

JOURNAL

Winter 2024 | Working in support of modern, sustainable, commercial agriculture



aic  2024
DINNER & CONFERENCE

Full AIC Dinner &
Conference 2024 coverage
Government's Budget
tax hikes cautioned
"Sustainability Action Plan"
for agri-supply industry launched



Chief Executive update

AIC's AGM in early October saw Jonathan Lane (ADM) elected Board Chair, along with a new Treasurer in David Anderson (Openfield) and Sector Chairs Tom Wood (Combinable Crops, Robin Appel), Ronan Hughes (Crop Protection and Agronomy, Agrii), Robert Ingham (Fertilisers, Glasson Fertilisers), and Toby Reich (Seed, Elsoms). In November, Graham Logan (Glasson Grain) was elected AIC Scotland Chair.

I welcome all new Board Members and look forward to working with them as we showcase the agri-supply industry as the bedrock of thriving and sustainable UK food production.

My thanks to Chris Guest for his outstanding leadership over the past two years as Chair, and the outgoing Treasurer Matthew Dalton, AIC Scotland Chair Sarah Bell, and Sector Chairs Richard Hopkins, Max Winkler, and Tom Nickerson for their dedication and support. A full list of AIC Board Members can be found on [AIC's website](#).

After six years as AIC Scotland Policy Manager, Ian Muirhead is leaving our trade association. His work has ensured that Member views are heard at the highest levels in Scotland, and he has contributed significantly to ensuring that policy development has appreciated the role of the Scottish agri-supply industry. We thank Ian and wish him all the best.

Robert Sheasby, Chief Executive, AIC

AIC cautions Budget tax hikes as a risk to agri-food industry inflation

On 30 October the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves MP unveiled the new Labour Government's first Budget, during which she announced that employers' National Insurance contributions would be increased to 15% and the threshold at which some businesses begin to pay this will be lowered.

AIC has voiced its concerns that this risks stifling productivity in the agricultural supply and wider agribusiness industries, whilst risking a rise in inflation.

While AIC welcomes this Government's overarching ambition to drive economic growth throughout the UK, it is concerning to see the tax burden mounting at a time when agricultural supply businesses need the confidence to invest in infrastructure, technologies and systems to boost productivity and enhance sustainability for the future.

To read AIC's analysis of what the Budget means for agri-supply businesses, scan the QR code.



Ed Barker,
Head of Policy and External Affairs



Image credit: Shutterstock



AIC Conference 2024: Defra Minister reaches out to UK agriculture as speakers mull agri-food supply chain “added value”

Addressing the biggest-ever AIC Conference of over 200 delegates, AIC Chair Jonathan Lane remarked that capturing “added value” depends on where you sit in the food system.

This set the scene for a passionate and insightful agri-food industry forum on this year’s theme of “Capturing ‘added value’ within the agri-food supply chain”.

The Conference also saw the launch of AIC’s Sustainability Action Plan “Agri-supply: An action plan for sustainable efficiency – delivering a resilient UK agriculture and food system”. The report was welcomed by industry as an invaluable resource to help agri-supply businesses navigate the sustainability landscape and improve efficiency.



Government mission to ‘create conditions for investment and economic success’



Acknowledging the anxiety felt by farmers and the wider agricultural industry around inheritance tax, Daniel Zeichner MP invited further discussion on the issue. While stating that decisions outlined in the Budget would not change, he spoke of the Government’s mission to “create conditions for investment and economic success.” He outlined a 10 to 20-year vision, allowing the industry to look ahead with certainty, as well as announcing that a consultation on a National Land Use Framework was imminent. Mr Zeichner added that Defra had secured £5 billion in funding over the next two years, demonstrating the Government’s commitment to the industry.

Daniel Zeichner MP
Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs



Cause for optimism despite last month’s Budget



Mr Sheasby expressed concern that last month’s Budget did little to boost confidence and encourage investment and growth. In a Q&A session with Daniel Zeichner MP, he highlighted Members’ disappointment that “while the narrative focused on growth, the Budget content has not inspired businesses to accelerate investment.” Despite this, he spoke of cause for optimism and welcomed the Government’s stated willingness to work in partnership with industry, as well as the potential for innovation and technology to deliver on trade and economic growth.

Robert Sheasby
AIC Chief Executive



Members challenged to consider their progress on sustainability



Following the launch of AIC’s Sustainability Action Plan, Vicky Robinson challenged Members to consider their progress. A year in the making, the report brings together the key issues in one place, providing invaluable guidance to agri-supply businesses on the actions they need to take to achieve sustainability and greater efficiency. Full details of the Action Plan, including a link to download it can be found on AIC’s website.

Vicky Robinson
AIC Head of Sustainability



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12 - 13 NOVEMBER



Evidence-based policy and collaboration key for sustainable food system



Henry Dimbleby provided an update on the National Food Strategy, three years on from its publication. He gave a stark summary of the transitional challenge to a more sustainable food system, stating that "Food delivers £12 trillion in value to global output, but does £13 trillion in damage." Mr Dimbleby also emphasised the extraordinary capability of the food system when it is properly incentivised. Recognising the need for land to produce multiple outputs-fuel, food, and fibre - he also acknowledged that there were trade-offs. He ended with a call for policy to be scientific and evidence-based and highlighted the need for collaborative discussion to future-proof the food system.

Henry Dimbleby, MBE
Author of the National Food Strategy,
and co-founder of Leon Restaurants



Vision for Scotland as a global leader in sustainable and regen ag



Mr Burgess outlined a positive vision for the future of “Scotland as a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture with co-designed policy between industry and Government at the centre of our vision”. He acknowledged the transition required in food production to achieve a carbon-neutral and biodiverse future, and emphasised that there would be no cliff edges. Central to delivering environmental commitments while enabling rural communities to thrive is a policy based upon whole farm plans, set to begin in 2025 with full implementation in 2027.

George Burgess

Director of Agriculture and Rural Economy for the Scottish Government



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Climate change is industry’s biggest threat



NFU President Tom Bradshaw delivered an impassioned plea to the Government to back up their warm words with actions. “Confidence is absolutely central to the farming industry; it’s a long-term business and we need confidence to invest,” he told Conference delegates. Speaking of how the industry feels “betrayed,” highlighting the Budget announcements on inheritance tax, Mr Bradshaw went on to list the issues where solutions need to be found; fair trade, not free trade, what food security means, public sector procurement, the planning system, and climate change, which he called “the biggest threat facing the industry.”

Tom Bradshaw

NFU President



Mindset change needed to embrace regen ag



Flying the flag for regen ag, Paul Cherry and Emma Loder-Symonds provided practical insights as well as strong evidence to suggest that regenerative agriculture was part of the transition. They also conceded that embracing it requires a mindset change and an acceptance that it’s more complicated than conventional farming. Highlighting that it can reduce costs, maintain yield, and deliver for soil health, biodiversity, and the environment, the pair also made the bold claim that it would be possible for the arable sector to be carbon neutral.

Paul Cherry

Farmer and Founder of Groundswell Festival

Emma Loder-Symonds

Director, Nonington Farms Ltd

Agritech can deliver ‘phenomenal opportunities’



Speaking of the UK Agritech Centre’s wealth of innovative facilities and expertise, Dr Phil Bicknell told delegates that agritech can deliver ‘phenomenal opportunities’ in four categories - One Health, Sustainable Production, Resilient Food Systems, and Intelligent Agriculture. He added that there are currently 92 live projects such as Potato Lyte, R-Leaf, and Dancing with Daffodils, delivering an estimated £70 million to the sector.

Phil Bicknell

UK Agritech Centre



Collaboration and consultation central to delivering the SFS in Wales



In his speech to delegates, Huw Irranca Davies MS emphasised the Welsh Government’s consultative and collaborative approach with industry to deliver the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) which launches in 2026.

Huw Irranca Davies MS
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Practical applications of AI can improve productivity



Professor Kristensson’s revelation that AI will never be 100% accurate came as a surprise to many delegates. However he did go on to highlight its practical applications in animal health and harvest technology which demonstrate its ability to drive productivity.

Professor Per Ola Kristensson
University of Cambridge



With thanks

AIC would like to thank all delegates that attended this year’s conference. It was fantastic to see record attendance and some insightful discussions on the issues that matter as our industry continues to navigate unprecedented change. I would also like to thank all sponsors for kindly supporting this year’s conference.



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



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



Political engagements at party conferences

AIC held its annual parliamentary reception in the House of Lords on 11 September, kindly hosted by Lord Curry of Kirkharle CBE.

The event saw more than 130 people representing the breadth of UK and EU agri-food supply chains - including Members, farmer representatives, and trade bodies - come together with MPs and Peers, as well as European Commission and embassy officials.

The Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office (Constitution and European Union Relations), gave a speech in which he acknowledged the agri-supply industry's vital role in underpinning **food security** and reaffirmed the Government's ambition to improve UK-EU trade by **negotiating a veterinary or "Sanitary/Phytosanitary (SPS)" agreement**.

Marking the first political party conference season since summer's **General Election**, AIC attended the annual

events of the Labour Party, the Conservatives, and the Liberal Democrats to make the case for modern, sustainable, commercial agriculture.

Later in the month, AIC met with the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs Daniel Zeichner MP to discuss this issue in more detail.

At the **Conservative Party Conference** in Birmingham on 30 September AIC Chief Executive Robert Sheasby joined a fringe event panel hosted by the think tank **Bright Blue** to discuss "Britain's farming future".



Nick Thomas-Symonds MP

Ed Barker,
Head of Policy and External Affairs

AIC launches "Sustainability Action Plan" for a resilient UK agriculture and food system

Following its launch at AIC's Conference, Members and industry stakeholders are encouraged to engage with AIC's "Agri-supply: An action plan for sustainable efficiency" publication. This new resource is a comprehensive blueprint dedicated to delivering a resilient UK agriculture and food system.

The report covers the fundamental areas for sustainable agriculture and food production, including economic resilience, climate impacts, biodiversity, and sustainable communities.

It includes a summary of actions for the agri-supply industry, clearly outlining where businesses can make a start and take further actions to build resilience.

By implementing the recommendations in the Action Plan, businesses can make tangible progress towards reducing their environmental impact, aligning with government policies, improving market access, and opening up wider investment opportunities.

The Sustainability Action Plan is now available for download on AIC's website, with Members and stakeholders strongly encouraged to speak to AIC about its insight and recommendations.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO DOWNLOAD



Vicky Robinson,
Head of Sustainability



Andrew Pearson,
Policy Manager





AIC's oilseeds advocacy group requests ministerial summit

AIC and industry stakeholders have written a joint letter to Defra Minister Daniel Zeichner MP to request a summit to discuss how to reverse the worrying decline in the domestic oilseeds crop.

AIC is coordinating a group of supply chain stakeholders to support the UK's struggling oilseeds sector and find ways to increase the area grown domestically in the face of current challenges.

Stakeholders working with AIC include the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB), CropLife UK, the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), the National Farmers Union (NFU), and the Seed Crusher and Oilseed Processors Association (SCOPA).

AHDB levy collection rebate rate latest

AIC has been working on behalf of Members regarding proposed changes to the administration fee paid to all AHDB levy collectors.

Following a series of meetings and exchange of letters with the AHDB, Members have been asked for insight on their costs associated with collecting the levy. This will aid AIC ahead of making a recommendation to the AHDB

Sector Council on what an acceptable future reclaim rate might be.



Rose Riby,
Head of Combinable Crops and Seed

Next steps for precision breeding laws in England

AIC has welcomed the Government's announcement of the next steps for realising the potential benefits of gene editing technologies in England.

Secondary legislation required to implement the Precision Breeding Act for plants is expected to be laid in Parliament soon, the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs Daniel Zeichner MP has confirmed.

AIC has played a pivotal role in partnering with the Government in recent years as it sought to introduce this landmark legislation, which carries major significance for the UK's food security.

AIC will continue to work with the Government as the secondary legislation to unlock the benefits of precision breeding technology is developed.

Ergot FAQs provide industry with information and clarity

AIC is aware that ergot is seeming a more prevalent issue in this year's harvest.

To provide information and clarity for Members and their customers, AIC has published an FAQs resource on its website explaining how the industry manages ergot contamination to ensure feed and food safety.



To view this resource, scan the QR code.



Webinars explain the role of Crop Protection and Agronomy Members

AIC's Crop Protection and Agronomy sector is developing a series of one-hour webinars designed to inform policymakers of the vital role Members play in supporting farmers and growers to produce healthy, sustainable crops.

Set to be delivered from mid-January to March 2025, the webinar series will cover topics providing an overview of the UK arable, horticulture, and amenity sectors, as well as a more detailed look at the UK distributor network and the various aspects of AIC Member businesses.

Policymakers and officials will be invited to each of the one-hour sessions, with time designated for questions and discussion.



Hazel Doonan,
Head of Crop Protection and Agronomy



EUDR implementation delayed by 12 months

The European Council and Parliament have agreed on a Commission proposal to postpone the implementation of the **EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)** by 12 months.

Some last-minute amendments to the regulation were proposed by the EPP group of MEPs, and whilst the Parliament supported the proposal for a 'no risk' category in the country risk register, the final text agreed, following a triilogue process, contains no amendments other than the twelve-month delay in implementation.

The implementation will now be deferred to 30 December 2025 for large companies, and 30 June 2026 for small companies. AIC supported the call from its EU trade associations for a delay of the entry into force and will now work to ensure that the legislation in the EU is fit for purpose, including how it will apply in Northern Ireland.



James McCulloch,
Head of Animal Feed



Government confirms CBAM introduction for 2027

The UK Government has decided to introduce a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) starting 1 January, 2027, to address the risk of carbon leakage.

The CBAM will initially cover aluminium, cement, fertilisers, hydrogen, and iron and steel.

It will apply a carbon price to imported goods from sectors such as aluminium, cement, fertilisers, hydrogen, and iron and steel, ensuring these goods face a comparable carbon price to those produced domestically under the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Both direct and indirect emissions will be covered, with importers able to use their actual emissions data or a default value set by the Government.

The point of taxation will generally be when goods are released into free circulation, with the liable individual or business being the one responsible for the goods at this point.

The Government says it will continue to engage with stakeholders and provide detailed guidance ahead of the CBAM's implementation. AIC will remain engaged in this process.



Jo Gilbertson,
Head of Fertiliser

Joint letter to Scottish Government urges precision breeding rethink

AIC Scotland is leading industry efforts to urge the Scottish Government to unlock the potential of precision breeding for crops by passing legislation equivalent to that already enacted in England in 2023.

In a letter co-signed by AIC Scotland, NFU Scotland, and GB Potatoes sent to the **Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands Mairi Gougeon MSP** on 21 October, the industry bodies called on the Scottish Government to set up an independent expert working group with industry to consider precision breeding technology.

The group would assess the range of issues and evidence covering impacts on EU alignment and trade, the effect on agricultural productivity, scientific application, comparative international regulatory developments, and the cost of enforcing divergent gene editing policies.

AIC Scotland is now awaiting a response from the Scottish Government with a view to convening a meeting with ministers to discuss this matter further.



Waiting game for Welsh agriculture

A state of waiting looms over Welsh agriculture as details have yet to emerge on the Ministerial Roundtable discussions and consultations on the Universal Actions of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).

Evidence gathering and decisions on carbon sequestration opportunities over and above tree planting and the financials of the social good potential payment are also yet to be made public. AIC Cymru also awaits publication of the agriculture and rural budget for Wales, as made available to Welsh Government from Westminster.

Clarity on these issues will ultimately determine the level of support for the SFS. At the time of writing, some clarity is anticipated in time for the Winter Fair on 25 and 26 November, where AIC Cymru is set to meet with Welsh Government to air concerns and seek reassurance.

Prior to this, AIC Cymru was also part of a Senedd event held in conjunction with NFU Cymru and sponsored by Llyr Gruffydd MS on 20 November.



Ian Muirhead,
AIC Scotland Policy Manager



Michael Muncey,
AIC Cymru Policy Manager



Additional Participant support for compliance with explosives precursors regulations

New documents have been added to the FIAS webpages to support Participants' compliance with The Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023 (CEPPR).

There is now an additional Appendix to the FIAS 2021 Standard which provides guidance on how CEPPR relates to clauses within the FIAS Standard.

There is also a template document to aid the collection of the CEPPR verification information for relevant chemicals which has been added to AIC's website.

Participants can use this to ensure that all the data required by the Regulations is collected from customers for regulated substances.



Roberta Reeve,
Technical Manager

Sustainable Commodities Scheme consultation

Members and wider industry are being consulted on AIC's Sustainable Commodities Scheme (ASCS) which is set to launch in early 2025.

The new Scheme has been developed to help Members fulfil their due diligence requirements for EUDR. It aims to provide feed and food supply chains with confidence that soya and palm commodities have not originated from deforested land.



Go to www.agindustries.org.uk/sectors/animal-feed for full details on the consultation.

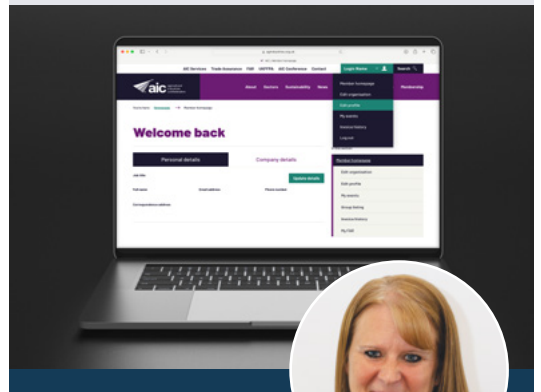
Sue Whittington,
Technical Manager

How to tailor the information you receive from AIC

Are you getting all the information you'd like to receive from AIC? Don't forget that Members can update their email preferences and opt-in options via their profile on AIC's website.

When logging in, click the icon in the top right corner, select 'Edit profile' and 'Contact Preferences' to choose the topics which are of interest to you. Members can also choose how they wish to be contacted and tailor their opt-in preferences for Member briefings, the Business Insights e-Newsletter, and the weekly News Bulletin email which offers a summary of all the latest information in one place.

Go to agindustries.org.uk/login.html or contact Membership Manager Tracy Smith (tracy.smith@agindustries.org.uk) for more information.



Tracey Smith,
Membership Manager

Dates for the diary

AIC Seed Trade Dinner
Cambridge - 5 December

AIC Board Meeting
15 January 2025

AIC Dinner & Conference 2025
11-12 November 2025



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