

NOVEMBER 2023

# BG NEWS

*An update from our CEO Jack Ward*

## Changes at the top

So, another reshuffle of Govt Ministers both in cabinet and lower down the tiers has brought us the 10th Secretary of State for Defra since 2010. The life expectancy in the job ranges from 6 weeks to around two years. Welcome to the Right Hon Steve Barclay MP for North East Cambridgeshire. His constituency covers the Fens east of Peterborough and the area north of Ely so every expectation he has a great understanding of the UK fresh produce sector. He is ably supported by Robbie Moore as a new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State. Robbie has strong agricultural credentials including being a fellow Nuffield Scholar. On paper we have a strong line up of Ministers with agricultural experience. The big question is how much time do they have left to in which to make a difference?



### IN THIS ISSUE

#### **HORTICULTURE CROP PROTECTION**

#### **FRUIT & VEGETABLE AID SCHEME (PO)**

#### **RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**

#### **DEFRA SUPPLY CHAIN REVIEW**

#### **OXFORD FARMING CONFERENCE NEWS**

# Horticulture Crop Protection HCP



Horticulture Crop Protection HCP  
HCP has been in operation for just over 6 months. Thus far it has been a success with numerous crops and growers benefitting from the growing list of Extensions of Use and Emergency Authorisations which the HCP staff have been working on since its inception. It has also been encouraging to see specific crops coming to HCP, wanting to be part of its membership and to benefit from its expertise in securing approvals for their crops.

Simon Conway the CEO of HCP is working his way through the contributions needed from each crop to ensure HCP is a viable proposition. No one likes spending more than they must, particularly when margin is so hard to come by in the world of fresh produce. But this is an essential service for the sector. In putting the new organisation together, a lot of thought has gone into making it as lean and cost efficient as possible. Apart from the core staff pretty much every other activity has been outsourced to external contractors which helps to keep overheads to a minimum.

## Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme (POs)

A couple of weeks ago Defra released a statement on the future for the F&V Aid scheme following the commitment at the Farm to Fork Summit in May at which the Prime Minister announced a new scheme to succeed the current scheme which ends in December 2025. The actual statement from the Summit talked about expanding the scheme to ensure that more growers, including those involved in Controlled Environment Horticulture such as glasshouses, can access support for investment. There is little doubt that too many growers and businesses were excluded from the original F&V Aid Scheme for numerous reasons. If the scheme is to be expanded, we as an industry need to think carefully about what an expanded scheme should look like and how much is needed to fund it. Simply expanding the scheme with no increase in the current level of funding would mean that the money on offer is spread so thinly as to make it almost unviable given the hoops which current POs have to navigate to get their funding. Govt, retailers and growers have some big challenges coming down the tracks in terms of ensuring the UK has a resilient and robust fresh produce production capability. Securing capital investment against a background of low margins; the need for automation, and robotic; the uncertainties in securing seasonal labour and the impact of climate change and net zero to mention just a few. These are not issues the industry can deal with alone. They need the commitment from both Govt and retail customers working with growers to provide the solutions to ensure we don't see a continuation of the empty shelves experienced last spring and make sure consumers have access to a plentiful supply of high-quality fresh produce over the next decade.



## Research & Development

Where to for the future of R&D for the sector is a sensitive topic. Invariably it involves a discussion about funding and while the spectre of compulsory levies is still fresh in the mind of many growers, discussion about what happens next and who is going to fund it can be tricky. That said we had a stab at tackling it at the recent Crop Association Chairs meeting. We are definitely not in the business of telling anyone what to do when it comes to R&D but looking at other leading fresh produce growers around the world, R&D seems to play an important role in everything they do.

At the Crop Association meeting two crop groups British Onion Producers Association and British Apples and Pears ran through the work they are doing to secure funding to support major R&D projects for their sector. Securing Govt funding is never easy but as these two projects demonstrated there is scope to access different sources of funding. In both cases the crop association provided the underpinning structure for the application supported with external expertise to navigate the intricacies of the grant application process.

## DEFRA Supply Chain review

We are expecting Defra to publish its consultation on Fairness in the Supply Chain towards the end of the year. It is easy to over generalise about retailer treatment of suppliers. Clearly there are a lot of difficult conversations taking place in the light of falling inflation rates but there are situations where retailers have listened to suppliers and done their best to respond.

This is going to be a sensitive area for Defra



who will be surely cautious about overstepping a thin grey line which, it could be argued, results in higher prices for consumers. However, there are areas of the supply chain dynamic which need to be improved to make life fairer for producers. For example, trying to reduce the extent to which growers' shoulder most of the risks associated with fresh produce production. Most growers carry the risks of adverse weather, attack by pests and disease, demand volatility and so on. While others in the supply chain carry some risk there is relatively little comparison between those risks and the Growers' risk of committing to a crop which may be anything from a few months to 15 years in production. Talking to growers, it seems unfathomable that the process of programming and agreeing timescales for confirming prices can be so out of step with the realities of growing a crop and in many cases storing it too.

Whether the review delivers the much desired silver bullet we will have to wait and see but there are definitely issues around the supplier relationship which could be rethought with potential benefits to both parties.

# British Growers Join OFC Organisers

Stepping up and getting involved is very much at the heart of the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC) ethos and, following the retirement of the previous Secretariat, British Growers Association has joined the ranks.

The British Growers Association, which has all the skills needed at its fingertips with its work providing a centralised shared administrative, accountancy, events and conference services for its existing members, is already busy ensuring the smooth running of the OFC.

Lisa Eagles, Managing Director of British Growers, said: “We are absolutely thrilled to have been given the opportunity to work with The Oxford Farming Conference, a prestigious annual event which brings together the farming industry to discuss and debate big issues”. “The Oxford Farming Conference Secretariat appointment enhances our portfolio of clients and we look forward to developing a strong partnership.”

Pauline Sutton, Client Manager at British Growers, is heading up the secretariat team which is responsible for administration, ticket sales and outreach programmes (Inspire, Scholars and Bursaries), as well as the wider organisation administration and management of the voluntary Board. They join Hawk AV, Jane Craigie Marketing (JCM), and Clare Greener (partnership and sponsorship).

The theme for this year's conference, the **Power of Diversity**, aims to celebrate all aspects of diversity – people, farming systems, genetics, and markets, to name just a few. True to the mission of the OFC, it will also explore the diversity of thought and opinion.

Chair of #OFC24, Welsh beef and arable farmer Will Evans, 45, praised British Growers for taking on the “key role” of conference secretariat.

“I’m delighted to be working with British Growers,” said Will. “They bring a wealth of experience to this key role and it’s great to know that with them at the helm all the information will be in place for a fantastic conference.”



## MANAGING DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to announce that our point of sale data platform has been revamped and is now live. If you have any questions about the fantastic service we provide please get in touch.

Our offices are closed between Christmas and New Year, except for our team members working with the Oxford Farming Conference.

Lisa Eagles

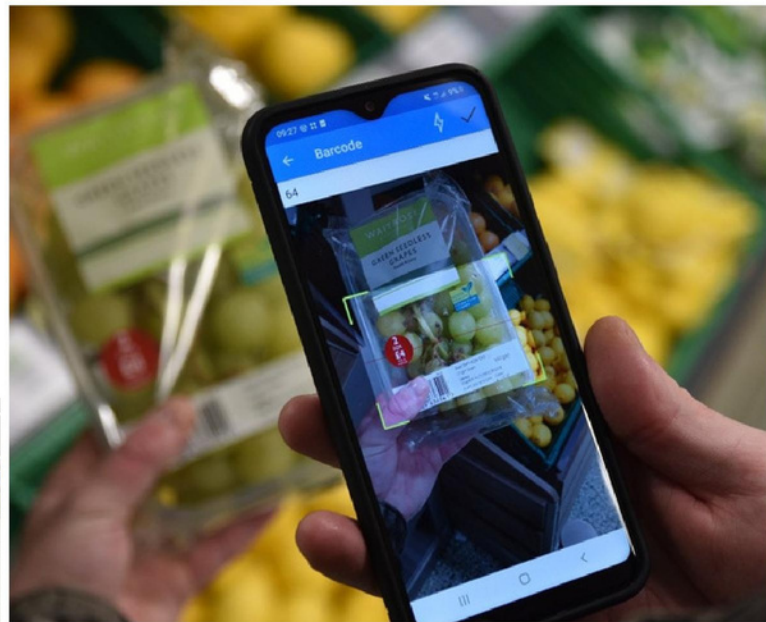


# The freshest produce data, on demand

## In-store and online point-of-sale data

*British Growers Insights* is the UK's largest and most up-to-date source of fresh produce point-of-sale data. We give category managers and agri-professionals access to high-quality, timely retail data, collected in-store, all in one place and available anytime, anywhere.

**It's produce data you can rely on.**



**Every week, our in-store data collectors check:**

### **3000+ product SKUs**

Spanning 20 categories of fruits, vegetables, salads, mushrooms and prepared produce.

### **25+ product features**

Covering pricing, promotions, pack size, retailer, availability and origin.

### **12 major food retailers**

Covering 90%+ of UK grocery market share.



# Features



## Full product data

Access and download over 4,500 product record updates every week, collected in-store and online from 12 major retailers.



## Image library

Access and download images showing SKU availability and placement for all in-store fresh produce areas. See what's on shelf, and what's not.



## Easy setup

Get started straight away with same day access to the platform included as standard. Setup is fast and easy.



## Self service

Access millions of product records, including 8 years of historical data - from anywhere, any time, and on any device.

# Discover what's in-store

## Nationwide data collection

Our team of data collectors visit stores nationwide every week to collect thousands of data points, both in-store and online.

## Unrivalled data access

Millions of product records already available, dating back 8 years, covering loose, pre-packed, prepared, conventional and organic.

## Barcode scanning

All of our data is collected using barcode scanners, improving accuracy and reducing the risk of human error.

## Reliable, accurate produce data

Every week, our team updates SKU data so you have the most accurate information available.



# Get started

Try it **FREE** for 14 days

[sales@bginsights.org](mailto:sales@bginsights.org), 01507 353796