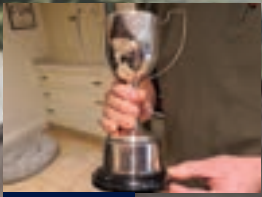


FARMERS FIRST

Issue 67 | Spring 2023



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FRAM MEMBERS TRIUMPH AT CHESHIRE COUNTY FARMS COMPETITION



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EMBRACING A NEW ERA OF IT TO DELIVER VALUE SERVICE



PAGE 18

TAPPING INTO TOURISM BRINGS SUCCESS TO HERTS MEMBER

*Fram Members' Role in
Net Zero Dairy Project
Page 11*

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SUPPORTING MEMBERS THROUGH THE ROUGH AND THE SMOOTH

As we near the end of the first quarter of the year (where did that go?) Fram Farmers continues to support members in challenging times, sharing industry developments and providing advice and support, while continuing to help farmers manage their business costs.

In this issue, we are pleased to bring you a number of updates on what the cooperative and our members have been up to, as well as some of the exciting things to come. Our usual news pages bring you a few internal updates, plus a review of a long list of events that have taken place since the beginning of the year.

Recent events, both in-person and online, have all been well attended, including breakfast meetings, mental health workshops, crop inputs seminars, technical briefings, and the second 'Regen Day' in East Sussex. We also have lots of other events in the pipeline, including a 'Pie and Pint' event in Cheshire in the spring, and member forums in Essex and Suffolk in June, and Cheshire this autumn.

We are also in the process of organising a webinar on farm finance in mid-April to help members with improving the financial resilience of their business going forward. The event will involve Lloyds Bank, Wilson Wraight and a company specialising in R&D tax credits – look out for more details soon.

Our business services team provides an update on the latest grants available

on page 9, as well as a reminder of the partnerships and trusted supplier opportunities and deals exclusive to Fram Farmers members – see pages 17 and 22.

After a rigorous few months of testing and training, we are in the final stages of launching a number of IT updates. On pages 12 and 13 Richard Snelham, Fram Farmers IT Manager, provides a preview of the new members' platform, and how this will make processes for members and Fram Farmers staff more simple and efficient.

Over to our fantastic members... we're pleased to share the news of some farmer members in the Cheshire region who have triumphed in the recent Cheshire County Farms Competition – see page 15.

Elsewhere, we meet Catherine Smith, who joined Fram Farmers last year. Catherine shares her diversification successes on pages 18 and 19. On page 11, we share details of an exciting regen project from Trewithen Dairy in Cornwall and meet two Fram Farmers involved in the journey to produce carbon neutral milk.



Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO

Internally, we celebrate recent successes of some of Fram's 'Rising Stars' (page 7), and Tim Gilbert reflects on the growth, development and future plans of the NextGen group on page 21.

Finally, as I leave you to browse the pages of the Spring issue, I share the news that we are looking to recruit a new farmer board member to replace William Goodwin who steps down in November. We are looking for someone who, ideally, can represent the interests of the dairy sector, as Fram looks to ensure it is fully supporting members across the country.

If you would like to find out more about the Fram Farmers board, what is involved and how it operates, please contact Wendy Houston (Chairman), Doug Inglis (Vice-Chair) or myself. If you are interested in applying to become a board member please contact Sarah Snell on 01728 727751 or sarah.snell@framfarmers.co.uk for more details and an application form.

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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 07833 777518. If you would like to opt out of receiving Farmers First, please email mail@framfarmers.co.uk

STAFF UPDATES



We are delighted to introduce Izzy Farrell, who joined Fram Farmers at the end of January to provide temporary administration support to the livestock team.

Izzy finished studying at Suffolk One College last year and has taken on her new role at Fram brilliantly.

DIARY DATES:

31st May – 1st June	Suffolk Show
13th-14th June	Cereals
27th June	Mowness Hall Trials Day & Fram Farmers Supplier Event
28th-29th June	Royal Norfolk Show
28th-29th June	Groundswell

NATIONAL AWARD FOR BARON BIGOD

Fen Farm Dairy's Baron Bigod cheese has been awarded the UK's best cheese for 2022/23 in the Fine Food Digest Awards!

Based in Bungay, Fram Farmers member Fen Farm Dairy is run by third-generation dairy farmer Jonny Crickmore and his family. The Crickmores started their journey by selling raw milk produced by their herd of Montbeliarde cows from their roadside cow-print shed, and started making Baron Bigod in 2011, which has quickly become a classic British cheese.



Voted for by delis, farm shops and food halls in the awards, Baron Bigod is a traditional Brie-de-Meaux style cheese with a nutty, mushroom flavour rind and a smooth, silky centre, making it a popular and versatile staple on many UK cheese boards.

SECOND 'REGEN DAY' IN EAST SUSSEX

Around 50 farmers were welcomed to Iford Estate by Ben Taylor, managing director and Fram Farmers member on 28th February. Spread over 1500ha, Iford Estate is on its own regenerative journey. Consisting 800ha of arable land and 500ha of grass, which is all in stewardship, they grow wheat, barley, oilseed rape and peas.

Delegates saw regenerative farming first hand in the field and heard from industry experts including Ben's agronomist, Richard Cartwright. Alex Hammond, CCM Technologies, talked about their stabilised high carbon organic material fertiliser and Natallia Gulbis, PlantWorks, explained how mycorrhizal fungi can improve soil health and increase the plant's ability to absorb nutrients and water.

Back in the yard, drills from Weaving Machinery were on display alongside Ori Agriculture's Mechanical Weed Seed Control Unit (SCU).

There were further presentations from Ian Gould, Oakbank Game and Conservation Ltd, who urged farmers to think of cover crops as a set of tools that will improve your soil health, structure, and reduce the need for herbicides. Thomas Brunt from Savills then went on to highlight how to unlock natural capital potential, whether



you are a landowner or a tenant. Fram Farmers has partnered with Agreeena to help members environmentally and financially.

"You'd think it is a new topic but ultimately carbon credits are the icing on the cake of known practices that bring long term benefits on farm. However, it is a long journey that requires open conversations." says Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO.

"Regen farming can play a huge role as part of the solution to our climate crisis," said Thomas Gent, regen farmer and UK market lead for Agreeena.

"By reducing the amount of land we plough and the amount of soil we disturb with farm cultivation machinery, the more

we can reduce greenhouse gases and turn our soil into carbon sinks, removing CO2 from the atmosphere."

The afternoon ended with a final Q&A with Agreeena and all the other speakers. The event brought farmers together to discuss and understand the role that regenerative farming and carbon farming can play in helping the environment, and raised awareness around how the sale of carbon certificates can provide additional revenue.

Fram members can now create an account on the Agreeena platform and receive full onboarding support for free. If you'd like to find out more, Fram Farmers will be holding another Regen Day with Agreeena in November, and you can also contact katharine.grubb@agreeena.com.

RECENT EVENTS SUMMARY

It has been a busy few months at Fram Farmers since the Winter 2022 issue of *Farmers First*. Here, we summarise the events you may have missed.

MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOP

20th January 2023

Fram Farmers is working closely with YANA to help support members and create a healthy environment both at work and at home. On the back of this, Fram Farmers was pleased to announce one of many interactive mental health training sessions to support farm workers. 'Your Needs Met' was aimed to advise and support members on how to reduce stress and anxiety, and understand the importance of looking after your physical and emotional health. Due to the success of this workshop, we are looking to host more in the autumn across other regions, so keep an eye out for future dates.

SPRING CEREAL FUNGICIDE SEMINAR

20th January 2023

We were delighted to host a Spring Cereal Fungicide Seminar in partnership with Corteva and Amazone. The virtual seminar included an update on testing and best use of Univoq, an agronomists' perspective on cereal fungicides, and talks on matching good chemistry with good sprayers.

TALKING DIRECT DRILLING & SPRAYING

25th January 2023

In partnership with Amazone, Fram Farmers hosted a talk on 'Direct Drilling & Spraying' which allowed Amazone to talk directly to Fram Farmers members, and inform them of the latest developments and thinking. The partnership with Amazone stretches back many years - this was a great event to tie together the benefits members can receive from this.

NROSO ROADSHOW 2022/2023

January & February 2023

The NRoSO Roadshow took place again this year with sessions being held in January and February. The roadshow was part of the farming and crop protection industry's Voluntary Initiative to minimise the environmental impacts of pesticides. The event was divided into four sections; current issues, application, technology and tips, and review and reflection. Members could choose from online or in-person sessions, with BASIS and NRoSO points available.

GRAIN MARKET BREAKFAST MEETING

1st February 2023

The Grain Market Breakfast Meeting took place early February at Diss Rugby Club, with 75 attendees. Andrew Dewing, chief executive at Dewing Grain, David Stubbley, commercial manager at Crown Chicken Ltd, and David Wilson, crops specialist at Fram Farmers, provided a thought provoking update on grain and input markets from their various roles across the industry. Due to the positive response of this meeting, there will be more to come in the near future.

FERTILISER INDUSTRY UPDATE

2nd February 2023

In February, members attended a Fertiliser Industry Update at the Fram Farmers office or online. The morning included a broad range of speakers from COFCO, LimeX, Brineflow and Origin Fertilisers. The update covered all aspects of the current fertiliser market, nutritional advice, the latest insight into liquid fertiliser, and an overview of the market; past, present and future.

LOW CARBON AGRICULTURE SHOW

7th – 8th February 2023

Fram Farmers supported the Low Carbon Agriculture Show in early February. The show was a great success and aimed to support farmers and landowners in rising to the challenge of producing more domestic, climate friendly food and energy.

SPRING TECHNICAL BRIEFINGS

7th and 23rd February 2023

Fram Farmers recently hosted two days of technical briefings with a range of manufacturers. Talks focussed on best practice for novel science mycorrhizal and biostimulant product use, converting useful scientific papers into tangible crop results, performance updates, new products, lessons learnt from 2022 and the global market of ag chem.

SUFFOLK AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION VIRTUAL BREAKFAST BRIEFING

2nd March 2023

The SAA, in partnership with Fram Farmers and Scrutton Bland, hosted a Virtual Breakfast Briefing for members of all three organisations. This briefing was a punchy version of the in-person Suffolk Farming Conference, which will return in spring 2024 to Trinity Park. For now, the recording of the event can be found on the SAA website.

The morning included an update from Thérèse Coffey, secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, followed by Julia Pyke, director of financing and economic regulation, who spoke about the impact of Sizewell C on Suffolk agriculture.

Dr Zoe Leach, NFU East Anglia regional director, provided an update on key legislative challenges and developments whilst Jack Deal, Scrutton Bland business advisory director, discussed budget updates, green credits and possible future tax changes.

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FRAM FARMERS' RISING STARS

The Fram Farmers team includes a fantastic group of enthusiastic and proactive individuals who work hard to ensure the highest quality advice and service to our members. We take a look at a few of their stand-out achievements over the past year.

RACHEL COOPER

Seed product manager Rachel Cooper was awarded one of eight places on the John Forrest Award in early January 2023, having applied the previous autumn. Taking place over three days at Madingly Hall near Cambridge, the course was provided by Green Shoots Productions, specialists in media and communication training.

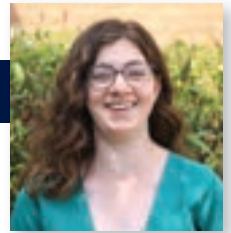
The award is managed by Felix Cobbald Trust (FTC) and funded by The Morley Agricultural Foundation (TMAF) and the FTC, offering the opportunity to eight

agriculturists, including scientists and farmers, for whom clear communication skills are expected to be integral to their careers.

Throughout the three days, the group were set several assignments and took part in workshops relating to agricultural media; one of the days explored applications for grant funding, and Nuffield Scholarship, while the other days offered workshops focusing on public speaking, presentations, interview practice for TV and radio, and

photography, followed by an assignment.

The group enjoyed talks from guest speakers including Dr Georgina Barrett and Dr Alistair Wright from BBRO, and TMAF farm manager David Jones about their own experiences on the course, and on the final day, the group learnt the practical skills needed for filming, media relations, chairing discussions and social media.



CHESSIE AITCHISON

Trainee seed specialist Chessie was awarded BASIS Trainee Member of the Year in January 2023, having achieved one of the top three BASIS points scores of the trainee membership. She later attended two interviews with members of the BASIS board before being announced the winner. The award is sponsored by Groundswell, providing the winner with tickets to attend the 2023 event. Chessie is excited to be attending again, after witnessing some

interesting ideas on regenerative farming last year.

Chessie signed up to the BASIS Trainee membership as it allowed her to learn at her own pace and offered a breadth of up-to-date information that's accessed easily through the learning tools.

For Chessie, the membership was invaluable for supporting her with her career in agriculture after graduating from

university. Keen to expand on her existing knowledge, Chessie already has her eye on the Seed Sellers course and Sustainable Land Management course by BASIS, and she is hoping to apply this knowledge to the sustainability board at Fram Farmers.



TIM GILBERT

Oxford Farming Conference Scholar and Fram Farmers business analyst Tim Gilbert, was awarded the Suffolk Rising Star Scholarship Award in Spring 2021. The award is organised by the Suffolk Agricultural Association and supported by Fram Farmers, earning Tim a scholar place at the Oxford Farming Conference in January 2022.

Open to those aged between 19 and 30, who work in agriculture, the Award aims to recognise those who are still in the early stages of their chosen career but are already starting to stand out.

Joining Fram Farmers in 2017 as member and supplier accounts assistant, Tim quickly worked his way up to become

a business analyst, directly contributing to the strategic direction of the business through data analysis. Tim has also led the establishment of the successful NextGen group within the Fram Farmers Membership. (see page 21 for more info).



HOLLIE LISTER

Hollie Lister, arable administrator in the crops team also successfully won an application to attend the 2022 OFC through the Woodbridge-based Deben Farmers Club, and Fram Farmers also provided the opportunity for Chessie (see above) to attend the Conference this year as a McDonalds Scholar.

was made an online-only event at late notice, so the scholar group were able to participate in the online conference, but missed out on in-person networking, which is a major part of the event. The OFC committee decided that, in order to get the full experience, scholars could attend the January 2023 conference as regular delegates.

The scholar programme for OFC also included additional events outside of the main conference with all the other scholars, including a day at McDonalds' head office and a virtual media training session with agricultural journalists.





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FARMING EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY FUND OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

The long-awaited Farming Equipment & Technology Fund (FEFT) is currently open for applications, with exact details on equipment that will be funded released last month. The fund offers grants for specific items of equipment to increase productivity, boost environmental sustainability, and improve animal health and welfare.

The Fund is split into two themes:

- Productivity & Slurry items
- Animal Health & Welfare items

As detailed in recent Fram Farmers Grant Bulletins, farmers, horticulturalists, forestry owners and contractors can apply for grants of up to £50k across the following two areas (a minimum grant of £1,000 and a maximum of £25,000 from each).

The Fund is proving extremely popular amongst members, and the application process is very straight forward, involving the completion of a simple form which can be accessed online. There are two separate 'portals' to apply for each grant, and plenty of help and advice on the gov.uk website.

What equipment can be applied for?

Please look back on previous Fram Farmers Grant Bulletins to view the full list of eligible items and the specific criteria that needs to be adhered to when it comes to the equipment itself. These lists are also readily available online.

The full details and lists of eligible equipment is vast and is included in the regular bulletins, but the categories under each area are as follows:

Productivity & Slurry

- Horticulture
- Forestry
- Slurry Management
- Arable
- Livestock
- Resource Management
- General

Animal Health & Welfare

- Cattle
- Sheep
- Pigs
- Poultry
- General Livestock

Please continue to look out for Fram Farmers Grant Bulletins for updates on these grants, including updates to application deadlines, plus any other grants.

This is an example of what you will see on the regular bulletins:

FETF	ITEM NAME	SPECIFICATION	EXPECTED AVERAGE TOTAL COSTS OF ITEM (£)	GRANT AMOUNT (£) (BASED ON A QUANTITY OF 1)	ITEM SCORE
Direct drill	6m	Direct drill for precision drilling of arable and cover crops, using either tines or discs to produce the seeding slot. To be eligible the drill must have a minimum drilling width of 5.9m, must have no cultivation or seed bed preparation equipment in front of the seeding slot mechanism andmore	46,800	18,720	64

The amount of grant offered (regardless of how much is paid for the item).

Each item is scored and the average score of all items included will be used to prioritise applications.

If offered a grant, the equipment you purchase MUST meet the specification here as a minimum.

There are a number of things to be aware of before making an application:

- If successful with a grant application, applicants will be required to purchase ALL items they have applied for.
- Any equipment purchased MUST meet the minimum specification criteria detailed in the guidance to validate a claim.
- Applicants should not buy any equipment before being offered a grant, but they are permitted to pre-order to secure a build slot by paying a refundable deposit.
- When purchasing an item, an applicant must pay for and fully own the equipment before claiming the grant. An item cannot be asset financed, for example.
- Applications will be scored using the average 'item score' of all of the equipment included in the application. If oversubscribed, then the RPA will award grants to the highest scoring applications.

Please contact the business services team if you have any questions:

01728 448207 | bizservices@framfarmers.co.uk

For assistance in sourcing any of the equipment listed in these grants, please use the following contacts:

Livestock related enquiries:

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

Any other equipment:

Gordon Cummings and Chris Flatt – 01728 727719 | machinery@framfarmers.co.uk

Maximising dairy producer margins and performance at grass

Feeding cows at grass provides a welcome opportunity to reduce feed costs, but if milk production and cow health is to be maintained and improved, dietary change challenges must be overcome.

Key areas to address when spring grass is introduced to the diet include balancing energy and protein supply, maintaining optimal rumen pH (reducing risk of sub-acute ruminal acidosis SARA), and reducing risk of falls in butterfat production.

Buffer ration

"It is important to be realistic about what can be achieved from grazed grass alone. A balanced buffer ration of suitable quality and quantity is critical to cow health and productivity," says KW Feeds nutritionist Charlotte Ward.

"The base of the buffer ration should be good quality silage, with maize and/or wholecrop cereal silages ideal to include, these are low in protein and provide a good starch source to help utilise the high levels of rumen protein in fresh grass," she adds.

"Including 0.5-1.0kg 'muzzle width' chopped straw helps provide the structural fibre needed for good rumen function."

These forages then need to be accompanied by carefully selected concentrate feeds to balance protein, digestible fibre and starch.

Balance the protein

Protein in grass is largely rumen degradable, as such, any protein supplied in the buffer feed should be high quality, with a good level of digestible undegraded protein (DUP). If milk urea levels rise above 0.030/300 then action must be taken to avoid negative impacts on production, health and fertility.

"The British rapeseed expeller **NovaPro** fits the bill perfectly, with its higher DUP:RDP ratio in comparison to soya, allowing for improved protein utilisation," says Ms Ward.

"A balanced buffer ration of suitable quality and quantity is critical to cow health and productivity"

Fibre digestion

Feeding the live yeast **Vistacell** and buffer **Acid Buf** as part of the daily buffer feed, can help to manage highly digestible spring grass and reduce risk of SARA and milk fat depression.

"By using **Vistacell**, the rumen is conditioned to promote growth of fibre digesting bacteria due to the yeasts natural ability to remove oxygen and helping to use up the excess lactic acid," says Ms Ward.

Acid Buf supports the cow's natural

buffering capacity, maintaining the rumen pH above the critical threshold of 5.8 to reduce the risk of SARA," she adds.

Benefits

"There's a lot to get right if you want to make the most of low-cost grazed grass,"

Ms Ward concludes. "If you do get it right, the benefits in terms of summer yields and fertility, and the foundation you set for winter milk production, will more than offset the investment in extra feeds."

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FRAM MEMBERS' ROLE IN NET ZERO DAIRY PROJECT

Climate change legislation and changes in consumer habits are driving the need for a reduction in the carbon footprint of milk production. We share details of an exciting project from Trewithen Dairy in Cornwall and meet two Fram Farmers members who are on a journey to produce carbon neutral milk.

With the likes of Arla and Muller introducing changes to milk contracts where payments will depend on meeting new environmental targets, the dairy sector is evolving to produce milk more sustainably.

Trewithen Dairy is owned and run by the Clarke family, who have owned Greymare Farm in the Glynn valley since 1976, and started crafting dairy products there in 1994. In 2001, they swapped farming for producing dairy products and craft clotted cream, milk, butter and yoghurt from a farming pool of 36 farms across Cornwall.

All farms agree to a common set of ethical and environmental values on which they are independently audited. Known as *trewFarming*, these high welfare standards go above and beyond Red Tractor requirements. It's one of the reasons why Trewithen Dairy's herds are in the top 25% of herds nationally for all 14 areas measured, from animal health to welfare and husbandry. As part of the standards, all farms must audit their carbon footprint.

In addition to *trewFarming* standards, Trewithen Dairy launched a pioneering project to explore the possibility of carbon-neutral milk - called their Earth Milk Project. The project started with two Cornish dairy farms - each with 400 cows and both Fram Farmers members - to switch to farming methods that significantly help the environment. Martin and Bridget Whell of Leyonne Farm and James Willocks of Tregleath Farm, two of 36 Cornish milk producers supplying Trewithen Dairy, agreed to spearhead research for the Earth Milk project.

Their agricultural practices and soils have been closely monitored for three years now, with soil samples tested at independent laboratories showing that the



Bridget and Martin Whell

organic content of most of the soils tested is increasing year-on-year. In fact, the data would suggest that several thousand tonnes of carbon have been sequestered across the two 300 hectare units during the project so far, although a further set of testing is required before having enough data to confirm this.

Martin and Bridget are making full use of the slurry produced by the herd rather than relying on bagged fertilisers, which supports soil fertility.

They have learned a lot about herbal leys - their reseed policy is to reseed with direct drilling roughly every 9 years, having sprayed off the existing ley.

"There is a gradual loss of diversity, leaving grass and clover ley in the last three years, but this does give enough early bite in the spring, where herbal leys can lag, and the advantages of herbal leys come later in the season," explains Martin.

"Deeper tap roots and more complex root systems mean more carbon can be stored in the soil too, and mixed with a greater diversity of bacteria and fungi, it is all improving our soil health," he adds.

With a once-a-day milking herd of British Friesian X Scandinavian Red X Jersey cows, the farm is low-input, using rotational grazing practices.

"As a farming business, we're delighted

to be taking part in the project, and we feel confident that we're achieving what the project aimed to do - it's been a fascinating journey."

"We're not just below average on our emissions, we're actually going beyond that, measuring the carbon in our soil, and learning from the carbon sequestration figures. This is not usually included in standard industry carbon reporting, but it's important to highlight the benefit livestock can bring," Martin adds.

Trewithen Dairy's project is potentially one of the most rigorous UK monitoring programmes of its kind to be carried out on dairy farms looking into what is known as 'regenerative agriculture', and as the project progresses, it is demonstrating that it should be possible for milk to be produced in a way which will sequester more carbon than it produces.

Following on from Fram Farmers' recent partnership with Agreeana, and the first two 'Regen Days' which were primarily aimed at arable farmers growing combinable crops, the cooperative is also exploring ways to support its livestock-based members.

More information on the Earth Milk Project can be found on the Trewithen Dairy website - www.trewithendairy.co.uk.

FRAM FARMERS EMBRACE NEW ERA OF IT TO DELIVER VALUE SERVICE

Over recent years there has been a strong push for the agricultural industry to invest and support innovation with technology. Farmers are being encouraged to invest in equipment that is technologically advanced and improves on-farm productivity and efficiency. Likewise, it is vital that Fram Farmers is strategic and forward-thinking in the use of IT systems and the way we manage data, so that we can provide members with the highest levels of customer service, enabling us to work as productively and efficiently as possible.

Fram Farmers 'Goes-Live' with new IT system

In 2019 the Corporate Plan for Fram Farmers included investment in the development of a system that would effectively bring together our customer relationship management (CRM), member's purchasing cycle, product ordering, business analytics and accounting into one data-rich system.

This work is now complete and Fram Farmers launched a new internal computer system called 'Business Central' (BC), part of the Microsoft Dynamics 365 platform on 1st March 2023. In addition, Fram Farmers has strategically hosted the new BC within the Microsoft Azure Cloud hosting platform to support long term flexibility and growth.

"The launch of Business Central was a significant step forward for Fram Farmers to enhance the long-term strategy and support the highest level of service and value to Members," explains Richard Snelham, Fram Farmers IT manager.

"Internally, a team of over 16 staff worked across the business to deliver the system, and the successful 'Go-Live' on 1st March was an anxious, yet exciting, moment for the opportunities it now presents".



Richard Snelham,
Fram Farmers IT Manager

What does this mean for members?

Members will not physically see the first part of this technology upgrade as this is an internal operation to service the full range of members' services. All interactions with members, including current telephone and online ordering have not changed, although the new BC system will enhance the current efficiencies of Fram Farmers' services.

"Three years of planning and diligent development has delivered this new system to Fram Farmers, with an intelligent and dynamic system which includes more intuitive data management," Richard explains.

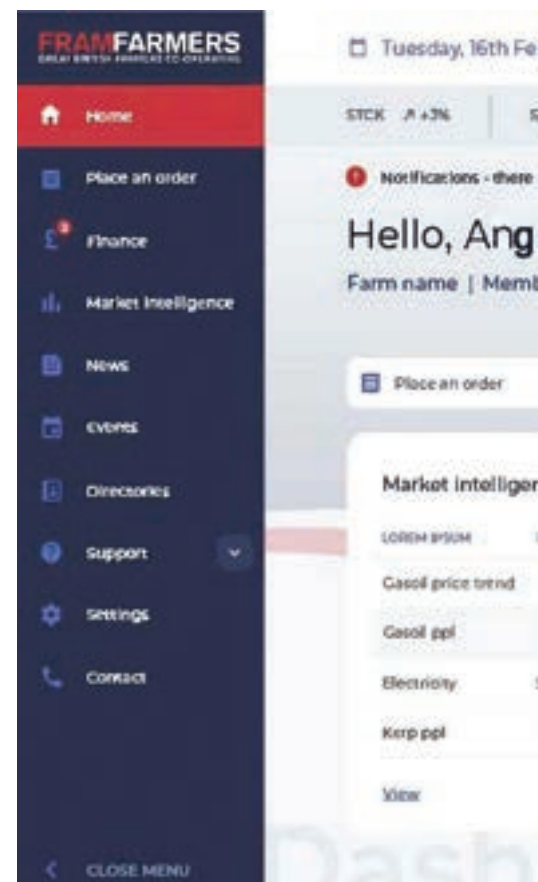
"It also enables staff to manage the full sales cycle, from creating opportunities, through to generating orders, in addition to bringing members' accounting into one environment. This Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is an off-the-shelf product which has the flexibility to be tailored to deliver to the needs of our business."

Members' Online Web Portal forthcoming launch

Better fulfilment of the needs of members has always been foremost in the development strategy of Fram Farmers.

Alongside the work of the ERP, Fram Farmers is delighted to be launching a new Members' Web Portal. This new environment for members is scheduled for launch the week commencing Monday 27th March 2023. With all business for members from 1st March being processed within Business Central, a new Member's Portal was a principal commitment.

The initial launch is an integrated platform which enables access to key elements including statements and invoices, market



DASHBOARD:

Left tab includes the following pages which are easily accessible:

- Finance – view your statements and invoices
- Market Intelligence – see latest price trends
- News – see the latest updates and developments
- Events – keep up to date with upcoming events
- Staff Directory – easily find contact information
- Support – FAQs, help articles, video demonstrations

STAFF DIRECTORY

Find contact details for staff members all in one place.

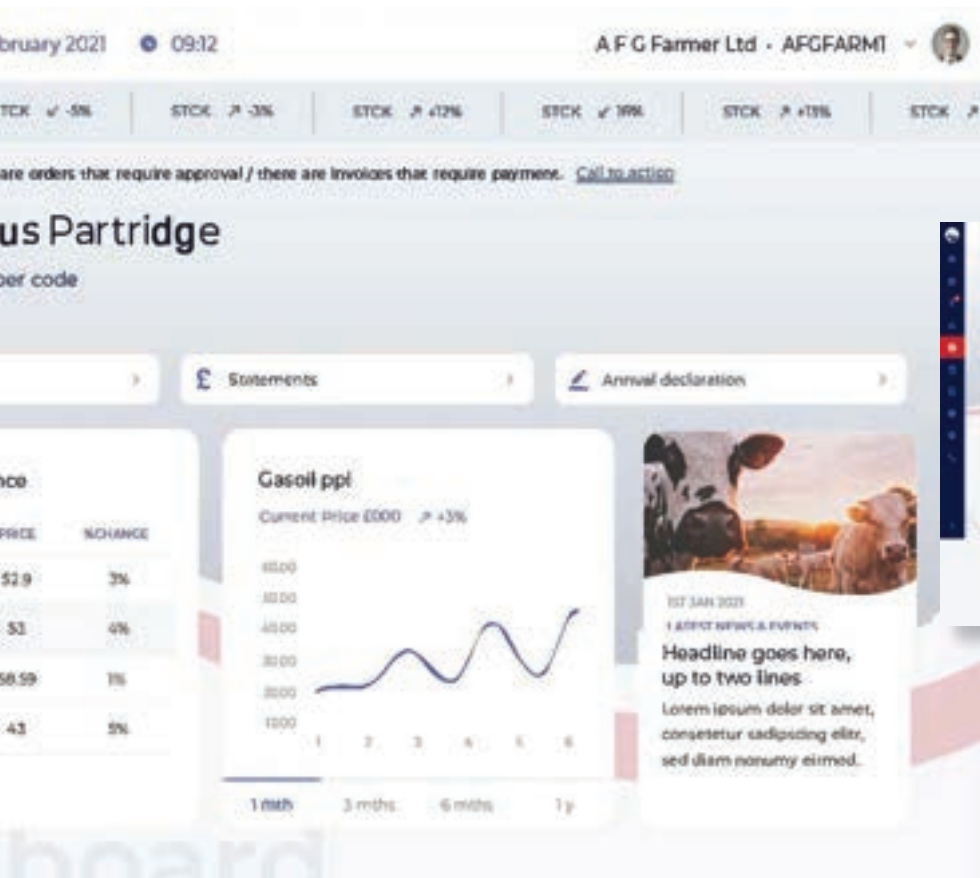


trends, news, events, and a Fram Farmers staff directory. These will be quickly followed with elements such as dynamic online ordering (creating orders directly into Business Central), enhanced market intelligence across sectors, members' directory and a members' settings area to update contacts and account details.

Continuity of Service

To ensure no level of service is lost by members, Fram Farmers has also strategically retained the existing Members Web Portal, which will stay active alongside the new Web Portal and Grain Portal, which was launched in Autumn 2021. All three web portals will become accessible via the Members Login link on the home page of www.framfarmers.co.uk

The existing web portal will be condensed to allow members to retain access to all invoices and statements for services provided prior to 1st March 2023, and will still be available as an archive to access historic statements and invoices.



While the new web portal is still in development, Fram Farmers provides an overview below of elements for the new site, plus some initial graphics.



NEWS:

This section will include the following articles, which can be filtered:

- Market Updates (e.g. fuel bulletin, weekly purchasing update, grain market update etc.)
- Fram News (staff updates, board updates, fundraising etc)
- NextGen (recaps of NextGen events)
- Member Profiles
- Partnerships
- Early Order Forms
- Events – recaps and recordings

EVENTS:

Keep track of upcoming events, whilst also having an improved method of registering for an event.



LOOK OUT FOR MORE DETAILS OF THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW MEMBERS' PORTAL IN THE COMING WEEKS.



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FRAM MEMBERS TRIUMPH AT CHESHIRE COUNTY FARMS COMPETITION

The Cheshire County Farming Competition is one of the oldest established farm competitions on a county scale in the UK. The competition aims to encourage pride and healthy competition in all aspects of farming, upholding the tradition of best practice farming in Cheshire.

With a choice of 23 classes designed to cater for a variety of farming interests, including cropping, herds and breeding, machinery and environment, the classes are judged on-farm, with an out-of-county judge travelling around entrants' farms to compare farming businesses in Cheshire.

In the 2022 Awards, a number of Fram Farmers members were announced as prize winners at the annual dinner and awards presentation evening, which took place in November.

Doug Richardson took home the cup for the best Winter Wheat, also scooping third prize for Winter Oilseed Rape. The wooden beam in the photograph shows the plaques they have won for growing crops in previous years.

Doug, who farms in partnership with his

brothers Peter and Paul and mother Iris, has been a member for around 20 years, purchasing fuel, electricity, fertiliser and crop protection through Fram Farmers. Farming 1500 acres in total of rented, owned and contract farmed land, he also purchases feed and livestock husbandries through the cooperative for the beef side of his mixed farming business.

Rob Cross, whose wife Catherine is competition secretary, has been a member since 1994. In the 2022 awards, Rob was awarded second place in the Farmed Environment category and the Winter Barley category. Rob grows wheat, barley, oats, OSR, spring beans and maize across 860 acres in Grappenhall.

James Dakin also triumphed at the event across many categories, including second place in Winter Oats, first place in the Early



Paul Sweeney, agronomist (left) Doug's brother Paul, Doug Richardson, holding the cup, and Fram Farmers crop protection product manager Matthew Cobbald (right).

Potatoes, second place in Farm Machinery and third place in Farm Buildings, also taking home the ECN Trophy for the Best Non-Dairy Farm.

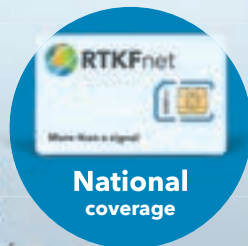
Ed Houghton, who farms in Lymm, was awarded third place in the category for Holdings Over 500 Acres. Ed farms across 700 acres in total, including an arable operation, suckler herd and contract spraying business, along with some farm diversification.

All competition winners can be found on the Cheshire County Farms Competition website.

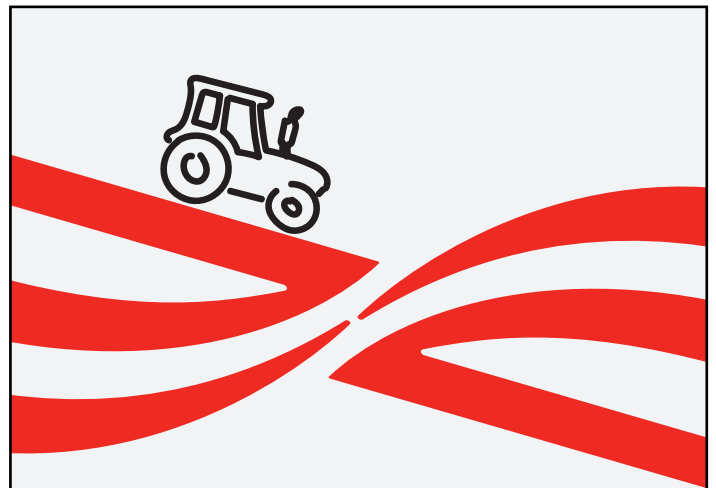
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ADVERTORIAL

POTENTIAL FOR LODGING HIGH THIS SPRING

An effective PGR programme this spring will be more important than ever, says leading off-patent manufacturers, Life Scientific.

The hot and dry autumn of 2022 saw many early-drilled crops going into moisture deficient seed beds, whilst a deluge of rain in early January left many crops standing in water - all of which create the perfect storm for lodging this spring, says Ruth Stanley, Life Scientific UK and IE country manager.



Ruth Stanley

Stem lodging occurs when the stem breaks as it is not strong enough to support the plant, whilst root lodging occurs when the plant's root system is not able to anchor it sufficiently in the ground. Both forms cause combining and drying difficulties, reduction in yields, and quality issues.

"We know lodging risk increases with factors such as early drilling and a high plant population. However, the risk from

root lodging increases where there is an insufficiently developed root system in soils that are fertile and well cultivated, particularly those with high organic matter or low clay content- and there are many crops across the UK that are in this situation," she says.

"Also, if it dries up again in the spring as it has done in the last several years, a poorly rooted plant won't yield, particularly on lighter land types."

A robust PGR programme will help protect against both root and stem lodging and Mrs Stanley recommends that Trinexapac, a key active in the PGR armoury which is less temperature dependent than chlormequat, can play a key role in an effective PGR programme in the form of Trinestar.

"Trinestar contains 250g/l trinexapac ethyl

and is a PGR registered for use on all varieties of winter and spring wheat, barley, oats, rye, triticale and ryegrass seed crops."

Manufactured by off-patent manufacturers Life Scientific, Trinestar is a reverse engineered formulation of its reference product Moddus.

"Trinestar can be applied between growth stages 30 – 39 in winter cereals and its use early (GS 30), can help root development and root plate diameter, which could be critical this year," she points out.

Trinestar is commercially available through distribution partners, ProCam and Hutchinsons

For more information on Trinestar visit the Life Scientific website <https://lifescientific.com/products/>



PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE FOR FRAM FARMERS MEMBERS

Fram Farmers membership brings a number of exclusive partnerships, one of which is the private medical insurance scheme, designed by Fram's financial services partner Scrutton Bland. Here, we provide a reminder of the scheme, exclusive to Fram Farmers members and their families.



What is private medical insurance?

Private medical insurance (PMI) is designed to cover the costs of private medical treatment for curable, short-term illnesses and injuries, and will usually cover the cost of in-patient and day-patient treatment, as well as some out-patient care.

Scrutton Bland has worked with Aviva Health UK Ltd to create an exclusive PMI offering for Fram Farmers members. The scheme can be tailored to meet individual needs, and can include both employees and family members.

What are the benefits?

The main benefit of having PMI is access to prompt treatment, without the worry of waiting for an NHS appointment. The Scrutton Bland scheme also includes several other valuable benefits including:

- **Access to a digital GP.**
- **24-hour stress counselling hotline.**
- **Cancer cover as standard.** Includes chemotherapy, radiotherapy and targeted therapy, plus up to 10 years of monitoring post-cancer treatment.
- **Specialist claims teams.** Aviva has claims teams specialising in areas such as oncology and mental health to ensure there is an informed person to talk to who understands your situation.
- **Free PMI cover for second and subsequent children.** Younger children are covered if you take out PMI cover for you and your eldest child under 20.
- **Discounted gym membership.** Up to 25% off membership of a range of UK health and fitness clubs.
- **Bespoke PMI cover.** Scrutton Bland understands that every farm business is different, so the PMI scheme includes a range of options to choose from, which can enhance or reduce premium payment options.
- **Security of using an award-winning insurance provider.** Aviva has won the Best Health Insurance Company award for the last ten years.
- **Local agricultural insurance professionals.** Scrutton Bland has a specialist agricultural insurance team with extensive knowledge of local farming businesses.

The Scrutton Bland PMI package is exclusive to Fram Farmers members and not available elsewhere.

In line with the cooperative aims of Fram Farmers, it is a group-rated scheme meaning premiums will be determined by the overall claims performance of the group. This means that although these preferential market rates obtained by Fram may still mean premiums can go up or down each year with inflation and/or age of membership, any claims impact is greatly reduced compared to directly insured schemes.

For further information, or to talk to a member of their specialist insurance team, please contact Scrutton Bland direct:
0330 058 6559 |
hello@scruttonbland.co.uk



Scrutton Bland Group refers to Scrutton Bland LLP, Scrutton Bland Financial Services Limited, Scrutton Bland Insurance Brokers Limited and S Merrick Hill (Commercial) Limited. Scrutton Bland Insurance Brokers Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Our FCA number is 828934.

TAPPING INTO TOURISM BRINGS SUCCESS TO HERTS FRAM FARMERS MEMBER

From redundant dairy buildings to an agricultural tourism centre - meet Fram Farmers member Catherine Smith of Foxholes Farm, who has built a thriving multifaceted business in Hertfordshire.

The Foxholes family farming partnership began in the forties, started by Catherine's grandfather, Alfred Ronald Smith. Two generations later, Catherine, along with her father and cousin, farm in excess of 1000 acres of arable land near Ware, Hertfordshire.

Alongside this, redundant dairy buildings have been converted into a beef and sheep unit and commercial units, alongside a farm shop, onsite butchery, and glamping site. Foxholes Farm Park opened in April 2017; what started as a small petting farm for chickens, lambs and goats has grown in size and now homes a range of animals including rabbits, guinea pigs, peacocks, donkeys and alpacas. In recent years, the addition of a climbing area for children and an undercover sandpit area has extended the appeal to families.

Catherine's cousin Martin runs the arable operation on the farm, growing a mix of feed and milling wheat, barley and intensive grass, while Catherine's daughters Helena and Charlotte take care of other farm operations, including livestock.

225 beef cattle, mainly Aberdeen Angus and Charolais, are grass fed and finished on forage maize and a bought-in rolled cereal mix. Lambing just under 100 Suffolk ewes provides the opportunity to open up the lambing shed to visitors, enabling them to see the working farm in all its glory, and learn how the lambing process works.

'Lambing Live' is a popular attraction that has been going for around 8 years, evolving into an Easter holiday attraction for visitors to see young lambs being born, and feed the ewes. The farm is also home



to 70 laying hens, and 30 goats, providing eggs and meat for the farm shop.

Half term holidays provide a platform for the 'Big Tractor Experience'. Catherine's husband Michael is an agricultural contractor, mostly covering East Anglia, so cleaning the kit up, and providing families the opportunity to see tractors up close, is another draw to the Farm Park. The team has taken part in Open Farm Sunday for nearly 10 years, and will be doing so again this year.

Making the most of their location near the A10 in Hertfordshire, they are successfully tapping into the family leisure and tourism market, organising an increasing number of seasonal events such as Christmas tractor lights, a Halloween pumpkin patch and 'Summer on the Farm'.

"Our business has grown in areas where we like what we're doing, where we enjoy the type of work," Catherine explains.

"Our ideas come from events and activities we would want to do as a family, and it's amazing what people who have grown up in an urban setting will pay to do and see. We feel we're doing our bit to educate the public on farming too."



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COMMERCIAL UNITS

Redundant farm buildings previously housing yoghurt and cream production facilities have been converted into commercial units. There are now 12 units on the farm, housing a variety of businesses, from animal feed suppliers to dog groomers, and gardeners to scaffolders.

The newest units were completed last year, one housing a vet practice and the other a wellness centre, the rural location of the units making them suitable for equipment that wouldn't fit into highstreet premises, such as cryochambers and saunas.

Glamping, another arm of the business, opened just before Covid; Catherine attended the Farm Business Innovation Show and came away with a safari tent! Open April – October, the addition of glamping pods, complete with full kitchens and hot tubs, means they can take bookings throughout the year.

Together, Catherine's onsite businesses employ around 25 members of staff, 12 of which are full-time. Including the other let business units, around 250 people are employed across the 1000 acre farm. This has led to Foxholes Farm winning multiple awards over the years, including, most recently, the Rural Employer of the Year Award in the CLA Rural Business Awards.

FARM SHOP AND BUTCHERY

Elsewhere, what started as a small-scale enterprise selling home-produced beef, has grown into a purpose-built farm shop and butchery, employing many local, trained, dedicated and friendly staff. Catherine wanted to offer more than just a farm shop, demonstrating the authenticity of the journey from farm to consumer. The on-site butchery unit processes 100% of the farm's lamb and more than 80% of the beef for the farm shop, with some being



sold through farmers markets to achieve carcass balance.

Catherine cures and cooks all her own gammons, hams and bacon in the farm shop kitchen, alongside baking homemade meat pies and pastries. A wide selection of British cheeses and other fresh produce is also available to purchase.

BETTER BUYING POWER

Already a member of buying cooperative North Herts Farmers, Catherine decided that May 2022 was a good time to join a larger buying group with better buying power for purchasing arable inputs, fuel and building materials.

"Everyone is looking at their bottom line, making choices based on value for money," she explains.

"I've been considering our overheads, thinking 'how can I save some money?' and a few other farmers in our area – the Hertfordshire-Essex border – suggested giving Fram Farmers a call."

Since May, the business has purchased fuel and some animal husbandry items through the cooperative, and is looking to other areas too. There is potential for further development on the farm, in the shape of some further farm buildings, with plans to work with the Fram Farmers

building materials team to source materials for future development, as well as maintenance on existing properties.

Electricity and other utilities will also be a focus for Catherine, in order to better manage business running costs. Solar panels have been installed since 2009 to help power the farm shop, with hopes to increase this number for the wider business, potentially through Fram's network of renewable energy suppliers.

"Fram is bigger than North Herts Farmers in its scale and size, and specialists in each department means Fram can provide additional knowledge on the products, as well as sourcing."

Alongside buying power, Fram Farmers has also been a source of information and advice for Catherine, who has attended a number of webinars.

"With all of our diversification projects, I feel like I've stepped back from the core farming, and Fram's webinars have helped me feel more connected to and involved again, helping me keep up to date with the industry."

"We've not looked back since joining Fram Farmers," she adds. "There's a lot more we can do, and we're looking forward to the years ahead."



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NEXT GENERATION STEPS UP

The idea for the Fram Farmers NextGen group was first developed in 2018, with the purpose of providing a social and support network for 18-35 year olds, enabling them to expand their professional networks and develop their relationship with Fram Farmers as they take on more responsibility in their businesses.

“Ultimately, we don’t want some of our younger members to feel removed from the Fram Farmers relationship, or see it as ‘something that mum or dad does’,” explains Tim Gilbert, chairman of the networking group.

“Succession planning can be difficult to manage, and we hope the NextGen group is helping to support the transition of responsibility, challenging members’ way of thinking and helping them to broaden their horizons.”

In 2021, post-Covid, when everyone realised the true value of conversation and networking within farming, the group came into its own with the purpose of in-person events renewed.

In the past few years, due to kind and generous sponsorship provided by Bayer Crop Science, the group has provided a regular stream of events to challenge ways of thinking, and provide ideas and

inspiration for members’ own businesses, such as diversifying or adding value.

“These are largely opportunities that members wouldn’t otherwise have access to, like behind-the-scenes tours of Direct Meats and Muntons Malt, or a Q&A session with Dr Dan Poulter MP and access to the Houses of Parliament,” Tim adds.

The purpose of the existing group and new groups is now clearer, with a more obvious narrative in the planned events and visits, a growing number of regular attendees, and a dedicated committee of Fram Farmers’ younger staff members driving the group forward.

Tim Gilbert, Fram Farmers business analyst, heads up the group, supported by committee members Jono Woollatt, Hollie Lister, Rachel Cooper, Bex White and Grace Hayward - who takes care of the marketing and promotion of the

group’s activities.

There are early plans to introduce groups in the north and south of the country, providing an equal offering to younger Fram Farmers members nationally.



Tim Gilbert

The premise will mirror the existing structure, with the aim of including one national event per year, enabling members to meet other like-minded young farmers from across the country. Each group will operate independently, coming together once a year to share their farming stories beyond their home county’s borders.



If you are interested in joining the NextGen group, please contact nextgen@framfarmers.co.uk



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*This difference is based on prices w/c 06/03/23. Historically, we have seen savings between 5ppl-25ppl.



TELECOMS & IT UPDATE

FRAM FARMERS TELECOMS & IT SERVICES: HELPING MEMBERS EMBRACE DIGITAL INNOVATION

It's been a busy and exciting twelve months within Fram Farmers' telecoms and IT services team. We bring you an update on the latest telecoms and IT services available through the cooperative.

Over the past year, the team has focused on supporting existing and new members through some of the ongoing industry-driven changes, whilst delivering an extensive range of new technologies and business improvements.

With UK Government and Ofcom driving

digital change and growth through technology, we all face evolution with the pending switch-off of historic telephony services like PSTN and ISDN landlines, alongside the decommissioning of 3G mobile technologies around the world. Fram Farmers' team of experts have continued to support and guide members,

helping to future proof their telecoms and IT services, and we are pleased to say that many Fram members have already transitioned to digital services.

We are confident that, with the continued support of our chosen local Agri Telecoms specialists, Comm-Tech Voice and Data Ltd, we will continue to work closely with our remaining members to help them achieve and embrace the digital future of farming.

MOBILES



Making use of the three major mobile network providers – EE, O2, and Vodafone – Fram Farmers can offer SIM-only deals, as well as a single purchase of a wide array of handsets, covering new and old flagship devices across all main brands. Contract terms for mobiles are generally fixed for 24 months, and we can offer employee packages for larger numbers under the same contract.

BROADBAND



Required for an increasing number of facilities on-farm, including security, broadband is becoming crucial to the everyday running of a farm. Our services at Fram Services include fixed lines, wireless, 4G and satellite broadband options, ensuring we can take care of members in particularly 'hard-to-reach' locations. Contracts can vary from 12-36 months.

LANDLINES



Fram Farmers offers a fixed pricelist for landline services, with additional add-ons available to suit your individual business. Calls within the UK and overseas are very reasonably priced, and contracts can vary from between 12-36 months.

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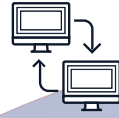
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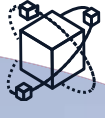
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