



BRITISH GROWERS

HELPING GROWERS DO
WHAT THEY DO BEST

BRITISH GROWERS UPDATE

31st May 2023



DOWNING STREET FARM TO FORK SUMMIT

British Growers was fortunate to get an invitation to the Prime Minister's Farm to Fork Summit held at Downing Street in mid-May. The guest list which amounted to around 70 included a varied selection of guests from Kaleb and Cheerful Charlie from Clarkson's Farm, through to various major retailer bosses. After being entertained in the No 10 Garden with a BBQ Brunch, we were led up several flights of stairs to a large room where we were addressed by the Prime Minister.

It easy to be cynical about the motives for these events, but in this case the Defra Ministerial team must have worked hard on the No 10 machine to persuade the Prime Minister to devote some of his time to this initiative. The PM spoke for about 10 minutes and was keen to stress his commitment to growing the food and farming industry. He recognised these were challenging times and that the country needed to avoid a repeat of the empty shelves scenario experienced earlier in the year. He is keen to support the veg and fruit sectors and to this end is launching a review of supply chain fairness for the horticulture industry. He also announced that the independence of the GCA would remain, and would not be merged with the Competition and Mergers Authority. In a break with convention, he announced the Seasonal Workers Permit Scheme would run through 2024 with the current numbers (we have got used to getting the announcement in the week before Christmas). And he finished his speech by announcing plans to re-introduce a new more inclusive Producer Organisation Scheme for 2026.



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The second part of the summit involved four breakout sessions looking at trade, resilience, skills, and productivity and sustainability which I co-chaired with Minister Mark Spencer.

What was apparent from this event was that the intervention of the Prime Minister has given Defra new impetus to make things happen. I sense Defra may have been struggling to make its voice heard during the recent months of political turmoil. But now the PM has given his backing to a list of specific projects, we can hopefully look forward to some tangible progress.

We have subsequently written to Mark Spencer offering our services to help progress these initiatives and we are in touch with Defra about shaping the review of supply chain fairness.

HOUSE OF LORDS INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF UK HORTICULTURE

The House of Lords is running an inquiry into the future of UK Horticulture and British Growers was invited to give evidence to the inquiry in early May. Prior to giving oral evidence, we lodged a written submission which focused on price and more specifically the lack of returns received by growers and the impact this is having on confidence levels. In recent weeks there has been several pieces in the press about inflation rates on fresh produce lines. What is clear, is that for fresh produce lines, and vegetables in particular, the rate of inflation has been significantly lower than main line grocery products such as cheese and pasta. While there has been inflation in veg prices in recent weeks, this in no way makes up for the years from 2017 and even further back, until 2022 when there was generally negative inflation in many lines. For some crops, even with the recent increases, the cost to consumers is still on a par with where it was five years ago. No one can reasonably expect to run a viable business with negative inflation against a backdrop of five years of general inflation and 15 months of super inflation.

In support of what British Growers was saying, it was encouraging that the lack of grower returns was a consistent message across all those being asked to give evidence.

RETAILER RELATIONS

Last autumn, British Growers in conjunction with British Apples and Pears and British Berry Growers wrote to all the major retailers about the parlous state of returns in the fresh produce sector. Six months on and we have written again to underline the challenges around the current operating environment, and for fresh produce growers things remains extremely tough. So, any talk about a deflationary period is premature. Although the latest numbers from Anglia Farmer's AgInflation index show a slight reduction in the rate of agricultural inflation, the prevailing inflation rate is still well above the RPI for food.

GROCERY CODE ADJUDICATOR

British Growers is arranging a meeting with the Groceries Code adjudicator. Now the GCA's independence has been assured, it seemed like a good opportunity for an in-depth conversation about the effectiveness of the supply chain in delivering sustainable returns. Also, in the light of the Government's announcement of a review in supply chain fairness, this felt like an important opportunity to make our points.



Horticulture Crop Protection

After a year in gestation, Horticultural Crop Protection came to life on 14 April 2023. HCP has taken on the role of securing EAMUs and Emergency Authorisations in the post AHDB Horticulture world.

The new company has taken on the five existing full and part staff from AHDB Horticulture who handled the plant protection approvals work for AHDB Horticulture. This has ensured the industry has a good level of continuity and expertise when dealing with this critical function. The HCP Board has recently appointed Simon Conway as the part time CEO. It is good to report that the first EAMUs are coming through the system and the new company is fully operational and working out of the Rural Innovation Centre at Stoneleigh Park. The Board is in the closing stages of working out the contributions needed from each crop to ensure the new organization is adequately funded in the future. And the plan is to collect grower contributions through the network of Crop Associations.

What has become apparent as the development of HCP has moved forward is just how much is involved in processing EAMU and EA applications. While some applications are relatively straightforward, others take a painstaking amount of time and input before approval is finally given. To give growers control over which applications are taken forward, each application now requires sign off together with an assurance on costs from the relevant crop association before any applications are progressed.

PEAT

Although not every sector has an interest in the debate about banning the use of peat in England there are sectors where the ban has the potential to have a massive impact. At the end of April Defra Minister Trudy Harrison called a meeting of various interested parties, including British Growers representing the mushroom and plant propagation industries. Happily, we are making progress and the proposed legislation is talking of exemptions for plant propagation and mushroom production. Unsurprisingly, the exemptions come with conditions which we are now working through but at least there is a recognition that switching off the use of peat, as a specialist growing media, can't be done without major consequences to the fresh produce supply chain.

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Would you like to advertise in one of our
Newsletters?

Half page or Full page Available; for prices
click [here](#) and for deadlines click [here](#).

Please contact postbox@britishgrowers.org

for more details.

The collage consists of four newsletters. The top one is 'BROWN&CO GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES' with a green field background. The bottom-left one is 'Unique 3 in 1 optical sorting solutions' by Optimum, showing various sorting machines. The bottom-right one is 'Trebro' featuring 'AutoStack 3' and 'Trebro - TSR' machinery. The middle one is 'Trebro' featuring 'AutoStack 3' and 'Trebro - TSR' machinery.



Upcoming Events 2023/24/25



British Leafy Salads
ASSOCIATION

Wednesday 21st June 2023

BLSA Weeding Tech Demo Day

Kindly hosted by PDM Produce in Shropshire. Refreshments will be provided. Entry is free for members. For your discount code please contact holly.jones@britishgrowers.org for more information.



Monday 2nd to Thursday 5th October 2023

International Carrot and Other Apiaceae Symposium.

The prestigious industry event is coming to the UK in 2023 and will be hosted at York Racecourse.

Information on sponsorship, exhibiting and attending can be found on the website www.carrotsymposium.com or contact pauline.sutton@britishgrowers.org



Thursday 5th October 2023

British Carrot Growers Association Annual Demonstration Day

Kindly hosted by Huntapac in Sherburn, this popular event is returning in 2023. There will be variety trials and an exhibition area, as well as refreshments provided throughout the day.

Please contact holly.jones@britishgrowers.org if you are interested in being involved in this event.



Wednesday 15th November 2023

Grow Careers Scotland

Grow Careers Scotland will be returning to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for 2023. Further details will be released in due course.

Please contact cih@horticulture.org.uk if you are interested in being involved in this event.

**BRITISH ONIONS****Thursday 16th November 2023****British Onions Variety & Technical Conference & Evening Dinner**

Further information will be released shortly.

Please contact Pauline.sutton@britishgrowers.org if you are interested in being involved in this event.**Wednesday 7th February 2024****The Leek Growers Association Agronomy Day****The Olde Barn Hotel, Marston, Lincolnshire**

Further information will be released shortly.

Please contact Pauline.sutton@britishgrowers.org if you are interested in being involved in this event.**Date TBC March 2024****Technical Conference**

Further information will be released shortly.

Please contact holly.jones@britishgrowers.org if you are interested in being involved in this event.**Date TBC 2024****Onion & Carrot Conference**

Further information will be released shortly.

Please contact Pauline.sutton@britishgrowers.org or holly.jones@britishgrowers.org if you are interested in being involved in this event.**Date TBC February 2025****Brassica and Leafy Salad Conference**

Further information will be released shortly.

Please contact Pauline.sutton@britishgrowers.org or holly.jones@britishgrowers.org if you are interested in being involved in this event.