



**ULSTER
FARMERS'
UNION**

**UFU
MANIFESTO
NORTHERN IRELAND
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS
2022**





Victor Chestnutt
UFU President



David Brown
UFU Deputy President



William Irvine
UFU Deputy President

About the Ulster Farmers' Union

Founded in 1918, the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) is the largest democratic voluntary organisation representing over 11,500 farming families throughout all parts of Northern Ireland (NI) and across all agricultural sectors. Its central objective is to promote their interests both at home and abroad through professional lobbying.

Mission Statement

“To serve its members by promoting and supporting a vibrant and sustainable rural economy where agriculture is secure and pivotal to its future.”

The UFU represents agriculture and wider rural issues, working with politicians and other groups and organisations locally, in the UK and in Europe to ensure that the interests of agriculture and rural issues are advanced.

Why farming matters

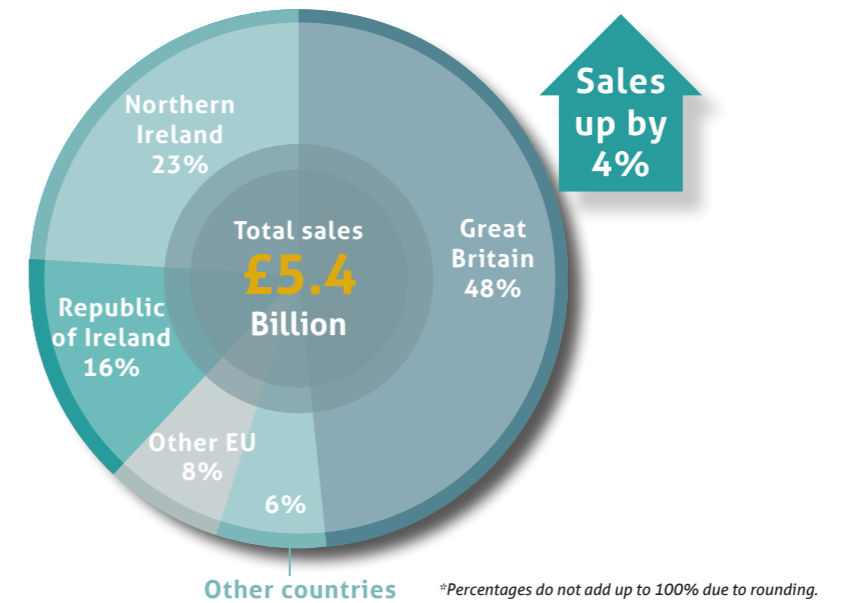
The UFU has a vision of a productive, profitable and progressive farming sector which can deliver for the environment; for the consumer; and for the economy. As well as growing and producing the high quality, healthy food that we all eat and enjoy, UK farmers and growers are custodians of our iconic countryside and leaders in promoting animal welfare standards. We underpin the food and drink industry, the largest local manufacturing sector, making a fundamental contribution to our economy while supporting rural and urban communities.

Provisional figures from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) indicate that the 'Total Income from Farming' in NI increased by 8.3% (8.0% in real terms) from £463 million in 2020 to £501 million in 2021.

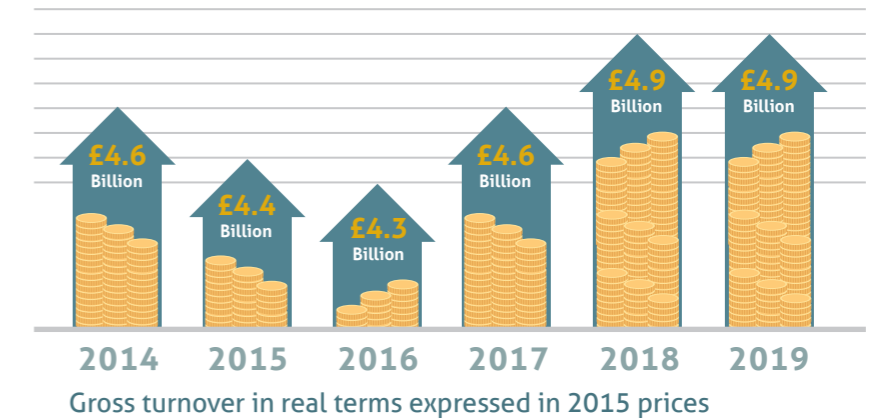
Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing Sector 2019

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WIDER NI AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Destination of sales



Sales trend over time



Contribution to Northern Ireland's Manufacturing Industry

37% of total sales



Employment

Up by 3%

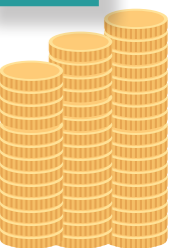


24,945 FTE* Employees

* Full Time Equivalents

Value Added

Up by 7%



£998 million

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.



Key strategic actions

Climate Change

The UFU have supported the need for a climate change bill to reduce emissions across all sectors with farmers recognised as part of the solution due to the ability to sequester carbon.

What is needed:

1. Fair and credible legislation backed by science and based on the Climate Change Committee's independent expert advice;
2. Legislation that delivers a just transition for farmers and rural communities;
3. Long term commitments from the NI Executive to research and development on climate change mitigation and adaptation;
4. Support for farmers to reduce on-farm emissions;
5. Any climate change legislation and policy should not result in carbon leakage.

Future Agricultural Policy

The proposed focus of the future NI agricultural policy on active farmers and growers is extremely positive. It is essential that farmers are equipped with the right tools to become more efficient, delivering positive outcomes and maximising returns while also protecting the environment and meeting climate change needs.

An example of this is a flexible agri-environment scheme that pays farmers on environmental results they provide as well as actions taken. DAERA should adopt the proposed UFU 'Farming with Nature' Scheme.

In addition, it is essential that the recent wider Independent Review of the NI agri-food sector is implemented. The UFU is supportive of the principles recommended and is willing to engage on the significant clarification and development work needed, particularly on the structural concepts around the creation of a new 'Sustainability Body' and a 'Northern Ireland Diamond' which must be industry led and Government/knowledge base supported.



Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC)

The UFU would like to see an ANC scheme form some sort of support payment to farmers going forward under a new agriculture support policy.

The UFU would like to see the ANC rebranded/renamed going forward. A proposed name would be the NI Rural Disadvantage Area Scheme (RDAS).

Improved Land Tenure

While the 'conacre' land letting system under which approximately one third of NI's agricultural area is farmed has served the industry well and provided significant production flexibility, more options are now possible, such as longer term leasing and rental arrangements. The UFU are working closely with the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU) and has already committed significant resources to the introduction of a major initiative to create a broader range of options for land succession and tenure. **The introduction of tax exemptions to encourage longer term land tenure arrangements must be fully explored.** A similar scheme is already operative in the Republic of Ireland and will facilitate more robust farm business planning and increased investment in land condition/productivity.

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB)

It is recognised that the strategy for eradicating Bovine TB in NI must change to address this persistent and costly disease. Fundamental to this is the need to tackle the disease in all hosts. **Meaningful wildlife intervention must be delivered without delay.** Livestock valuation payments must be protected until this happens, and the disease incidence is substantially lowered.

Food Procurement

For NI to be a leading example of sustainable public sector procurement, **local government should 'encourage growth of domestic public procurement'**. We believe that procurement tendering practices should be reviewed to ensure that ingredient origin is accounted for in local buying. The best way in which to achieve a step-change in the procurement of local food, should be via the introduction of mandatory targets for central and local procurement.





Horticulture

Self-sufficiency in vegetables and potatoes is falling and it's low in fruit. **The UFU believe that we can and should drive a horticulture revolution.** At a time when we should all be eating more fruit and veg, we should be looking to our farmers to deliver more quality, affordable and home-grown fresh produce to our shelves.

Dairy

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) **milk price purchasing code must also apply to the NI dairy industry.** In addition, a review of pricing of butterfat/protein constituents and the end to retrospective pricing of milk in NI must also be delivered.

NI Protocol

While parts of the NI Protocol have been working for the agri-food industry, significant practical difficulties such as accessing livestock and arable seed (cereal and potato) and plant protection products from GB still persist. **It is essential that solutions are found for these problems urgently.**

UK Trade Deals

The UK government continues its process of negotiating trade deals with third countries with the focus on exports at the expense of local food production. **The guarantee to protect food standards must be delivered.**

Labour Shortages

The ongoing shortage of both seasonal and permanent labour continues to destabilise agri-food sector businesses and damage their competitiveness. **Urgent short and medium-term solutions must be provided for under the UK government's immigration policy.**

In addition, following the introduction of the National Living Wage, **the NI Agriculture Wages Board (AWB) should be abolished.** The UFU wish to see the DAERA Minister's proposal to revoke agricultural wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (and subsequent abolition of Agriculture Wages Board) seen to fruition.



Rural Services

With over 35% of the NI population living in rural areas, the satisfactory provision of wider services in these areas is essential. **It is important that health care, education, childcare and transport services are retained in rural areas and not centralised.**

Rural Broadband

Rural areas are crying out for accelerated rollout of high-speed broadband and reliable mobile coverage, with universal coverage equivalent to urban areas. Better coverage is required to support farmers to maximise the opportunities that digital technology can provide for their businesses, to improve productivity and workers' health and safety.

Rural Crime

A promise to combat the increasing level of rural crime. We want to work with government to address major rural crime issues such as fly-tipping, livestock-worrying and theft, which are having a huge impact on farming communities and agricultural businesses. We believe we can do this through:

1. A more co-ordinated cross-departmental approach to rural crime;
2. Increased funding for rural policing;
3. Simple changes to legislation where appropriate to aid the police and criminal justice system when dealing with rural crimes.

Rural Enterprise

Term sustainability and viability recognition of the role of farming in small scale energy/heat production in energy transition. Including support for biomethane injection to gas grid/transport.

1. More affordable grid connection for rural generators of energy;
2. Overhaul of the rating of small scale renewables;
3. Review of NI planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy;
4. Increased investment in low voltage (11/33kV) electricity network in electricity network price control.



f | Ulsterfarmersunion
t | @UFUHQ

www.ufuni.org

