

JOURNAL

Winter 2025 | Working in support of modern, sustainable, commercial agriculture



AIC strengthens
political engagement

AIC works with Defra on
EU-UK Trade Agreement

AIC secures Climate
Change Agreement target

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DINNER & CONFERENCE 11 & 12 NOV 2025

**AIC Dinner & Conference
2025 Full Coverage**



Chief Executive update

AIC's Board meeting in October included the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which confirmed key changes. Ronan Hughes, Chair of the Crop Protection and Agronomy Sector and Managing Director at Agrii, was elected Vice Chair, succeeding Chris Guest, while Jonathan Lane (ADM Agriculture) continues as Chair. In the Animal Feed Sector, Beth Austermuhle (ForFarmers) succeeded Jo Gatcliffe (AB Agri). Two co-opted Board members were also appointed to represent SMEs: Daniel Hughes (Prime Molasses) and Ben Schadla-Hall (Dewing Grain). I thank Chris and Jo for their contribution and look forward to working with Beth, Daniel, and Ben.

This quarter, AIC continued focusing on core priorities: reducing trade friction through a refreshed EU-UK Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS), calling for a clear Land Use Framework and 25-Year Farm Plan, and standardising sustainability metrics.

A highlight of the quarter was AIC's Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons, strengthening engagement with policymakers. AIC's Conference also emphasised productivity and partnership, with Food Security Minister Dame Angela Eagle MP calling for clear decisions and long-term plans to give businesses confidence to invest. Her message reinforced the importance of stability and strategic planning as the sector navigates future challenges.



Robert Sheasby,
Chief Executive, AIC

AIC strengthens political engagement

Autumn brought considerable political change, started by a Cabinet reshuffle that saw a new Secretary of State (Emma Reynolds) and a new Minister of State for Farming and Food Security (Dame Angela Eagle) appointed. AIC met the new Minister shortly after her appointment to outline our priorities.

As well as hosting its annual parliamentary reception on 9 September, which brought together Members of Parliament (MPs) from across the political divide and AIC Members,

AIC attended six party conferences around the UK. This engagement remains especially important ahead of a busy 2026 with elections in Scotland and Wales, plus many new mayoral elections in England.

It has been encouraging to see MPs visiting AIC Member businesses in their constituencies to gain a better understanding of the agri-supply chain. If you are interested in hosting your local MP, please contact AIC.



Right Honourable Alistair Carmichael MP
at this year's AIC House of Commons reception



AIC Conference 2025: Managing 'New Global Norms' in the Agri-Food Supply Chain

To a packed audience, AIC Chair Jonathan Lane opened the conference by recognising the sector's resilience and its readiness to innovate. He emphasised that while long-term uncertainty continues to challenge farm businesses, collaboration across the supply chain is already delivering "real added value" – but there remains "much more to do." This set the scene for a passionate and insightful industry forum exploring how the sector must adapt to rapidly shifting global conditions, from trade volatility and climate pressures to technological transformation and evolving policy landscapes.



Growing UK agriculture's contribution to GDP



Robert Sheasby, AIC Chief Executive, called for the Government to be ambitious and share a desire to grow UK agriculture from 0.6% to 1% of GDP. He argued that with clarity, stability, and collaboration across departments, plus the right framework, the sector can "unlock growth, boost productivity, and lead the transition to a more sustainable and globally competitive food system."

Robert Sheasby
AIC Chief Executive



Minister calls for long-term investment and partnership



Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP, Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs, set a collaborative tone by acknowledging the anxiety felt across the sector around policy churn and the lack of coherent strategy. "We cannot build a food-secure nation on short-term thinking," she told delegates. In a reassuring message to the sector, she said that the primary purpose of farming has been, and always will be, to produce food that feeds the nation, and that Government is "listening carefully" to ensure food security "sits at the heart of national strategy."

George Burgess, Director of Agriculture and Rural Economy for the Scottish Government, and Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in Wales, both reinforced the need for cross-government coherence and long-term certainty for farmers.

Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP
Minister of State
(Minister for Food Security & Rural Affairs)

The Farm Profitability Review: "A moment of truth" on land use



Baroness Minette Batters, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) lead for the Farm Profitability Review, revealed that her report had been submitted to the Government and would inform ministerial deliberations ahead of a formal Defra response before Christmas. She warned that the UK faces a "moment of truth" on land use, stressing that climate change remains the number one challenge and that volatility is already reshaping domestic and global supply chains.

Baroness Minette Batters
Defra lead,
Farm Profitability Review



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Agriculture cannot be an afterthought

Sam Lowe, Partner at Flint Global, warned that agriculture is too often "traded away" in negotiations and that the UK must be more assertive in defending domestic production standards. He noted, "other nations protect their farmers - we need to be realistic and strategic about doing the same."



Sam Lowe
Partner, Flint Global



AI, the 'third agricultural revolution'



Dr Elliott Grant, Visiting Fellow at the University of Cambridge, provided a compelling vision of AI's potential to drive a "third agricultural revolution". He urged the sector to understand - not fear - the technologies emerging, with the next 10 years delivering the equivalent change of the last 125! "AI will change farming. The question is whether we shape that change or react to it."

Dr. Elliott Grant

Visiting Fellow at the University of Cambridge



Land value now goes beyond food



Kelly Hewson-Fisher, Director and Head of Rural Research at Savills, presented analysis showing land values continue to outperform most commodity assets, and argued future valuations must reflect "the full range of opportunities beyond food, fuel and fibre."

Kelly Hewson-Fisher

Director, Head of Rural Research Savills Rural



Richer data, better decisions



Professor Pete Falloon, Science Lead for Food Security at the Met Office, highlighted the urgent need for richer farm-level data to address growing volatility and enable more effective forecasting. Without improved data, he warned, the UK risks underestimating the climate-driven challenges ahead.

Prof. Pete Falloon

Science Lead, Food Security at the Met Office



Innovation needs policy certainty



Cranswick Chairman Tim J Smith CBE stressed that the UK agri-food sector's progress depends on long-term investment certainty and clear, stable policy. He urged deeper supply-chain collaboration, noting that productivity, profitability and environmental gains "all depend on consistent government support and shared commitment between farmers, processors, and retailers."

Tim J Smith CBE

Chairman - Cranswick



Produce more from less

George Freeman MP reinforced the “30:50:50 Innovation Agenda,” highlighting its “clear and positive vision” for UK agriculture. He emphasised the sector’s potential to “produce more from less,” framing farmers as catalysts for innovation across the supply chain.



George Freeman MP

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture



Closing the conference, Jonathan Lane highlighted the energy and ambition visible throughout the day. “Our industry isn’t standing still – it’s innovating and adapting,” he said. “The future will be different – but it does not have to be negative. Working together, we can build a strong, sustainable and competitive agri-food system for the UK.”

With thanks

AIC would like to thank all delegates and sponsors for their support, making this year’s conference a fantastic forum for insightful discussion as our industry continues to navigate unprecedented change.



John Kelley,
Chief Operating Officer, AIC
Managing Director, AIC Services



To watch videos from the Conference scan the QR code >>



AIC works with Defra on EU-UK Trade Agreement implementation and supply chain changes

Significant policy attention has focused on the European Union–United Kingdom Sanitary and Phytosanitary (EU–UK SPS) agreement, which is expected to remove trade barriers while bringing inevitable supply chain changes as the UK dynamically aligns with EU standards across pesticides, seed, and food and feed rules.

With the European Commission now mandated to negotiate with the UK Government, AIC has engaged in numerous meetings with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) covering

sector-specific detail. These include what alignment on pesticides will mean for UK agriculture, regulated product approvals, alignment on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) and contaminants, and the future for precision breeding (England), now fully entered in law.

AIC expects further detailed work with Defra throughout 2026 as technical aspects of implementation and transition are worked through. To keep Members informed, AIC provided a webinar in October alongside Defra, with further webinars planned for 2026.



Ed Barker,
Head of Policy and External Affairs

AIC secures Climate Change Agreement target and champions sustainability initiatives

AIC secured Ministerial approval for an 8% target under the new Climate Change Agreement (CCA) scheme, starting January 2026. This followed several submissions of evidence from the Feed Manufacturing Committee, resulting in a reduction from the initial 12% target.

AIC has continued providing insight into the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)'s work on addressing water pollution from agriculture, including signing a joint letter, led by the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), setting out an agreed set of principles and solutions from several agricultural stakeholders.

As a member of Defra's Senior Stakeholder Group for the Farming and Countryside Programme, AIC has worked with other stakeholders to consider improvements building on what has worked well in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and address areas that have not worked as effectively.

AIC was delighted to be shortlisted in the Research Institute of the Year category at the Edie Net-Zero Awards for its Sustainability Action Plan.



Vicky Robinson,
Head of Sustainability

Andrew Pearson,
Policy Manager

UK Farm Assurance Review Report

AIC supports the findings of the UK Farm Assurance Review – Monitoring Report and remains committed to maintaining consumer confidence in food and feed integrity. The report highlights steps to simplify processes and strengthen assurance schemes, guided by nine strategic recommendations. AIC will continue collaborating with farmers, processors, retailers, and other assurance bodies to uphold standards and meet legislative obligations. The report tracks progress on 56 operational recommendations, including short- and long-term actions. A second update is expected in spring 2026 to report further progress.

Pea bruchid

AIC is working with the Processors and Growers Research Organisation (PGRO) on pea bruchid, a serious pest of peas that has recently been detected at two UK sites, posing a major risk to crops. As the pest can fly several miles, growers in affected areas should take particular care. Key actions include isolating infested consignments, avoiding infested seed, registering crops with PGRO, and applying appropriate insecticide programmes. Importers and exporters must follow strict checks and treatments for pea seed. Ongoing monitoring, reporting, and adherence to PGRO guidance are essential to limit spread and safeguard the UK pea industry from significant economic and trade impacts.



Rose Riby,
Head of Combinable Crops and Seed



Euroseeds 2025 Congress

The Euroseeds 2025 Congress, held in Edinburgh, brought together leaders from European and UK seed sectors, government bodies, and international organisations to discuss the future of seed trade. AIC and British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) hosted a joint stand, showcasing UK expertise in plant breeding and seed supply. Central discussions focused on aligning EU–UK regulations post-Brexit, including simplifying seed movement, mutual recognition of variety registration, access to treated seed innovations, and easing trade barriers. Delegates emphasised the importance of regulatory alignment to support farmers, accelerate innovation, and strengthen Europe's agricultural resilience.

The journey to seed certification and marketing

Seed certification is vital to UK agriculture, ensuring the health, purity, and performance of major arable crops. To clarify this process, AIC and British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) have developed a roadmap outlining 17 stages from variety registration to marketing and royalty collection, under the Seeds Marketing Regulations 2011 and the Plant Varieties and Seeds Act 1964.

Key stages include variety listing with Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) and Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) testing, Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) licensing, crop entry and traceability, inspections and laboratory testing, seed treatments and labelling, royalty management to protect breeders' rights, and export compliance under Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) standards.

EU reset and plant protection products (PPPs)

The EU reset presents an opportunity to transition to a common list of plant protection product (PPP) active substances for the UK and EU, including Northern Ireland (NI). This would make active substance assessments more resource-efficient and remove difficulties for Great Britain (GB) distributors serving NI.

However, alignment with the EU PPP regime poses significant challenges. AIC has highlighted these to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Chemicals Regulation Division (CRD), the Cabinet Office, and the Minister through face-to-face meetings, webinars, and information sharing.

Defra's position entering negotiations remains unclear. AIC urges consideration of gaps in crop protection, potential impacts from simultaneous PPP withdrawals, and the need for sufficiently long transition periods to allow orderly movement and use of stock through the supply chain, avoiding market shocks. We will continue to provide data and messaging.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

AIC is monitoring European Commission activity and the unilateral actions by member states on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The sector has produced a Q&A document to help Members address client or stakeholder queries.



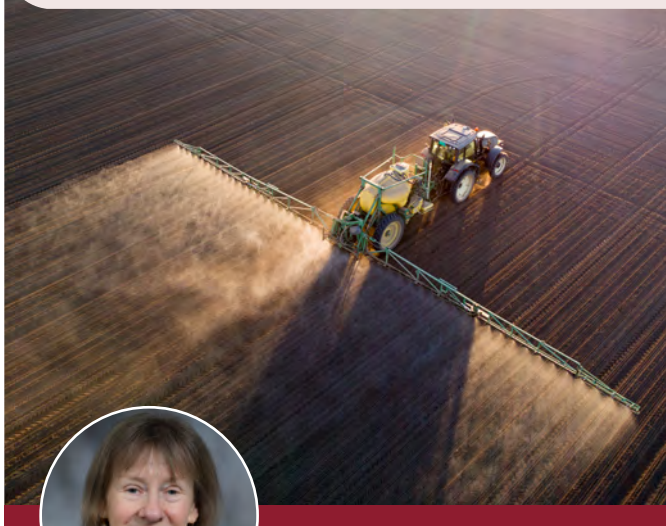
EUDR – Is the end of negotiations in sight?

Negotiations on the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) appear to be nearing conclusion. On 19 November, the European Union (EU) Council, supported by the Danish Presidency, agreed on a position for the European Parliament.

Key elements include:

- EUDR would apply from 30 December 2026 for medium and large operators; 30 June 2027 for micro/small.
- The obligation and responsibility for submitting the required due diligence statement will rest exclusively on the operators who first place the product on the market.
- Downstream operators and traders will no longer have to submit separate due diligence statements. However, only the first downstream operators must retain and pass on the reference number of the initial statement.
- Micro/small primary operators will only need to submit a one-off simplified declaration.

The Council has also tasked the European Commission with carrying out a simplification review assessing the EUDR's impact and administrative burden on operators, particularly small and micro businesses, by 30 April 2026. Where appropriate, this review should be accompanied by proposals to amend the legislation.



Hazel Doonan,
Head of Crop Protection and Agronomy



James McCulloch,
Head of Animal Feed

CBAM update: Challenges and next steps

Since AIC met with the Government in late summer, there has been little progress on the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (UK CBAM). We highlighted three key issues:

1. Quarterly rate determination

Treasury acknowledged challenges for the sector, especially farmers, but remains committed to quarterly rates to align with the European Union (EU) system. They noted that separate tax regimes for fertilisers and other products are not feasible under one UK framework.

2. Free allowances and carbon pricing

Uncertainty over free allowances continues to impact current carbon pricing models. Treasury indicated that, once clarified, prices could be hedged via markets such as the Intercontinental Exchange United Kingdom Allowance (UKA) Futures Pricing, similar to currency risk management. This would only become practical for importers once the framework for free allowances is clarified.

3. Comparison of EU Certificate Scheme and UK Payment Process

The EU scheme requires businesses to pay upfront when buying certificates, straining cash flow and offering limited benefits. By contrast, the UK system only requires payment when a transaction takes place, making it easier to manage cash and more flexible for hedging.

Despite implementation scheduled for January 2026, EU markets remain unsettled, with reports of traders reluctant to quote post-January delivery prices.

Further UK CBAM details are expected once primary legislation is finalised around 1 December as part of the post-budget process.



Jo Gilbertson,
Head of Fertiliser



AIC engages Scottish Ministers and prepares election manifesto for 2026

Ian Muirhead, Special Adviser to the Scottish Government, hosted Robert Sheasby and Ian MacDougall at Holyrood for a roundtable with Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon and the Minister. Discussions covered agricultural policy reform, the EU-UK SPS agreement, renewable fuels, sustainability, and precision breeding, with AIC's role in policy development acknowledged.

With the 2026 Scottish Parliamentary Elections approaching, AIC Scotland is developing a concise manifesto to strengthen engagement with political parties and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). This work is supported by strong relationships through the Food and Agriculture Stakeholders Taskforce (FAST) and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS).

AIC drives FAST dialogue on Scottish Agricultural Reform

The Food and Agriculture Stakeholders Taskforce (FAST) continues to engage with the Scottish Government. AIC attended a roundtable with Baroness Minette Batters hosted by National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS), discussing the Profitability Review from a Scottish perspective. Ian MacDougall emphasised AIC Members' key role in the agri-food supply chain.

Recent meetings with senior officials addressed adjustments to basic payment and greening for 2026–2027 and proposals for a new multi-annual programme from 2027/28. Despite timing concerns, a framework is expected by year-end 2025.



Ian MacDougall,
AIC Scotland Policy Manager



Plaid Cymru Conference

AIC Cymru attended the Plaid Cymru Conference and the combined fringe event hosted by National Farmers' Union (NFU) Cymru and the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW), where both unions presented their election manifesto priorities ahead of the 2026 Senedd elections.

Opened by Plaid Cymru's Rural Affairs Spokesperson Llyr Gruffydd, the event featured Ian Rickman (FUW President) and Aled Jones (NFU Cymru President), who outlined shared priorities including fair agricultural funding, a Welsh Food Plan, and reducing regulatory burdens on farmers.

Michael's presence reinforced AIC Cymru's commitment to collaborative policy development and amplifying rural voices, coinciding with the launch of AIC Cymru's manifesto, calling for sustainable growth, food security and a resilient agri-food supply chain in Wales.

AIC joins Farmers' Union of Wales panel

This autumn, the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) marked its 70th anniversary with events bringing together voices from across the agricultural sector. Ed Barker, AIC's Head of Policy and External Affairs, joined a panel discussion on the Union's legacy and the future of Welsh farming.



Michael Muncey,
AIC Cymru Policy Manager



AIC Member contribution to PATH-SAFE: Surveillance outcomes

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has published findings from the £24 million PATH-SAFE programme, which AIC and its Members supported. The programme aimed to modernise UK bio-surveillance to detect foodborne pathogens and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Over 600 animal feed samples were tested for salmonella and AMR. Results indicate a low AMR risk from imported feed, which helped inform decisions to de-prioritise animal feed as a surveillance metric.

BioMar hosts AIC UFAS visit

BioMar, an aquafeed production facility in Grangemouth, Scotland, recently participated in a Universal Feed Assurance Scheme (UFAS) case study. Simon Williams (AIC Technical Manager, UFAS), David Moss (AIC Technical Manager, Animal Feed), and Wendy Ford (AIC Communications Manager) visited the site to learn more about BioMar's approach.

As a UFAS Participant for over 20 years, BioMar believes accreditation strengthens feed safety and customer trust while supporting sustainable, responsible aquaculture. The case study highlights three key benefits of BioMar's UFAS participation:

- Protecting customers, businesses, and industry through robust feed safety
- Building operational confidence via practical testing and processes
- Driving compliance and collaboration across the industry

AIC extends its thanks to BioMar, and especially Emma Matheson, for hosting the visit.



David Moss,
Technical Manager

Earned Recognition: Building stronger relationships with regulators

AIC Services, with the support of UFAS (Universal Feed Assurance Scheme) Participants, recently hosted regulators at feed mills to engage with them and ensure decision-makers are familiar with the animal feed industry and the role AIC schemes play through Earned Recognition. These schemes help enforcement authorities target their resources effectively.

AIC Services would like to thank Lloyds Animal Feeds, Noble Foods, and AB Agri for hosting the visits.



Simon Williams,
Technical Manager

AIC joins European Feed Schemes and IDTF Committee in Vienna

At the time of writing, Simon Williams and Gill Barrow, Technical Managers, are preparing for a visit to Vienna for the annual European Feed Schemes meeting. The event provides an opportunity to discuss scheme management, address challenges and maintain mutual recognition to ensure an assured supply chain. Representatives from seven schemes across six European countries will attend.

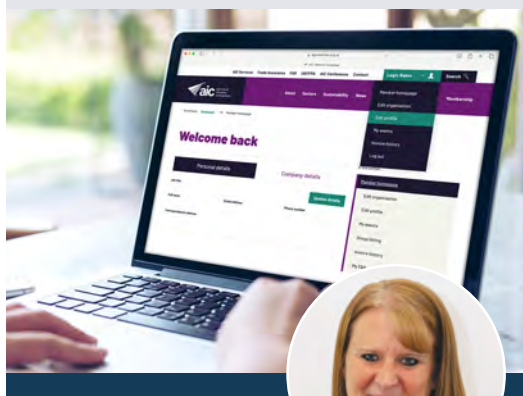
The visit coincides with the meeting of the committee that manages the International Database for Transport of Feed (IDTF), which will review outstanding assessments and products requiring further details on cleaning regimes.



Gill Barrow,
Technical Manager

AIC website – set up personal preferences on login

Did you know that you can update your personal preferences and opt-in options via your profile on AIC's website? When logging in by clicking the icon in the top right corner, click on 'Edit profile' and 'Contact Preferences' to select the topics which are of interest to you. You can also choose how you wish to be contacted and tailor your opt-in preferences for Member briefings. Go to www.agindustries.org.uk/log-in



Tracey Smith,
Membership Manager

Key dates

Oxford Farming Conference
7-9 January 2026

AIC Board Meeting
14 January 2026

AIC Pulses Dinner
22 January 2026

Sustainable Foods Conference
28-29 January 2026

Economist Impact
Future of Food Summit 10 February 2026

AIC Dinner & Conference
10-11 November 2026