

# **Farmstock Futures Research Programme**

**Helping to Shape the Future for Farmers and Agri Business.**

## **Commissioned researched by H&H Auction Marts in 2021**

The H&H team selected individuals from across the UK involved in farming and agricultural based businesses

The interviewees were all aged between 21 - 40

Independent qualitative research was undertaken by the Family Business Community

The method chosen was booked telephone interviews due to various locations and the continued presence of Covid19

## **The 8 Key Questions used...**

- What is your present role within Agri business?
- What do you think the future holds for Agri business?
- What do you think the challenges are for you and your Agri business?
- What would you have told yourself five years ago?
- How do you presently interact with your Mart?
- Given the choice, how would you like to interact with your Mart?
- What development opportunities are you looking for?
- What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career?

**Insight from 13 interviews**

**What is your present role  
within the Agri business?**

A close-up photograph of green grass with water droplets, serving as a background for the text. The image is slightly blurred, focusing on the texture of the grass and the glistening water droplets. The lighting is soft, creating a natural and fresh atmosphere.

## **A broad mix of roles took part in the feedback sessions:**

- 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Farmers from both, dairy and mixed farms
- Individual from the Agricultural team within the legal profession
- Farm Managers from mixed enterprises
- Specialists in Genetics
- An agricultural officer within government
- Operation role within Agricultural equipment dealers

**What do you think the future holds  
for Agri business?**



## **Looking at a positive future...**

- Diversification and more contract opportunities within the dairy sector
- Realisation that things have to change to work together to help climate control
- More voices representing the need for change on sustainable focus for food production and the environment
- Connection with the general public is key for farming in particular for educating people of all ages about the food supply
- Covid has been a positive in peoples perception of the industry and recognising the importance of the food chain from field to fork.
- The consumer seems to be keen to understand, and be further educated on how the food is made on their plate



## Looking at a positive future...

- There are more relevant events being hosted to help educate the industry across all levels, referenced The Farmers Network events as very topical and helpful
- The key for the future is technology and being more efficient with the data that is available as it helps us unlock so much more efficiencies for farming,
- Longer term positive on farming as businesses, and not just a lifestyle business which hopefully will encourage more people into the sector as a career
- There are lots of opportunities in farming and there just needs to be a mindset shift to embrace and harness this for the next generation

## **Looking at a challenging future...**

- Pricing is being controlled too much, will make the short term outlook tougher
- Brexit is still an unknown, only seeing negative so far.
- Subsidy scheme needs to end as its holding opportunities back for people entering the sector
- Everything is up in the air, the government need to work closer with the farmers as a definite lack of clarity and information
- If people are not willing to adapt to change then there will be even more challenges for issues around succession, environment and education

## Looking at a challenging future...

- Farming needs to become more like a job not seen as a lifestyle, there are lots of opportunities and they need to be communicated better
- Although the future could be positive in many respects, it is also worrying if nothing changes and our voices are not heard
- We need to look at changing our business model to be sustainable, but need the help and support to do this before its too late
- Costs are going out of control which is a real worry

**What do you think the challenges are for you and your Agri business?**



## What are the challenges...

- Basic Payments are a headache
- Weather is being more extreme so causing further challenges in the way we farm,
- Worried about the longer term climate changes on the sector as a whole
- Restrictions being placed on what is/was traditional methods of farming, feel this will cause longer term problems in the future
- Borrowing money at the moment is ok and quite risk free due to interest rates, but what will happen when they increase, need to be more business savvy to deal with the financial challenges ahead
- Succession is a challenge as no plan in place and this is worrying for my future on the farm as also want to have the conversation about not wanting to do things how they have always been done
- Recruitment is causing us challenges on the farm both recruiting and keeping employees
- At the moment recruitment is affecting the supply chain which is a definite kickback from Brexit

## What are the challenges...

- Public perception to the Agricultural sector is a problem, we need support with our messaging to the end user
- Quality of staff in the recruitment process is not good, need support on looking at other sectors and bringing new skills in
- Career messaging is key for future recruitment needs and encouraging the next generation, and needs to start in the schools and educating of the sector
- Zoom is hard work for communicating with suppliers and clients when on the farm due to lack of signal, makes it more challenging than seeing people or speaking on the phone
- Efficiency of paperwork needs to improve and become more user friendly, especially as we have more to deal with
- Recent challenges in livestock and moving them off the farm, its mentally harrowing and upsetting to think we may have to kill our healthy stock but not for food chain purposes

## What are the challenges...

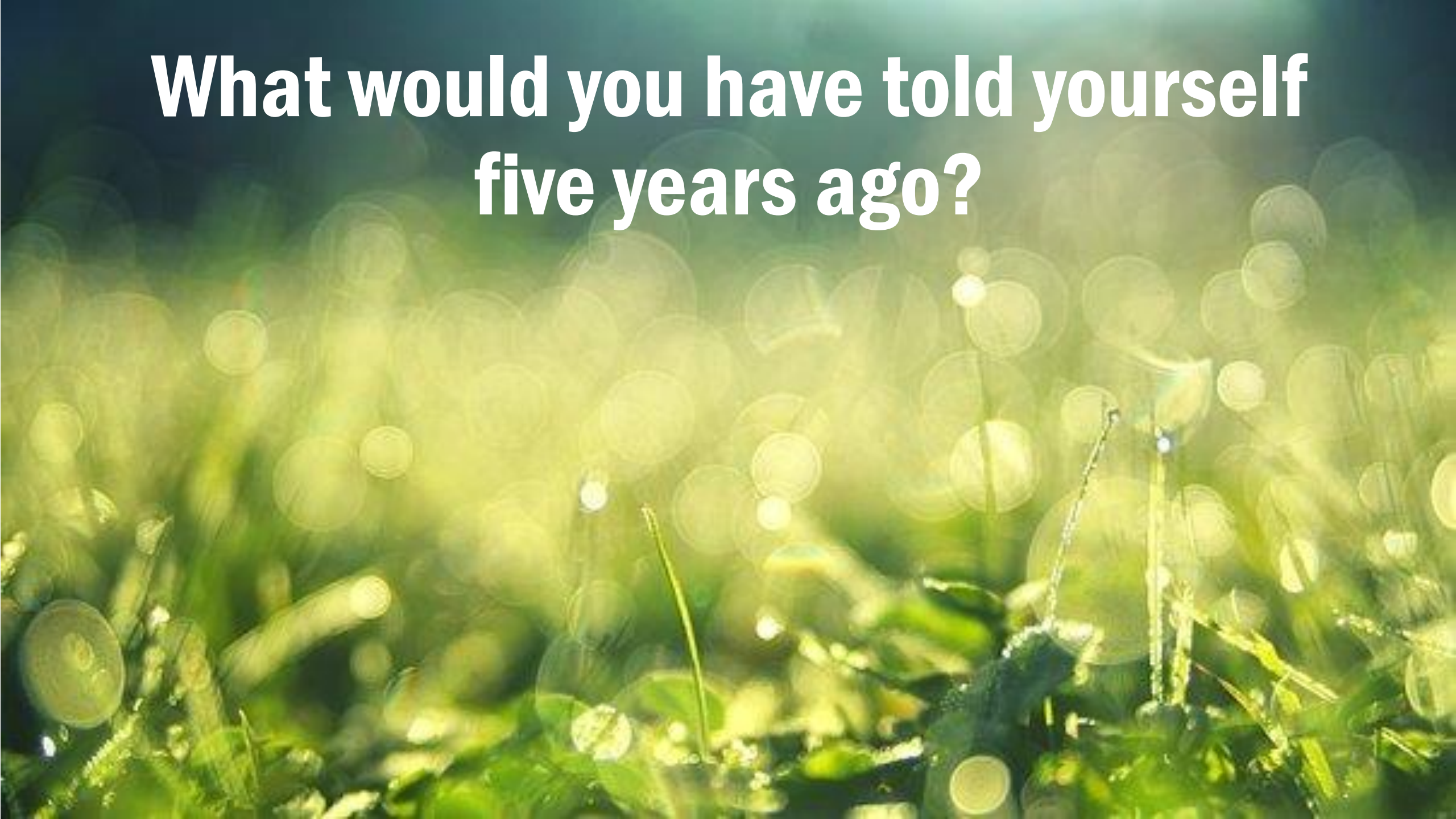
- Mental health and loneliness is hard on the farming community
- The current tick box exercise for climate reasons on dairy farming will hinder and can only see it getting worse as more legislation is introduced
- Feel as Farmers we are having to make sacrifices which is hindering what we do and also affects us mentally and emotionally as well as causing unnecessary conflict and a divide with family working on the farm on how we should do things
- Farmers are the biggest challenge as we don't like to embrace change or new ways of working which can hinder the sector and give it a negative image
- More tech needs to be used by all farmers, we need to embrace it not work against it

## What are the challenges...

- Uncertainty around pricing is a problem. We should look at Australia who have recently updated the framework for their pricing structure and this seem to be working. Why can't we do something similar
- We have so many interesting and exciting roles across the whole Agri sector but no one seems to be helping us tell people about this, this messaging could be really powerful in changing peoples perception and helping with all areas, including education and recruitment which would be good for starters
- More support in business skills and technology are needed to cope with current economical challenges and make us better business people, as well as farmers
- Changing legislation, Brexit and veganism are all hindering us as a sector, need more support on the way forwards



**What would you have told yourself  
five years ago?**



## Five years ago...

- Wish I had travelled more when younger as will not have chance to do this now, feels grateful for the 6 weeks I had, but looking back would tell myself to think bigger and take more risks
- Be more patient and research into things properly, don't just go headlong into something as the longer term affect can be harder
- Have more confidence in myself
- Never stop learning, remember you do not know it all
- Do what your passionate about and want to do, be truthful with yourself about this
- Plan better in what you want to do and when

## Five years ago...

- Embrace new challenges and go for it
- Don't judge a book by its cover in terms of career options
- Discuss succession earlier don't leave it too late however hard the conversation is
- Find my own external support in professional services and advisors, don't just use who my past generations have used, this will help give a fresh outlook and can be really beneficial and in fact for me personally it was life changing
- Be bolder and more adaptive to change generally and embrace new ways of working and diversification
- Work hard and don't be afraid to strive for what you think is the impossible as it really can happen
- Wished I had educated myself more and gone to Agricultural college

## Five years ago...

- Take more risks and work together more as a family to help support change
- Run the farm as a business rather than a lifestyle as this helps with better decision making
- Stop worrying what people think of you, just do what you do and do it well and don't feel like you need to prove yourself all the time
- Expand my horizons and read more about business psychology to help me with my own self development and dealing with people
- There will be knock backs but learn from these and apply yourself differently next time
- As farmers we should get together more often with our peers as you will be surprised how much this can help you with farming and mental health reasons

**How do you presently interact  
with your Mart?**

A close-up photograph of a green plant, possibly a succulent or a similar leafy plant, with several water droplets on its leaves. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, creating a bokeh effect. The text is overlaid on the top left portion of the image.

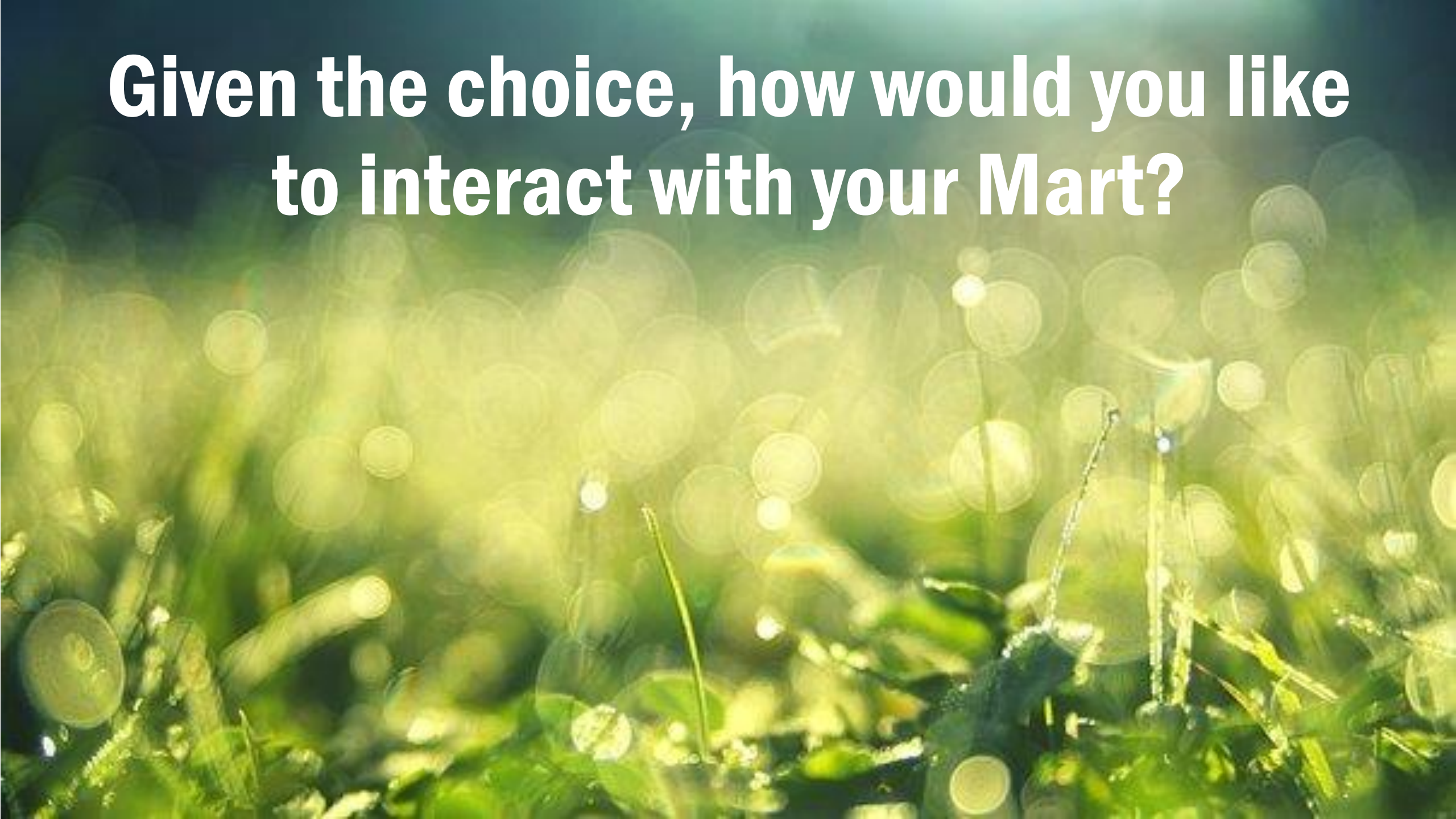
## **Interaction with the Mart...**

- I really enjoy seeing people at the shows and sales for social reasons
- Online sales has been a good thing and long may it continue
- Only light touch contact with the mart when selling calves and some cows
- My husband works for H&H so regular contact that way but not with livestock
- We don't interact but do keep updated on pricing and general news across the sector
- Due to Arla regulations we now go to a collection centre rather than interact, but Mum works for H&H and my Dad is a shareholder
- Interact weekly with the mart for both our cows and sheep and also sell breeding bulls. Main auction mart for us is Carlisle

## Interaction with the Mart...

- If there is a sale on I might accompany my husband depending on work commitments, but always look to attend the bigger sheep sales and dairy shows
- We have a strong connection with H&H at home and do a lot of business with them, in particular the larger sales and dairy events and have more recently got back into selling Friesians and Bulls again
- I have had past interaction but don't seem to have as much these days, did ask H&H for support with an idea on elite pedigree sale called Perfection Collection in 2018, but they were not interested at the time, however it was a few years ago and would be a different conversation now
- The main thing we do is marketing via posters on sale days and attend events to showcase our equipment

**Given the choice, how would you like  
to interact with your Mart?**

A close-up photograph of a green plant, possibly a succulent or a similar leafy plant, with several water droplets on its leaves. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, creating a bokeh effect with circular light spots. The overall tone is fresh and natural.



## How would we like to interact with the Mart...

- Would like to see more educational talks hosted for learning and self development
- Monthly interaction for the auctions for the farm and cattle auctions for selling store cattle
- Showing and genetics is a big part of their business and feel they get a good return from the sales at Carlisle Mart. 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest revenue generator for them is the sales of their pedigree heifers. The Auctioneers at Carlisle know them and the right people to sell to which is why they would not go elsewhere.
- Sector updates and interaction with others to expand peer groups and knowledge across the whole sector
- Understands that a group like Farmstock Futures could benefit peer groups and combat the loneliness feeling as well as enhancing wider sector knowledge – so this could be something done more through the marts on auction days or specific larger events that are going on.

## **How would we like to interact with the Mart...**

- Data availability for EID, this is not something he can get via the marts so unless this changes cannot see the day-to-day interaction change.
- Prefer the face-to-face Auction Marts but can see the online sales do work, as you can get a wider audience. Would personally not buy online though as they like to see the animals in the flesh.
- I think it's good when the Marts have consultants there, people on hand to ask questions, something like an RPA (Robotic Process Automation) helpdesk.
- One thing I have always thought was a good thing is having a tour of the auction site and an online option if unable to physically attend. I think that tours would be really educational for people going forward. The more they can educate on how farming practices work- the how and why would really benefit the sector.

## **How would we like to interact with the Mart...**

- The last year has shown us that things can take place online so making markets accessible online has been an incredible thing. There is a lot to be said for being able to log on and watch a sale that I would have ordinarily liked to be at. Sometimes, however there is no substitute for being there due to the networking opportunities.
- They seem to be an opportunity to do business rather than just auction. Now that we are coming out of the pandemic it would be good to see more networking events, bringing business together at the Mart.
- Having a platform for discussion on things that affect my age group in the industry would be helpful.
- Nothing different as a good relationship with Auctioneers, always attend the Expos as it's a day off from the farm and helps us talk to other people. Missed this during the Pandemic

**What development opportunities  
are you looking for?**



## **What development opportunities are you looking for...**

- Educational talks to enhance my own learning on all aspects of the Agri sector
- Always talk to others to help with learning and enhancing knowledge.
- Keep an open mind and don't be afraid to embrace new things and learn from others
- More learning opportunities is a good thing, attends courses on sector related environmental factors and being more sustainable, improve soil health, financial knowledge, accounting and business skills are all courses he is keen on.
- Engage more with changing the public perception – wants to be seen as an ambassador to assist with this. Wants to progress the Arable side of the farm so learn from others on the different crops and how this could be done.
- Would like more training for younger people to get into the poultry industry, more educational opportunities is key as the potential is endless. Would like to be a voice to help drive this in the future which is something of personal interest me

## What development opportunities are you looking for...

- Further support on the Grants that are available, gets very confusing so would rather have an easier process or more help to apply for the right ones. As without this it tends to make you not want to apply
- Technology is definitely a way forwards and would like to be involved on how this can be developed to help make the day job easier but also be user friendly so does not put people off
- Part of 3 groups related to stock peers, which is really important to me for interaction and also knowledge transfer and learning.
- Farming community can be too secretive so there is a change that is needed with this generation and future ones to be more open with each other.
- Gain fresh ideas from others is key for me personally, Young Farmers has helped give him this, but is keen to see what Farmstock Futures can do in this area as well.
- How to make farming more effective and support environmental challenges. Also, the general overview of costs and how to be more efficient.
- I do have quite a few personal connections with various people in the agricultural sector but building more professional links would really help as this can be quite daunting for me. As a newly qualified solicitor I think the more events I can attend the better to help this.

## **What development opportunities are you looking for.....**

- I do have quite a few personal connections with various people in the agricultural sector but building more professional links would really help as this can be quite daunting for me. As a newly qualified solicitor I think the more events I can attend the better to help this.
- Having a platform for discussion on things that affect my age group in the industry would be helpful.
- I am extremely passionate about the areas I work in. I would like to stay in the genetics industry, and continue to support and deliver for farmers
- Enhancing my knowledge in the financials of the business would be beneficial.
- More awareness and understanding of the environmental considerations to be made and social responsibility would also be helpful- how we can modify our business and purpose to incorporate this.
- Embracing technology is a big thing also, understanding and getting the best out of it

**What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career?**





## **What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career...**

- Go to Agricultural college and learn from others, take your time to understand the sector as it presents so many opportunities
- Visiting farms and working on farms for experience is a really good thing to do.
- You don't need to be an agricultural expert, just a basic understanding to then progress in all different areas of the sector. Don't be afraid to work hard when your younger but as he is learning there is chance to then look at roles or ways of working that suit your lifestyle.
- More education and awareness for young people, offer work placements and experience for young people, they actively do this as a farm and happy to share this experience with others if it will help.

## What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career...

- More education and awareness for young people, offer work placements and experience for young people, they actively do this at her place of work, happy to share this experience with others if it will help make it happen more.
- Give things a try, ask questions and gain knowledge and experience in all aspects of the sector, as people are willing to help if you ask.
- Countryfile and other programmes do not encourage young people into farming and feels these need to be shaken up as it gives the wrong impression to a career in Agriculture. However, the recent programme with Jeremy Clarkson is the first programme in a while to make Agriculture look interesting and varied which is key to encourage the next generation into the industry.
- Educational support is important, and the loss of Newton Rigg in Cumbria is catastrophic for the region and where do our young people go now who want to develop/learn the sector. Can H&H help with this?

## What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career...

- More education and awareness for young people, offer work placements and experience for young people
- Remove the barrier about not making money which is a big put off – come up with schemes like shared farming with a generation of farmer that has no succession so a partnership could be formed to encourage more opportunity into farming this way.
- “It’s not just muck and smell, it’s a lifestyle”. Bringing animals into the world and seeing them through their lifecycle and all aspects of the land and food chain. Need to do more to help encourage people gain a further insight into Agriculture sector by taster days, work experience, farm experiences
- Farming and agriculture is relied on by everyone, we all eat 3 times a day so we all rely on this industry. I would encourage people by advising them that they would feel proud and be helping to make the country run.

## **What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career...**

- There is a perception that farmers work all hours of the day and don't get paid very much. It is hard work, but the image portrayed isn't completely accurate- there are lots of roles within the Agri sector.
- We need to make sure that the jobs available are well paid and get rid of the stigma that you work all day every day
- We need other people in the industry- scientists and engineers for example to make sure that we are moving forward.
- I would advise people to speak to those already in the industry. Don't let a lack of agricultural knowledge get in the way, sometimes a lack of knowledge is beneficial as it leads to an out of the box thinking to shine through

## **What would you say to encourage more people into an Agri Career...**

- We need to remember that agriculture is at the heart of everything we bring into our homes and that farmers are to be thanked for that. The UK has some of the highest standards for food in the world.
- I don't see there being a shortage of young people wanting to get into the business that they are in. We have recently recruited some young apprentices. If you wanted to encourage skilled people I would say that it needs to be made more clear how people who can use their transferable skills to change their career
- You have got to be aware and honest with people coming into this sector as it is one of the hardest, but it is also one of the most rewarding. Seeing all of the effort you put in and your produce on a shelf, knowing the quality and care that has gone into that is one of the best things.
- Long days and hours do not help encourage people, gives a negative perception – need to combat this reputation and change mindset to encourage more people.

**For more information to join Farmstock Futures or take part in our research  
go to [www.farmstockfutures.uk](http://www.farmstockfutures.uk)**

# **Farmstock Futures Summary Notes**

**Interviews captured and collated in 2021**