NORTHERN FARMING CONFERENCE

Meet the Speakers

Wednesday 4 November 2026
Hexham Auction Mart

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Gavin Lane, CLA President



Gavin grew up on his family farm on the edge of King's Lynn in Norfolk. At 25, he started farming on a contract farming arrangement with his father and now owns and farms land on two separate arable farms, both with large countryside stewardship schemes and using regenerative farming practices. He is involved with a family residential property portfolio and with his wife, Jane, has diversified into a holiday cottage letting business.

Within the CLA, he was chair of Business & Rural Economy Committee (BREC), chair of the Norfolk Branch and was previously chair of Agriculture and Land Use and also sat on Policy Committee.

He has also chaired the Education Committee of the Worshipful Company of Farmers and is a Nuffield Scholar.

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Tom Bradshaw, NFU President



Tom farms in partnership with his wife, Emily, and his parents in North Essex. Alongside a small owned farm they run a larger contract farming business growing a range of combinable crops across 950 hectares in North East Essex.

The home farm is based around arable production but has also diversified into equestrian and renewables.

Tom has represented the NFU from Local Branch Chairman through to Chair of the National Combinable Crops Board.

Tom was elected to the position of NFU President in February 2024 and reelected in February 2026.

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George Dunn, TFA CEO



After studying at Nottingham and Reading Universities, George worked for the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food and the Country Landowners Association before joining the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) as Chief Executive in January 1997. He was Chair of the Farming Community Network between 2010 and 2015 and has been a trustee of the Arthur Rank Centre. He is currently a specialist governance volunteer for the National Trust in respect of its let estate.

George served on the Tenancy Reform Industry Group for over 20 years, was a member of the Rock Review Group on Agricultural Tenancies and continues as a member of the Welsh Government Tenancy Working Group as well as the Welsh Ministerial Roundtable on the development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Outside of TFA, he is on the leadership team of his local church.

In 2022, George was the recipient of the Farmers Weekly Lifetime Achievement Award and in 2023, he received the British Farming Award for his outstanding contribution to the agricultural industry. He was made an honorary Doctor of Laws by Harper Adams University in 2024.

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Adam Bedford, Commercial Director, GSC Grays



With nearly 20 years' experience across commercial leadership, farming policy, stakeholder engagement and business development, Adam has worked in the public, private and notforprofit sectors at regional, national and international levels.

He specialises in building strategic partnerships, identifying commercial opportunities and bringing together diverse stakeholders to deliver practical results.

His career includes senior leadership roles with the National Farmers' Union, representing UK agriculture in Brussels, serving as Regional Director for the North East, and leading collaborative innovation projects across farming, food production and environmental management at Fera Science

.Adam has a strong track record in business growth, strategic delivery and stakeholder engagement, working closely with government, industry and landbased businesses.

His expertise spans agricultural policy, natural capital, organisational development, project delivery and commercial strategy. Known for his collaborative approach and deep understanding of rural industries, he is passionate about supporting profitable businesses, thriving rural communities and sustainable environmental management.

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Anna Jones, Rural Affairs Journalist



Anna Jones is a rural affairs journalist, author, educator, and founder of Just Farmers™ Community Interest Company. She's also a farmer's daughter from the Welsh Borders.

She produced and directed BBC One's Countryfile, Channel 4's Our Dream Farm with Matt Baker and is a familiar voice on Radio 4's Farming Today and On Your Farm. In 2025, Anna drove across the Midwest of America listening to the views of rural communities on President Trump for the Radio 4 documentary Corn Belt People.

Anna founded Just Farmers™ after completing a Nuffield Farming Scholarship looking at the coverage of agriculture in the mainstream media. She developed her own training model to give farmers and growers the practical skills and confidence to tell their own stories, in their own words. Anna now travels the UK delivering storytelling courses and giving talks to a wide range of organisations.

Anna's mission to improve the national conversation around rural issues, agriculture and the environment inspired her book Divide: The relationship crisis between town and country, published by Kyle Books in 2022.

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Jonathan Eckley, Director of International Trade, AHDB



Jonathan is Director of International Trade Development at AHDB, leading export activity across the meat and dairy sectors and ensuring international market development delivers value across the supply chain. Having joined AHDB's economics team in 2006, Jonathan has built extensive expertise in the livestock sectors.

For the past 14 years, he has focused on helping British meat exporters grow their presence in global markets. His work has included organising overseas trade missions, identifying new opportunities, and promoting the UK's highquality produce to international buyers and stakeholders. He also leads AHDB's market access programme, supporting government efforts to secure and maintain access to priority export markets.

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Freddie Humfrey, Head of Grain Trading at ADM Agriculture



Freddie Humfrey has spent over 12 years in the UK grain trading industry, having started his career at Gleadell Agriculture as what he describes as a “glorified tea boy.” Fortunately, someone eventually let him near a trading screen, and he went on to spend seven years specialising in wheat trading, with various adventures along the way in barley, oats, oilseed rape and a few of the more unusual crops grown on British farms.

Freddie is now Head of Grain Trading & Logistics at ADM Agriculture, where he oversees the trading, risk management, procurement and execution of the combinable crops flowing through the business. Operating nationwide, ADM Agriculture is the UK's secondlargest grain trader by volume, connecting British farmers with domestic processors and export markets.

Although a separate business, ADM Agriculture is closely connected to ADM's wider UK operations, including the Erith oilseed crushing plant, the largest singlesite facility of its kind in Europe, and ADM Milling, the UK's secondlargest flour miller.

Freddie holds a BSc in Physical Geography, where his dissertation focused on the impact of weather on UK wheat yields.

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Jamie Leslie, mixed farmer, Scholland Farm, Shetland



Jamie Leslie, I farm in partnership with my Dad at Scholland Farm in Shetland. I am the 6th generation here so a pretty traditional family farm however I try most days to not farm too traditionally!

We run 130 suckler cows, mainly Angus and around a third of them are Pedigrees. We also lamb around 500 ewes, they're a mix of Romney, Lleyn and Texel genetics. Most of our stock are sold store throughout late Summer and Autumn.

We grow a few crops purely to use as winter feed Spring barley, beet, kale and silage.

Cattle and sheep are rotationally grazed all summer, predominately in a leader follower system and we utilise a lot of deferred grass for cows all winter.

Overall, we are trying to farm profitably with a handle on inputs whilst striving to push productivity.

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Alix Ritchie, Director at Farmstrong Scotland and Perthshire Farmer



Alix Ritchie is Director of Farmstrong Scotland, the charity dedicated to improving the wellbeing of Scotland's farming and crofting communities. Alongside leading the charity, she farms at Montalt Farm, a family cattle and sheep enterprise in Perthshire, Scotland.

Before joining Farmstrong Scotland, Alix worked in a range of agricultural roles including with Quality Meat Scotland, RHET and the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs (SAYFC). Her work is driven by a passion for strengthening rural communities, educating people about food and farming and helping farmers and crofters feel good and function well.

A 2026 Nuffield Farming Scholar, Alix is researching how stronger social wellbeing can help agricultural communities thrive. Through her international

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David Cross, Glover’s Farm, Norfolk farmer



David Cross farms in partnership with his father at Glover’s Farm in northwest Norfolk. The business spans 340 hectares of owned land and a further 500 hectares of rented grazing. They contractrear dairybeef cattle, with numbers reaching around 1,400 head in spring, alongside a small suckler herd.

The farm also runs a performancerecorded sheep breeding enterprise, grazing cover crops through agreements with local landowners, and a pasturebased egg business supplying restaurants, farm shops and direct customers.

Having grown up on the family farm, David studied agriculture at Aberystwyth University before gaining practical experience in the USA and New Zealand. He later managed farming businesses in New Zealand and Cheshire before returning to Norfolk 11 years ago.

Since returning, David has helped lead the farm’s transition from a conventional arable system to a predominantly grassbased livestock operation. Improving soil health while maintaining business flexibility has been central to this change. In the last three years, the farm has installed 42 km of fencing and 16 km of water pipe, creating an alleyway system designed to support both livestock and future arable cropping.

David’s focus is on building a resilient business with strong soils, sound finances and efficient systems. He takes a wholefarm approach, continually seeking opportunities to improve performance, anticipate challenges and adapt to changing market conditions.

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Joe Nelless, livestock farmer
Thistleyhaugh Farm near Morpeth



Joe Nelless, a young farmer from Northumberland, working alongside my family at Thistleyhaugh, an 880hectare organic sheep and beef farm a mixture of lowland and upland grassland, with a strong focus on producing livestock efficiently from grass and forage.

They run around 1,800 performancerecorded Lleyn ewes alongside a suckler beef herd. With over 20 years of performance recording and genetic selection behind their sheep flock, they place considerable emphasis on livestock efficiency, grazing management and lowinput farming systems.

Joe is particularly passionate about improving the profitability and longterm sustainability of family farms. He has a keen interest in understanding farm business performance and using practical data to make better management decisions.

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