

Groundswell 2026: Reflections on collaboration, practical action and the future of farming

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Groundswell is over for another year, but what stays with me is not just the conversations we had, but the *quality* of those conversations. The willingness of farmers, researchers, businesses and partners to share what is working, what is challenging, and where we need to learn more together.



Events like Groundswell are important because they create space for honest discussion. Farming is navigating a period of significant change, and progress will come not from simple answers, but from collaboration, evidence and approaches that recognise the complexity of real farming systems.

Across the two days on the LEAF stand, three themes stood out.

Collaboration is central to progress

The transition towards more sustainable and resilient farming systems relies on people working together. Farmers bring invaluable practical experience; researchers bring evidence and insight; and supply chain partners can help create the conditions for change.

Our sessions on farmer-to-farmer learning, public engagement and the M&S Plan A: Farming for the Future programme reinforced the importance of sharing knowledge and experience. Farmers learning from farmers remains one of the most powerful ways to build confidence, test new ideas and support practical change.

Turning ambition into action

The move towards more sustainable farming needs solutions that work in the context of individual farms and businesses.

Our session with the NUE-Leg Project highlighted the value of collaboration between farmers and researchers, exploring how novel legumes could contribute to reducing reliance on synthetic nitrogen in livestock systems. What stood out was the openness of the discussion – recognising both the opportunities and the practical challenges involved in making change happen on farm.

IFM provides the framework for regenerative decisions

One of the key messages throughout Groundswell was the importance of looking at farming systems as a whole.

Integrated Farm Management (IFM) provides the framework within which regenerative decisions are made. It helps farmers consider the relationship between environmental outcomes, business performance and the wider needs of their farm, supporting informed decisions that are practical, balanced and built for the long term.

Regenerative approaches have an important role to play, but they need to be considered within the context of the whole farm. IFM provides the structure to help farmers evaluate options, understand trade-offs and continually improve their systems.



We were also privileged to welcome HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh, LEAF's Honorary President, to our stand, where she met members of the LEAF team, farmers and partners working together to support more sustainable farming.

A huge thank you to everyone who visited us at Groundswell, joined our sessions and contributed to the discussions – particularly the farmers who shared their experiences and insights.

The conversations started at Groundswell will continue to inform our work over the coming months as we strengthen farmer networks, support knowledge exchange and develop practical tools to help farmers navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead.