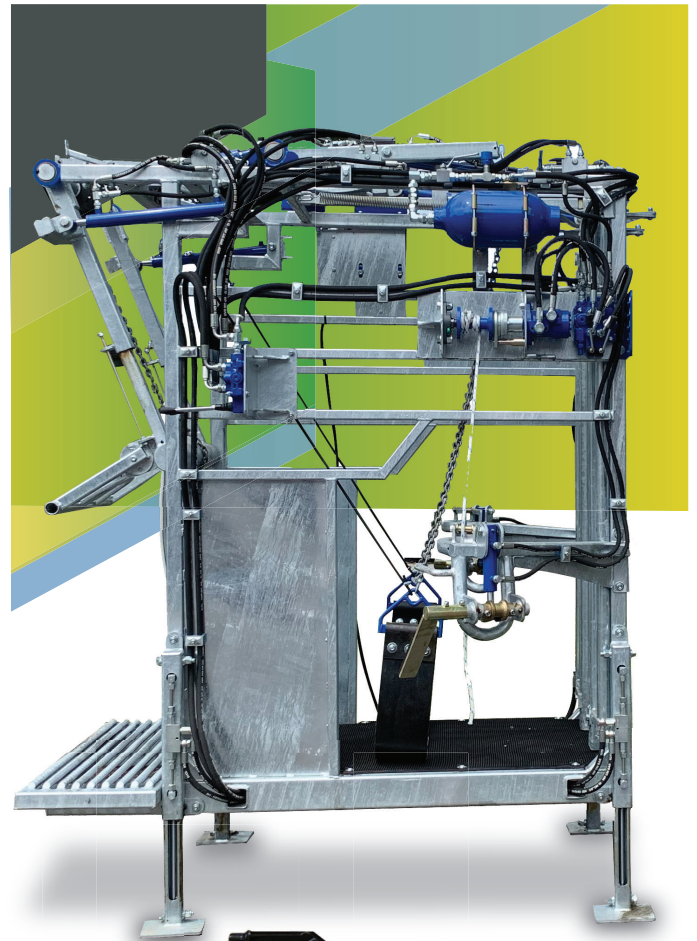
Hoofcare and lameness Prevention advice built on four decades of knowledge

Formed in 2007 by Robert Doran, DP Agri Ltd is a family run company based in the South-West of England. The company was born after Rob had to retire from active hoof trimming, which he had done since 1984, having trained at the Grassland Management Centre in Oenkerk Holland.

DP Agri are now at the forefront of cow comfort equipment; their state-of-the-art workshops in Devon manufacture specialist hoof trimming crushes and automated footbaths for farms large and small, they also now supply wholesale trimming equipment across the UK and Europe.

Combined with this and based on many years of travelling around the globe, the company also supplies the best in calf hutches, self-propelled cubicle brush/bedders, cubicle sand rakes and anything that makes livestock more comfortable.

With the onset of digital dermatitis into the United Kingdom in 1986, lameness in dairy herds has become a common issue. If the bacterial infection is left untreated, it can soon become a dominant lameness problem within the herd. Any lesions on the claw allows dermatitis to turn to toe necrosis, which is extremely challenging to treat.



Through years of networking across the globe DP Agri has some of the best products available for both prevention and cure of lameness in cattle and in sheep, as CODD is also a form of dermatitis.

A range of fast setting blocking glues, blocks, bandages, and treatments are available through Fram Farmers, as well as a range of hoof crushes and equipment.



Rob and his team can advise on calf management, importing some of the best group and single calf hutches and pens from the Netherlands, including motorised bedders, sand rakes and cow safe cubicles.

The team at DP Agri are available seven days a week and have had great success working with Fram Farmers, which they hope to expand on in 2023.

Alverdicott Road, Bideford, Devon, EX39 4FG

Email: info@dpagri.co.uk

Website: www.dpagri.co.uk

Tel: **01237 425000**

FARM DIVERSIFICATION MAKES THE MOST OF PICTURESQUE LOCATION

Fram Farmers member James Wellock shares how help and knowledge from friends and family, combined with competitive purchasing through Fram Farmers, helped them turn their existing assets into an additional source of income.

Farming just over 200 acres, and milking 170 Holstein Friesians in the picturesque Yorkshire Dales, James Wellock and his partner Indi were looking for a venture that would fit around family commitments.

The farm is situated in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, a popular tourist destination for campers and caravanners, so James saw an opportunity, making the most of the beautiful landscape on and around the farm.

Bringing in knowledge and experience of friends and family who are keen campers, they decided to allocate a peaceful spot in the corner of the farm to a 14-pitch caravan site.

THE PROCESS

After the initial idea was formed, and after two and a half years of navigating the very difficult planning process, James experienced one of the wettest winters on record in Yorkshire in 2019.

After securing funding, Covid lockdown hit the UK at the end of March 2020. Uncertainty, coupled with wanting to make progress, made James question whether the project would progress.

With staff across many industries being furloughed, James purchased all materials as soon as possible to avoid any potential issues. Having become a member through recommendation, James was already sourcing livestock inputs, including genetics, electricity and grass seed through Fram, plus some machinery.

James sourced most of the materials for the project through Fram, including sewage and treatment plants, water pipes and fittings, as well as electric cable and Rolec hook-up points, which were all priced and ordered by the team at Fram Farmers, saving James money and time.

Fram's telecom department also provided advice to James, helping source internet routers through Vodafone. James believes the Fram account was hugely beneficial in helping them meet their budgets, alongside the convenience and knowledge.

"Not only did they save us money, they put us in touch with the right suppliers, who were really great for advice in areas we knew so little about," says James.

"Telecoms was something I had no clue about – and this is where Fram really helped us out – with the advice and service, as well as the actual supply. As Fram is a big player, being a member gives me power as a little player."

With some support from local external contractors, this diversification project was very much a 'hands on' build, with staff member James Hartley working three days a week on the farm and helping to complete the project on the other days of the week.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The whole process took just over three months, going from a field of grazing cows to a fully functioning caravan site. Ash Keys Caravan Park in Eshton officially opened in July 2020. Just a fifteen-minute drive from popular tourist destinations such as Malham Cove, Gordale Scar and Janet's Foss, and only three-quarters of a mile from major trails like the Pennine Way, it is now one of Pitchup's most reviewed sites, with 858 reviews in 30 months.

The well-kept pitches all have electricity and water hook-ups, plus access to a toilet on-site, with further toilets and showers adjacent to the farmhouse, an



Elsan point (for chemical toilet disposal) and recycling facilities. James was keen for the site to be dog-friendly, so made use of a one-acre field to offer a dog run site.

The site is advertised on Pitchup (an online campsite and holiday park booking website), social media, Trip Advisor, and the Yorkshire Dales National Park website – these methods alone helped achieve 80% occupancy in the first year, 98% last year (helped by the rise in 'staycations') and 94% in 2022. Word has also spread to European campers - now a growing percentage of bookings.

The online booking system also means the site is relatively low-input to run, operating a self-check-in system; guests are provided with a welcome pack a week before arrival, and free wi-fi.

James' girlfriend Indi runs the site and takes care of the back-office element of the business. With cleans and checks twice a day, this allows for flexibility that fits in between family time and the dairy business.

The farm now has a diversified venture which fits alongside existing commitments. One of the important aims was to have a business that did not detract from the time needed for James to manage the livestock farm, and buying through Fram Farmers allows James to manage his time effectively.

They are continuing to explore further opportunities, looking to install roof-mounted solar panels to take both businesses to using green energy and get a grip on electricity costs.

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MEET ROGER POYNTON, MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (NORTH)

Roger joined Fram Farmers in October as membership development manager, covering the North of the country, and will be working with members to help them get the most out of their membership.

He has already hit the ground running, speaking to and meeting many members in the area, and getting to know their businesses. He recently attended a number of local events in the area, including a networking event at Bradford Estates, and will also be at the Low Carbon Agriculture Show in February.

With a 40-year career in agriculture, Roger has worked practically with livestock on mixed and dedicated livestock farms, as well as within businesses that have served them, starting in the pig sector, and returning to the ruminant sector where the majority of his experience lies.

In his time, he has seen the move towards larger farming businesses and suppliers.

“It is the nature of competition to dislodge your opponent, with fewer competitors you can dominate the market and increase margins,” he explains.

“I can imagine that a Farmer driven cooperative would be seen as a disruptor to this process, which is why it is my belief that cooperation is more important than ever.”

In these early stages, Roger is mostly listening to members, allowing them to be honest with their requirements and the challenges they’re facing.

“I am interested to learn how we can grow our combined trading strength and relationships. I am keen to find what works, what doesn’t, and where members see their future with Fram. I see my role as one of facilitation and providing for growth within the group, which I am excited and proud to be involved in,” he adds.

Looking back at his early practical dairy experiences on his family’s dairy farm



in Staffordshire, Roger can relate to the hard work and effort required to remain in the industry. But also, would point to the importance of access to the latest business trends and market intelligence required to withstand future challenges. Fram Farmers can provide farmers with the right tools to progress.

If you’re in the north of the UK, and would like to know more about joining Fram Farmers, please get in touch with Roger: 07442 931 960 | roger.poynton@framfarmers.co.uk

NEXTGEN GROUP VISITS THE BIG SMOKE

For their Autumn event, Fram Farmers’ NextGen group ventured to London for a tour of the Houses of Parliament, which was a change of scenery for many!



The tour provided an insight into many of the traditions, including Black Rod, and continued with lessons about the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The tour concluded at Westminster Hall, where Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was laid to rest in State the following week.

The group then met Conservative MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, Dr Dan Poulter. After participating in an hour-long Q&A session, which many found to be the highlight, the group

engaged in discussions with Dr Poulter, and each other. Debates ranged from the government’s stance on the subsidising of gas and fertiliser production, to more local issues affecting farming closer to home.

After lunch and drinks in Westminster, the group visited the Tate and Lyle sugar cane processing plant in east London. This sparked some controversial conversations, but was a beneficial experience for a group of young people in agriculture. The take-away message is that the UK sugar industry could not survive without either domestic or imported sugar production; supporting UK producers is crucial, but there is a place for the two sub-industries to work side by side.



As the day drew to a close, some of the group retired early with the thought of work in the morning, as other group members found a pub in Stratford.

NextGen members also enjoyed an afternoon test driving the latest Case IH machinery and vehicles on 22nd November ahead of the Arrive and Drive event the following day, with member Henry Maddever winning the driving challenge. Head to the news article on page 4 to find out more.

FRAM FARMERS AND AGREENA JOIN FORCES TO HOST THE FIRST EVER 'REGEN DAY'



Fram Farmers recently hosted a Regen Day with Carbon Partner Agreeena where speakers were invited to discuss regenerative farming. From experiencing a decrease in overheads per year and better yields, to soil health and biology, and managing drainage, we covered the good, the bad and the ugly, and cleared up the myths of carbon farming. The event also explored the opportunities for Farmers to obtain an income from generating and trading carbon credits as a result of regenerative farming practices.

Hosted by Fram Farmers member Ed Reynolds at his farm in St Neots, the event aimed to help members and agronomists understand how carbon farming can be made simple. His 330ha farm has moved from conventional combinable cropping to regenerative farming over the last 5 years.

Ed is in his third year of the Agreeena programme, having changed to regenerative farming after noticing the volume of subsoil being ploughed, and the increasing use of artificial fertiliser and fungicides. His overhead cost was previously £715/ha in 2018, which has been reduced to £494/ha in 2021.

With a regenerative mindset, Ed is constantly learning and evolving his production system, incorporating cover crops into the cycle of growing cash crops, and reducing cultivations and inputs, specifically to reduce impact on the soil to produce a more resilient farming system. Working with Agreeena, Ed shares his learnings with other farmers as a conservation agriculture specialist.

THE AGREENA PROGRAMME

Agreeena was founded with the aim of driving the environmental and financial sustainability of agriculture by making it

easier for farmers to access new market opportunities.

AgreeenaCarbon is the certification programme that Ed Reynolds has signed up to, one of the first internationally recognised and accredited soil carbon programmes. It was created to financially support the transition from conventional to more sustainable farming practices and provides farmers access to an additional revenue source based on their individual, voluntary climate action.

By adopting climate-friendly practices, such as reduced tillage and the use of cover crops, farmers can reduce emissions and remove carbon from the atmosphere, effectively turning soils into carbon sinks. Put simply, sustainable farming practices are about farming in a way that disturbs the soil as little as possible, so the carbon stored in the soil isn't released back into the atmosphere.

Agreeena's online platform quantifies emissions reductions and carbon storage in the soil, and issues carbon certificates based on these quantifications which can then be sold or kept to offset farmers' own carbon emissions.

Thomas Gent, a Cambridgeshire farmer and Agreeena UK market lead, has deep roots in regenerative farming as his family has farmed in this way for the past 14 years. Thomas joined Agreeena in 2021 to help launch the AgreeenaCarbon programme across Europe, which now operates in 14 European markets.

"This first ever 'Regen Day' with Fram Farmers is a great way to show a holistic picture of how to transition to regenerative agriculture, and how carbon farming comes in to support and finance that transition," says Thomas.

CONTENT AND SPEAKERS

The concept of the day was a farm walk, with various talks from industry experts. The day started with Fram Farmers Crop Protection Product Manager Matthew Cobbald and Will Smith from NIAB, who ran a session called **'Through the eyes of an agronomist'**. This explored how agronomy fits into regenerative farming, and where the concept originated from. Will is involved in the research and development of knowledge-based solutions for those interested in pursuing regenerative farming techniques.



Sharing insight from recent NIAB trials and the value of trusted and independent research, Will explained that NIAB are currently working with Leeds University to gather data on regenerative farming, trialling different stages of 'regen', from the most conventional system, to no-till.

"Getting farmers together to discuss regenerative agriculture always brings with it great discussion," he said.

“Arming these growers with the right tools to make any changes in that direction is really important. Understanding the types of challenges that might be faced – changing weed pressures, overall crop performance, and specific rotational slots in particular – is vital to ensuring high productivity into the future, alongside profitable farm businesses.”

If you'd like to gain access to independent research, then make sure to get in touch with Fram Farmers to make the most of membership offers with NIAB that have been negotiated on your behalf.

The day then offered a session on **soil sampling and the benefits surrounding this**, with a live extraction demo from Thea Pease at Agricarbon. Thea explained how and why soil cores are taken down to 1m depth, then analysed and broken into samples and depths to fully analyse carbon values and content.

Next up, visitors looked at some of Ed's cover crops, where Ian Gould, director at Oakbank Game and Conservation Ltd, explained how **cover crops can be used to reduce soil erosion and suppress weed growth**.



Ian, who has worked in the environmental side of farming for over 20 years, described cover crops as a 'box of tools' that can provide a huge benefit to farmers in improving their soil biology and increasing soil organic carbon.

His background in seeds and plant breeding has led to a keen interest in how plants can be used to solve problems with soil health and the wider environment, and he has travelled extensively to study



regenerative agriculture and cover crops in particular.

“I hope that the potential of carbon markets refocuses farmers' attention on soil organic matter and soil health more widely,” Ian explains.

“There is no doubt that paying more attention to your soil will have significant positive impact on your farm business, building resilience to climate stress and encouraging healthy, high yielding crops.”

To wrap up the day, the group headed back to the main yard to view a static display of Weaving drills. Simon Weaving, sales director at Weaving Machinery, explained how the first Weaving drill was specifically developed and designed over a number of years for drilling into cover crops, and includes a unique offset disc design.

Simon has always had a keen interest in seed drills and regenerative farming. As a business, their aim is to build quality British-manufactured products to make farming as simple as possible.

Fram Farmers has exclusive offerings on drills and parts with Weaving so make sure to get in touch with the machinery team: machinery@framfarmers.co.uk.

MISCONCEPTION AND LEARNING

Overall, the day addressed a lot of misconception, and separated some of the confusion and myths from the solid facts surrounding regenerative farming. There is no better way of informing farmers about the potential that carbon farming has to offer than to bring in experts from all aspects of the regen sector.

Not only did members get a clear account of their carbon potential but the informative sessions from leading figures within the cover cropping, machinery and agronomy sectors gave members a holistic overview of this way of farming.

Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO, believes it is important to bring this information to members, helping them to understand what's available to the agricultural community, and enabling them to make decisions on their own farms and be recognised for their efforts.

“We are proud to have partnered with Agreena, as they have created a model that puts farmers first,” he explains.

“You can join the scheme and leave at any point – you've got nothing to lose. If you're already doing these practices, get the recognition.”

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE AN EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR ALL FRAM MEMBERS:

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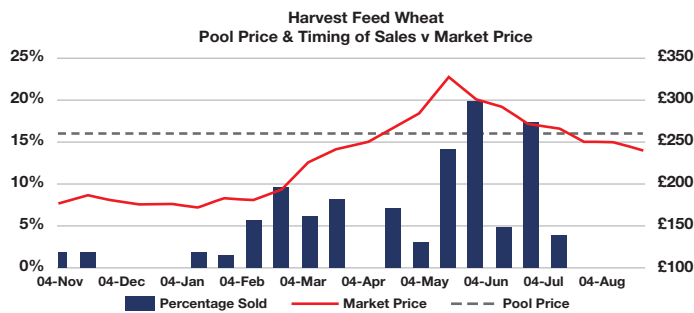
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FRAM FARMERS HARVEST WHEAT POOL OUTPERFORMS COMPETITORS

This season's harvest pools achieved excellent returns compared to both competitor pools and the average prices achieved by non-pool members. Prices paid are detailed in the table below.

Commodity	Ex Farm Price
Feed Wheat	£260.21 plus regional premiums up to £10/tonne
Feed Barley	£237.18 plus regional premiums up to £10/tonne
Oilseed Rape	£595.03 plus additional quality bonuses averaging £57.32/tonne



"We routinely benchmark results against the main merchant pools, and I am pleased to report that they performed very well for all commodities, achieving £7-15/tonne more across the board," said Barry Howard, Commercial Manager at Fram Farmers.

"We also looked at the average price paid for feed wheat to non-pool members for the same delivery period, and this was also approx. £15/tonne lower than the pool price."

Fram Farmers' grain marketing team is seeing a number of new members entering the pools for next season as the increasing volatile markets are ever more challenging, while existing members using the pools remain pleased with the results.

Fram Farmers member Geoffrey Mayhew in Suffolk comments on pool performance: "Fram's pools have excelled this season in harvest pool price, and the execution of grain collections was second to none. The whole process from collection to payment gives clarity to all parties in contract farming agreements."

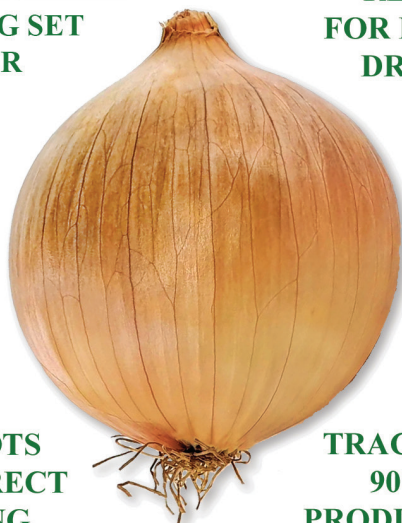
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SELF-BUILD DREAM REACHES COMPLETION



We last visited Tim and Kim Eden, and Tim's brother Jonathan, in the 2017 Winter Issue of our magazine, when they were embarking on their renovation journey, expecting to be moved in by Autumn 2019. We recently paid a visit to their farm on the Norfolk/Suffolk border as they put the finishing touches to their 17th Century barn and adjacent single storey parlour building.

Picking up from where we left off, Tim and Kim had got the floor down in Eden Barn, before turning their attention to The Dairy Lodge, the single storey barn destined to be Jonathan's residence.

Planning allowed for an extension to be added to the original parlour building that will be The Dairy Lodge, so they worked hard to do everything required structurally, including foundations to the extension, stripping the building back and rebuilding the roof frame.

By Autumn 2019, The Dairy Lodge was watertight, allowing Jonathan to continue work on the inside of the property, which he largely undertook himself to remain on budget. This allowed work to continue on Eden Barn, using the existing roof to shelter the property from the elements. The frame of the building had to be rebuilt in places, and a whole new roof structure was required, with Tim and Jonathan calculating angles, constructing the A-frame and installing the purlins themselves. Once the roof was on, and the barn was watertight in early 2020, first-fix electrics followed shortly after.

With plasterboarding complete, they drafted in the help of family and friends in spring 2020 for internal plastering. By the time lockdown hit, they were working hard to install the external insulation and

weatherboarding, swiftly followed by underfloor heating and floor screeds. The kitchen was fitted in summer 2020, then second fix electrics and final internal finishes, allowing Kim and Tim to move in in time for Christmas 2020. Jonathan completed works on The Dairy Lodge the following summer.

The project has been a real labour of love, with many long days and very few days off, which is where the knowledge and support of the Fram Farmers building team has been a huge help with sourcing materials throughout the build.

With the majority of the usual building materials sourced through Fram Farmers, including aggregates, cement, concrete, OSB boards, blocks, bricks, roof tiles and insulation, they believe they saved around 40%, allowing their self-build budget to stretch much further.

With the original frame and roof of Eden Barn requiring some structural intervention, timber was a vital material; this was also sourced through Fram Farmers, alongside drainage, floor joists, roof membranes, internal flooring, paint, and Velux windows. By sourcing materials through Fram Farmers, Tim and Kim have peace of mind that prices are compared through a network of suppliers, ensuring they receive the best available price. And where they



sourced materials directly from suppliers, it was added to their Fram Farmers account for convenience.

"We had no individual payments to worry about, or paperwork to keep track of, with all purchases swept up into one invoice," explains Kim.

"Nick is honestly amazing - the number of times I have phoned him up in a panic when we've run out of something... he's been so on the ball, ordering materials swiftly and organising deliveries."

Tim, Kim and Jonathan were fortunate that they had already purchased most of their materials ahead of prices increasing in lockdown, and the dedication of the Fram Farmers team ensured materials continued to be delivered on-time, keeping the project moving (if a little behind original schedule in true Grand Designs style, due to a wet winter and an uncharacteristically wet spring).

Work continues on Eden Barn and The Dairy Lodge, perfecting the gardens, driveway and outside space, though they have chosen to decrease the level of work to a more manageable level, allowing them all to enjoy their homes they have worked so hard to build.



Kim and Tim moved in just in time for Christmas 2020.

SUPPLIER COLLABORATION BRINGS BENEFITS TO DIVERSIFIED FARM BUSINESS



The business is a member of Fram Farmers, buying ag chem, fertiliser, seed, building materials, fuel and electricity through the cooperative. Direct drilling has meant their establishment costs are very low, and the pig and poultry aspects of the business work well together – with low-cost fertiliser from the pigs, and straw from the land.

However, Nathan says that input costs, including electricity, are extremely high, particularly for the farm shop element of the business, which bears the cost of running chillers, freezers, and air conditioning units. With ever-increasing energy costs becoming an issue, the business partners have been looking at ways to reduce costs.

SOLAR IS THE WAY FORWARD

Between the farm partners and all involved in the farm shop business, they decided that solar was the way to go, making best use of the resources and available space on the farm.

Suffolk-based renewable energy firm East Green Energy was recommended to Nathan by the Fram Farmers business services team. George Gawthrop at



With the rise in energy prices, renewable energy can offer a suitable solution to help manage input costs. We speak to Fram Farmers member Nathan Wiffen, who tells us how combining the expertise of a Fram Farmers supplier, and the Fram Farmers Finance Scheme, has paid off for his mixed farm business and farm shop.

In the heart of the Suffolk countryside, in a village called Stonham Aspal, you will find the Hog and Hen Farm Shop. Opened five years ago to diversify from the traditional farm enterprise, the farm shop and café sells local, seasonal produce and supports local artists and craftspeople.

Nathan's wife Naomi also runs a floristry business – Rose and Berry Flowers – based at the farm.

The shop itself is run by Luke and Anna Salisbury, while Nathan and Naomi farm just over 300 acres in partnership with Naomi's parents Mark and Rachael Howson. The arable enterprise is made up of wheat, barley and beans, while the pig enterprise fattens around 10,000 indoor pigs per year.

Free-range poultry also forms a part of the business, with 800 laying birds, plus 800 broilers, producing eggs and chicken for the farm shop, local pubs and cafés.



Nathan Wiffen (L) and Mark Howson (R)



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East Green Energy visited the site a few times, considering the space available and the installation that would best suit requirements.

Planning was required for the proposed installation due to its size and scale, which Nathan instructed George to obtain on his behalf prior to going under contract.

They decided on a 65kW ground mounted system that would sit in the land occupied by their free-range laying hens, therefore not taking up any productive arable land, and also providing the hens with some shade. The structure sits in a directly south-facing field, maximising sunlight and daylight hours.

With the future in mind, they have decided to install a larger system than is currently required, so that, at peak times, they can cover electricity costs on the farm and the farm shop, as well as exporting back to the grid.

SECURING FINANCE

After agreeing on the size and location of the system, and understanding the cost of

purchase and installation, they looked to progress with financing the project.

Nathan's initial plan was to finance the project through their high-street bank, but after encountering a few issues and setbacks (as well as long response times), Nathan decided to try the Fram Farmers Finance Scheme, having heard about it through member communications.

Nathan spoke to Simon Shepherd at Flexi-Funding, the credit broker working with Fram Farmers to provide the service to members*. After the initial phone call, accounts were sent to Simon, along with some background information on the business.

After agreeing requirements and terms, the process caused no delays, with the funds reaching Nathan swiftly and efficiently in just over two weeks.

"The process was very simple," explains Nathan. "More so than I was expecting."

"I wasn't initially going to go down the route of alternative finance, and the early initial conversation was supposed

to be a back-up option. However, the conversation with Simon reassured me that the process could be trusted and it was the right move for our business, and it turned out to be a good decision." Nathan is pleased with the low interest rate, which is fixed for six years.

This should roughly work out to be a similar duration as the payback period, depending on the business circumstances and consumption.

INSTALLATION

With finance secured, the ground-mounted solar panels were given the go-ahead in August. Installation started in mid-October and was completed early November, taking only a few weeks.

They are estimated to produce almost 70,000 kwh/year, and the returns should start to show in the spring and summer months. Performance is calculated on average use over 6 years, and although winter brings shorter and darker days, Nathan is confident that they have invested wisely, reporting that it is "so far, so good".

*Under this scheme, Flexi-Funding is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority as a credit broker, and finance is provided by Novuna Business Finance, a trading style of Mitsubishi HC Capital UK PLC authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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Following the success of the show last March, new conference sessions will focus on enhancing biodiversity, transitioning to regenerative farming systems, niche crops, managing energy use and costs, as well as sessions on the decarbonisation of UK heat and power, and maximising returns from existing clean energy assets. A policy workshop, giving farmers and landowners the chance to quiz experts on agricultural, energy and environmental policy has also been added. The new topics have been introduced alongside already popular

sessions, such as carbon farming, soil health, each renewable energy type and an open debate on reaching net zero in agriculture.

Supported by Fram Farmers and held in partnership with the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), Low Carbon Agriculture Show incorporates four expos including: 'Environmental Business Expo', 'Farm Technology Expo', 'Energy Now Expo' and 'Low Emission Vehicles Expo.'

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ROOT CROP FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

Nearly twelve months on from our last update on the Root Crop Focus Group, we bring members an update on what is happening behind the scenes.

2022 saw the creation of The Potato Partnership, a collaboration between Agrii, Fram Farmers member James Foskett Farms, other local farms, including James Winch of East Suffolk Produce, and Matt Gregory of Greenwell Farms, and agronomist Graham Tomalin.

The aim and purpose of this partnership is to ensure progress is maintained by continuing to incorporate the research and development findings into commercial practice.

Although Fram Farmers is not a formal ‘partner’ in these trials, the cooperative has a strong existing commercial relationship with Agrii, and we are looking to work closer with Agrii to access and share the trial results, which are already in place, plus other expertise their business can offer.

Markets in the last twelve months have been extremely volatile and communication has proved more critical than ever. Although Fram Farmers cannot predict the future – just as no one in the industry can – the cooperative is doing all it can to support members by understanding their needs and challenges. However, this cannot be achieved without input from members.

250 fertiliser requirement forms have been submitted, allowing Fram Farmers to order over 7500 tonnes of orders in a single day when new season terms were released. 300 early season ag chem order forms were also submitted, allowing us to secure product early. Fram Farmers has also continued to work in partnership

with Grimme, supplying members with genuine parts to keep machines working, whilst keeping costs down.

All of the above efforts are helping growers to manage the variable costs of root production, but, as the saying goes: “your variable costs are fixed, but your fixed costs are variable”. While some savings can be made through efficient ag chem and fertiliser ordering, there are far more significant savings to be made in storage and energy.

By utilising all the expertise within the cooperative, and accessing the latest technical information, we are striving towards enabling our root growers to achieve the lowest cost of production in the country.

The Fram Farmers business services team is able to help provide solutions in storage and energy to suit the specific energy



requirements of root crop farms, which are largely focussed towards the winter months. Various solutions are available, including renewable energy systems and battery storage, as well as advice on appropriate grants and funding.

Crops specialist David Wilson is hoping to visit more of Fram’s root growers during the coming year to share these insights.

More meetings with The Potato Partnership are scheduled for early 2023, and we look forward to sharing results and findings, which will be tied in with updates from manufacturers about product development and pipeline products.

Fram Farmers is also in talks to add potato seed producers to the ever-growing list of suppliers, widening our offering to members, and further reducing farm paperwork.



DID YOU KNOW?

Fram Farmers has purchased 115 vehicles for members in the last 12 months, saving them thousands of pounds.

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