

Food Ethics Council, UK

PRESS RELEASE

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Overwhelming public backing for UK farmers with high animal welfare and environmental standards

Almost three-quarters of the UK public agreed they would like to do more to support UK farmers that have high animal welfare and environmental standards, based on a recent poll.

A survey released today shows that UK farmers, particularly those farming sustainably and humanely, have the firm backing of the UK public. This will be welcome news at a time when farmers and growers are facing multiple pressures. These include climate breakdown, poor crop harvests, price pressures and COVID-19, as well as impending changes following the end of the UK's transition period after Brexit.

The poll by Yonder (formerly Populus), commissioned by Eating Better, the Food Ethics Council and Hubbub, interviewed a representative sample of 2,095 people in the UK. Respondents were asked about a range of questions relating to eating meat and dairy, livestock production, trade and support for farmers.

73% of respondents agreed they would like to do more to support UK farmers that have high animal welfare and environmental standards.

Leading farmers in the UK are already farming in ways that produce nutritious food, treat animals humanely, enhance agricultural biodiversity and accelerate the shift to net zero and regenerative agriculture. Many of us in the UK feel disconnected from where our food comes from, but actually there are lots of ways that we as food citizens can and do support farmers, particularly those that are treating people, animals and planet with respect.

Over seven in 10 (72%) of those surveyed said they had taken steps to support UK farmers in the last year. Such action included buying direct from farmers e.g. farm shops or farmers' markets (35%), signing petitions or campaigning in support of UK farming (11%) and visiting farms e.g. participating in a farm open day (8%). These are just a few of the many ways the public *can* support UK farmers who have high standards – above and beyond purchasing high welfare meat, dairy and eggs.

The survey showed that actions taken to support farmers varied across different regions of England and across the Devolved Nations. Almost one in six respondents (16%) in Northern Ireland and around one in eight (13%) in Wales said they had thanked a farmer in the last year - e.g. in person or through applauding farmers as key workers during the pandemic - for what they do. Around half (49%) of those surveyed in Scotland said they had selected food produced in the UK ahead of imported products in shops.

Overall, the results show there is strong public support for good farming and that action has been taken to support UK farmers in all parts of the UK. Crucially, public support needs to be backed up by a policy and business environment that allows progressive farmers to flourish.

Dan Crossley, Executive Director of the Food Ethics Council said:

"Farmers in the UK are at the sharp end of extreme weather, supermarket price wars and the outcome of trade negotiations. They can also be at the forefront of action to address the climate, biodiversity and obesity crises.

The public overwhelmingly want to support UK farmers that are looking after farm animals and the environment well. They need our collective support – and this survey shows that they have that in bucketloads. Let's get behind those farmers and growers that want to produce nutritious food, farmed sustainably and humanely.

We need government to provide serious support to farmers making that transition. We also need both government and food businesses to ensure farmers are treated fairly.”

Key findings:

- Almost three-quarters (73%) of those surveyed agreed they would like to do more to support UK farmers that have high animal welfare and environmental standards
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents said they had taken action to support UK farmers in the past twelve months. Over one-third (35%) said they had bought direct from farmers e.g. farm shops or farmers' markets; more than one in ten (11%) told us they had signed petitions or campaigned in support of UK farming; 8% said they had visited farms e.g. participated in a farm open day; Over one-quarter (28%) reported they had bought from restaurants, cafes or shops because they sell food produced in the UK
- Over four in five (84%) of respondents agreed that UK farmers are important in keeping our country going
- Over four in five (84%) of those surveyed agreed UK farmers should get a fair share of the price we pay for meat and dairy in shops, cafes and restaurants

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Notes to editors

The results of the Yonder (formerly Populus) survey conducted on 21st-22nd September 2020 are available [here](#).

Yonder conducted an online sample of 2,095 UK adults 18+ between 21st and 22nd September 2020. Data is weighted to be representative of the population of the UK. Targets for quotas and weights are taken from the National Readership Survey, a random probability F2F survey conducted annually with 34,000 adults. Yonder is a founder member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For further information see <http://www.britishpollingcouncil.org/>.

The Food Ethics Council (<http://www.foodethicscouncil.org>) is a UK-based charity whose mission is to accelerate the shift towards fair food systems that respect people, animals and the planet. It brings experts from across the food sector together and provides ethical tools & safe space for honest, meaningful dialogue. It challenges the status quo in food and farming and accepted ways of thinking. The Food Ethics Council also promotes 'in the round' ethical approaches and considered solutions that tackle root causes. Twitter [@FoodEthicsNews](#)

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