

LEAF's response to Michael Gove's address to the National Farmers' Union Conference, 20th February 2018

We endorse the Secretary of State, Michael Gove's commitment to building a more resilient farming and rural industry. We welcome his recognition of the success of British farmers to date and the world leading farming systems they deliver. It is clear that he has listened to farmers and taken time to understand the many challenges facing the industry today.

His commitment to build on successes with shared aims is vital but this must be followed by action. LEAF and our members are ideally placed to help meet the government's goals through sharing best farming practice as demonstrated by Integrated Farm Management. This in turn will help build resilience to ensure we are export ready. Specifically, post Brexit, we need a policy and subsidy framework that rewards farmers for protecting and enhancing natural resources alongside productive agriculture.

LEAF has been driving the connection with people and farming for more than 26 years. We are of course very encouraged to hear that the delivery of public goods and services is now at the heart of government thinking and that Mr Gove believes, as we do, that public access is a public good which should be valued and that people need to be more connected with the countryside. Proactively reaching out to consumers will drive trust and help to ensure that people understand and value what farmers deliver.

Crucially, delivering a joined-up package of support for profitable, nature-friendly farming, will require farmers to *demonstrate* they farm responsibly. The use of robust and independently audited assurance schemes, like LEAF Marque, will be essential. In addition, the success of any future payment arrangements has to be underpinned by an engaged and educated public, aware of the *value* of what farmers deliver. Initiatives like LEAF Open Farm Sunday, which enable people to see for themselves how and where their food is produced will become even more important.

We also welcome the focus on new technology and investing in education and training. Successful implementation of new support measures must be based on robust, *farmer-driven* R&D. LEAF's Network of Demonstration Farms and Innovation Centres has a vital role to play in driving forward knowledge around sustainable farming best practice.

Careful and thorough consultation will be essential in the months ahead. With the framework set by the Governments' 25 Year Environment Plan, we look forward to the impending command paper and to working with government and the wider industry to help realise Mr Gove's ambitions.