

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY TASK FORCE – MINUTES

14.30 Friday 26th June 2020

TEAMS online meeting

Present:

Tim Mordan (TM), Tom Bradshaw (TB), Angela Christison (AC), Tom Hind (TH), Robert Sheasby (RS), Andy Cureton (AC), Susan Twining (ST), Andy Richardson (AR), Jeremy Moody (JM), Jack Ward (JW), Belinda Clarke(BC), Edward Barker (EB), Phil Stocker (PS), Phil Bicknell (PB), Susannah Bolton (SB), Nick Whelan (NW), Peter Dawson (PD), Helen Browning (HB), Janet Swadling (JS), Alex Waugh (AW), Liz Quigley (LQ), Sarah Palmer (SP), Sarah Evered (SE), Dave Ross (DR), Jill Hewitt (JH), Andrea Graham (AG), Sarah Williams (SW), Andrew Kuyk (AK), Helen Ferrier (HF), Judith Batchelor (JB), Jack Watts (JW), Richard Laverick (RL), Caroline Povey (CP), John Hustler (JH), Tess Howe (TH) , Calum Murray (CM)

Kate Saunders (KS) - Minute taker

Apologies: Andrew Clark

1. Chairs introduction

The meeting was Co-Chaired by TM (Director - Defra) and TB (Vice president of NFU) who introduced themselves.

TM explained the history around the Task Force group and the reasoning behind its makeup. The original Agricultural Productivity Working Group (working underneath the FDSC chaired by Peter Kendall) that was set up resulted in the APWG report published in February. The APWG and the Productivity Round Table (Chaired by Tim Mordan) have been combined to form one Task Force which will feed into the Sector Council.

The group needs to be realistic and disciplined in what can be achieved and focus on productivity. A starting point will be to look at the work of the APWG. It will only work fully with the support of volunteers to make a meaningful change for the industry and delivering the recommendations within the report. It is a joint initiative with all stakeholders taking part together with Defra and agencies.

2. Terms of Reference for the task Force/proposed timescales to address work streams - AC

AC presented the terms of reference for the Task Force (slides previously distributed) pointing out the aims of the group and the structure that is already in place. Membership of the group will be reviewed annually. The key aim of the group is to roll out the recommendations made by the APWG report catalyzing positive changes throughout the industry. AHDB will lead the Secretariat.

The group discussed the feedback that had been received on the APWG report and if any had been negative. Defra, Stakeholders and FDSC had all been complimentary, supportive and positive. There was not a great deal of media coverage of the report.

The group discussed that the language needs to land well and be relevant to the times we are currently living in, particularly when speaking about productivity and issues around labour. There is a need for a key focus on ensuring the recommendations get communicated through the correct channels to the right people.

ACTION: AC/KS To log 'Communications' as an agenda item for the next meeting

3. Defra Update

TM gave a Defra update.

Covid-19 recovery focus work has taken over from EU Exit and the Agriculture bill over the last few months. However now the Agriculture bill is now back in Parliament and EU exit work is being resumed.

Productivity issues are currently in discussion, these include support options for farmers taking over from the Countryside Productivity Scheme. A small grant scheme for certain projects is being issued later this year and a larger grant scheme for bigger projects will be rolled out in 2021. These are being discussed with more detail at the Productivity Round table meetings.

The launch of the Dairy supply chain mandatory consultation was launched this week. There is lots of Innovation and R&D work taking place, transforming food production, farmer leg research and how to encourage more new entrants into the industry.

4. Update on Evidence for Farming – SB

SB presented on Evidence for Farming. The initiative came out as a recommendation from the APWG with key themes (slides previously distributed).

Following the presentation the group discussed the initiative and advised the following points:

- Further thought needs to go into clear action points for the task force group to ensure it makes a real difference to industry.
- How best to get the engagement with the farmer needs consideration
- The language needs to be closer to field level and demands of the customer are an important motivator for farmers.
- The use of social media and farming press needs to be in an accessible way to the industry
- The initiative should be communicated to the Net Zero Steering work for some constructive feedback.

ACTION – SB to consider recommendations.

5. Update on Skills TH (slides previously distributed)

TH presented on the institute for Agriculture and Horticulture and the leadership group. This included the background, aims, business support and benefits. TH also talked through the structure, recommendations, responsibilities and support for the concept and the plans on how to take it forward. Victoria Prentis and George Eustice are both very enthusiastic and clearly see how it fits in to getting the economy back on its feet. The next step is looking into the funding options for the project.

ACTION: Anyone wishing to join any of the working groups to get in touch with Sam Crocker at AHDB who is doing the project management (samantha.crocker@ahdb.org.uk)

6. KPI/Data sharing – brief update PB

PB briefly updated the group on KPIs and data sharing. The focus is to drive mindset change with a clear set of principles around KPIs. This involves looking at the wealth of information and metrics that can be collected and cover the business performance aspect.

Three core KPIs were identified that related to revenue coming into the business. Previous feedback from the APWG group included the need to think about the approach and to gather information that helps farmers do things differently looking at what are the real drivers of performance.

The next steps would be for group members to volunteer and there is a cross over with the Evidence for Farming work particularly around the environmental aspect and net zero.

Jack Watts volunteered.

A discussion took place and key points were raised:

- Take into account the importance of using the right language
- Work on ensuring industry understand what is meant by the productivity KPIs and grass root farmers can relate to it in their day to day operations
- Try 1 sector of agriculture with basic KPIs and another with more slightly sophisticated KPIs could be explored rather than all at once

ACTION: PB - To consider recommendations made by group .

7. Feed UK - JB

JB updated the group on Feed UK. JB Chairs the Innovation Working Group and the Nutrition Working Group which is part of the Food & Drink Sector Council. In August 2018 a 2 day away day was hosted by BBRSC and Global Food Security to look at the innovation questions that needed to be answered. This work resulted in a report (JB to share the report on request) involving the idea of a digital twin of the food and farming system.

The current work is ironing out what the digital twin is and adding more detail. A formal proposal has not yet been reached. The idea is to bring together all members of the system and delivery for all stakeholders. Formal briefing sessions are hoping to be held at the end of the summer to form a proposal.

JB is pulling together a group of people to create dashboard which will give a view of the food system from a data perspective and what feed UK may look like.

ACTION: Anyone wishing to join the working groups to contact JB
(Judith.batchelar@sainsburys.co.uk)

RS informed JB that Agriculture supply industry would be interested in digital model –

ACTION: JB will get in touch with RS to discuss this further

8. Research and Innovation work – brief update (slides distributed with minutes)

DR gave a brief update on the Innovation Task & Finish group. DR described the role of the group which is to focus on the recommendations lead in a collaborative mission trying to break down all the recommendations into parts and address as many of the multiple points as possible. He described the key areas, the plans and the participants. Interim findings to be reported back in November.

ACTION: Anyone wishing to participate in the group to contact DR.
(dave.ross@agri-epicentre.com)

ACTION: DR to circulate participant list to KS

9. Rural Infrastructure work - brief update.

ST reported on the infrastructure work and the 4 areas included in the report. There is an investment by the government for £5 billion in the rural areas but it is not so developed on the mobile side as some legal issues have slowed this work down.

ACTION: Notify ST of any volunteers or recommendation to be involved in the group

10. AOB/CLOSE

The Chair summarized the meeting:

- The next few meetings will be confirmed
- Calls to be arranged in between meetings to keep momentum
- Not to be so ambitious with the agenda in future
- The group agreed with the scope and efficiency of the task force
- The Evidence for Farming initiative needs to move from theoretical into the practice looking at correct language and more meaningful to the audience that matters
- Skills is a very import piece of work which needs a real push particularly around funding and opportunities for socializing.
- Re: KPIs – JW volunteered and PB agreed to try and come up with a set of indicators and look at

KPIs slightly differently and simply

- Re: Feed UK - JB to invite group members to forthcoming engagements
- There is a need to ensure we have the correct coverage on the workstreams for the research and innovation work

TB thanked Tom Hind for all his work in this area as he is moving roles.

The meeting closed at 16.30.