



# AgriSearch

Driving Excellence & Innovation



# Annual Report

2024/25

# Reference and administrative details

## Registered charity name

The Northern Ireland  
Agricultural Research and  
Development Council T/A  
Agrisearch

## Charity registration number

NIC102341

## Company registration number

NI035855

## Principal office and registered office

Innovation Centre  
Large Park  
Hillsborough  
Co. Down  
BT26 6DR  
Northern Ireland

## Trustees

Mr Seamus McCaffrey  
Mrs Jo-Anne E Dobson  
Mr David Rea  
Mr Ivor Ferguson  
Prof. Gerald Eugene Boyle  
Mr Ian Gardiner McCluggage  
Mr James Norman McMordie  
Mr Alan McCay  
Mr Samuel Chesney  
Mr Richard Cleland  
Mr Daryl Daniel McLaughlin  
Mrs Beulah Louise Skelly  
Dr Keith William Agnew  
(Appointed 10 June '25)  
Dr David Andrew Graham  
(Appointed 10 June '25,  
Resigned 20 August '25)  
Mr Cormac Patrick McKervey  
(Appointed 20 August '25)

## Company secretary

Mr Sean Kane

## Auditor

Aubrey Campbell &  
Company  
Chartered accountants &  
statutory auditor  
631 Lisburn Road  
Belfast, BT9 7GT

## Bankers

Ulster Bank Ltd  
22 Frances Street  
Newtownards  
Co. Down, BT23 7DP

Danske Bank  
Donegal Square West  
Belfast, BT71 6JS

## Solicitors

J McKee & Sons  
The Linenhall  
32-38 Linenhall Street  
Belfast, BT2 8BG

# Advisory Committees

## Beef Advisory Committee

Alan Turkington (Chair)  
Stephen Hennan (Vice Chair)  
Matthew Brownlee  
Arthur Callaghan  
Thomas Chambers  
Andrew Clarke  
John Egerton  
David Gibson  
Pat McKay  
Thomas Moorehead  
John Payne  
Michael Calvet (Non-voting CAFRE liaison)  
William Sherrard  
Frances Titterington

## Dairy Advisory Committee

Gary Thompson (Chair)  
Samantha McCarroll (Vice Chair)  
Claire Beckett  
Phillip Donaldson  
Neville Graham  
Alan Irwin  
Mark Blelock  
Robert Martin  
Samuel McElheran  
Don Morrow (Non-voting CAFRE liaison)  
John Oliver  
James Purcell  
Thomas Steele

## Sheep Advisory Committee

Roger Bell (Chairperson)  
Alistair Armstrong (Vice Chair)  
Brian Cromie  
Jayne Harkness-Bones  
William Egerton  
James Davison  
Clement Lynch  
Nigel McLaughlin  
Brendan Kelly  
Kenneth Linton  
Michael Calvert (Non-voting CAFRE liaison)  
Frances Titterington  
Ian Walker

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# Chairman's Report

## Prof. Gerry Boyle

AgriSearch continues to play an important role in supporting the ruminant livestock sector in Northern Ireland, helping farmers improve competitiveness, profitability and long-term sustainability. As Chair, I am pleased to see the organisation remain true to its founding principles a locally rooted, independent body established by farmers for farmers while continuing to evolve to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing agricultural landscape. I would also like to record my appreciation to our joint Vice-Chairs, Norman McMordie and Ian McCluggage, whose guidance and support throughout the year have been invaluable.

A key part of our strength lies in our ability to manage farmer levy funds responsibly and transparently, ensuring every pound delivers as much impact as possible. The multi-actor approach working collaboratively with farmers, researchers, industry partners and policymakers continues to be central to achieving that. It ensures research is relevant, grounded in real-world farm practice, and capable of delivering tangible improvements for farm businesses. Our staff have also played a crucial role in this, and I want to



sincerely thank them for their dedication, professionalism and commitment throughout 2024/25. Their work underpins everything AgriSearch delivers.

This year saw several major achievements that highlight the organisation's direction of travel. The launch of our new Five-Year Strategic Plan was a significant milestone, providing a clear, forward-looking framework for AgriSearch. It sets out our ambition to further strengthen the connection between cutting-edge research, practical innovation and on-farm adoption, ensuring farmers continue to benefit directly from the work we commission and support.

A highlight of the year was the conference celebrating the 25th anniversary of the GrassCheck programme a testament to the long-term value of farmer-led research and the importance of consistent data, innovation and knowledge exchange.

Events since the year end have brought into focus the critical importance of having accurate and independent scientific evidence to inform policy decisions. AgriSearch has put considerable effort and resource into its response to the NAP, CAP and other consultations.

AgriSearch recognises that these are rapidly changing and challenging times for the agri-food sector. AgriSearch has a crucial role to play in helping

Northern Ireland farmers to succeed in economic, environmental and indeed social growth.

However, levy income has remained unchanged since 1997, apart from a small increase of 10 pence per head for beef in 2015. Over nearly three decades, inflation has significantly eroded the real value of this income, making it increasingly difficult to commission meaningful research at the scale and depth required. This is a key area of focus for the Board, and over the coming period we will engage closely with farmers and processors to explore opportunities to strengthen levy collection and consider a necessary review of levy rates. Ensuring AgriSearch remains fit for purpose and capable of delivering the research and innovation that Northern Ireland's livestock sector needs will require collective effort, open conversation and a shared commitment to future-proofing our industry.

Overall, the past year reflects both solid progress and a clear sense of direction. I would like to thank everyone involved, trustees, advisory committee members, partners, and above all the farmers who continue to support and engage with our work. Together, we are helping build a more resilient, sustainable and profitable future for Northern Ireland agriculture.



# Operations Manager's Report

## Sean Kane

The 2024/25 year was one of consolidation, delivery and real momentum for AgriSearch, with day-to-day operations continuing to support our vision of driving farm profitability and sustainability through science, research and innovation. Even with a tougher funding landscape and fewer opportunities to leverage external support than in previous years, the team delivered a broad programme of work and maintained strong engagement with farmers, researchers and industry partners. We continued to deliver core programmes such as GrassCheck, which marked its 25th anniversary with a well-attended conference, and the ZeroNside project, where we ran a farm walk, webinar and workshop to share findings directly with farmers. Carbon benchmarking progressed into its second round across the Beacon Farm Network, and we completed research into mycotoxin levels in silage to help improve on-farm decision-making. A proof-of-concept nutrient management tool was also developed, strengthening our support for sustainable nutrient use.

Alongside this, we secured places in two major research collaborations

the UK-DCN (UK – Dairy Carbon Network) and Cli-Beef (Climate Friendly Beef Production) projects and commissioned additional long-term research capacity through PhD studentships focusing on carbon inventory modelling and AI-driven renewable energy optimisation. We also commissioned a sheep genotyping project with Signet, supporting future improvements in genetic progress and flock performance. Internally, the team helped steer the development and launch of AgriSearch's new five-year strategic plan and ensured annual planning aligned closely to strategic priorities. We supported trustee and committee recruitment, strengthened induction processes and improved operational systems, including financial and administrative controls.

The year was not without its challenges. Reduced availability of external funding calls continued to limit opportunities for large collaborative projects, and inflationary pressure further eroded levy income, making it more difficult to meet the growing expectations and needs of farmers. As our engagement activity increased, so too did the demand on operational



and administrative capacity. Nevertheless, the organisation remains well positioned for the year ahead. Our focus for 2025/26 includes delivering the new High-Performance Dairy Conference and Beef Conference, continuing the roll-out of PhD research and wider dissemination, and further developing our farmer networks and on-farm research capability. We will also be concentrating on delivering strong outcomes and meaningful farmer engagement through both the UK-DCN and Cli-Beef projects, ensuring we maximise the value of these partnerships for the Northern Ireland farming community.

# Strategy Manager's Report

## Jason Rankin

Work focused on keeping the organisation aligned, forward-looking and responsive to the changing research landscape. With traditional research and innovation funding routes becoming more limited the emphasis shifted toward ensuring our research and innovation priorities remained high-impact, farmer-focused and financially sustainable. This meant deeper collaboration with farmers, processors, researchers and other stakeholders to make sure the strategy genuinely reflected the needs and direction of the Northern Ireland ruminant sector. It also meant supporting the development of a strategic business plan that connects long-term objectives to practical, deliverable activity for the year ahead.

Despite the challenges, the year brought strong strategic wins. AgriSearch played a central role in successful bids for two major collaborative research programmes: the Defra funded UK-DCN project, and the PEACEPLUS Cli-Beef project,. Alongside this, strategic oversight was provided to two new AgriSearch PhD scholarships aimed at strengthening long-term research capability in carbon (LCA) modelling and the optimisation of



renewable energy use on farms—areas that will be increasingly important for future policy and industry planning.

Our knowledge activities and impact continued to grow as well. There was stronger alignment between research and innovation outputs and how they were communicated, ensuring farmers received timely, relevant information through events, online platforms and advisory networks. AgriSearch's profile also continued to build through events such as the GrassCheck 25th Anniversary Conference, our presence at the

RUAS Winter Fair and the continued growth of digital engagement through social media and web-based resources.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, the strategic focus will centre on gathering fresh insight from Dairy, Beef and Sheep farmers to shape future research priorities, enhancing communication through implementation of social media recommendations and the rollout of a new website, and further strengthening collaboration with government, academia and industry to expand opportunities for leverage and partnership.



## 25 Years of Grasscheck

In 2024, AgriSearch proudly marked the 25th Anniversary of GrassCheck, celebrating a programme that has become one of the most influential and practical grassland management tools available to Northern Ireland farmers. More than 140 farmers, researchers and industry stakeholders attended the anniversary conference, underscoring the programme's importance and reach.

Since its inception in 1999, GrassCheck has transformed how Northern Ireland measures, monitors and manages its most valuable crop—grass. Early research highlighted a major gap between the grass farmers could grow and what was actually being utilised. GrassCheck filled this void by providing the first national grass growth monitoring system, establishing research plots at Hillsborough, Greenmount and Crossnacreevy.

Its value was proven quickly. During the severe weather of 2002, GrassCheck data identified a 32% reduction in grass growth, providing the evidence base that secured £4.6 million in weather aid for farmers. In 2007, long-term growth data was instrumental in securing the Nitrates Derogation, protecting productivity across the grazing sector.

A major leap forward came in 2017 with the expansion to on-farm monitoring. Today, 53 dairy, beef and sheep farmers across Northern Ireland contribute weekly measurements and samples, supported by AFBI, CAFRE and AgriSearch teams. This collaborative effort enables the delivery of highly localised, timely and actionable information through weekly bulletins, social media and a new dedicated email update.

The result is a decision-support system that farmers

actively trust. GrassCheck now tracks regional variation, weather impacts, and quality metrics such as ME and protein levels—offering a level of precision and predictability that was unthinkable 25 years ago.

Looking ahead, the GrassCheck dataset one of the most comprehensive of its kind continues to reveal future opportunities. Long-term modelling indicates that by 2100, Northern Ireland could grow an additional 2 tonnes of dry matter per hectare, particularly in spring and autumn.

GrassCheck's enduring strength is its partnership model: farmers, scientists and industry working side by side. As climate variability intensifies and the economics of production tighten, the programme's ability to support resilience, efficiency and environmental stewardship has never been more important.

# ZeroNsil

ZeroNsil was developed in response to rising fertiliser costs and the need to reduce the carbon footprint of silage production. The project explores whether good-quality silage can be produced without manufactured nitrogen fertiliser by using nitrogen-fixing legume species.

Building on AgriSearch's previous multispecies sward work, which mainly focused on grazing systems, ZeroNsil provides a much-needed focus on silage production for both dairy and beef/sheep sectors. Although earlier research at AFBI Hillsborough has

shown promise, on-farm experience with these crops in Northern Ireland remains limited.

The project involves 12 farms across NI (six dairy and six beef/sheep). Each participating farm is establishing dedicated red clover alongside comparable control fields. Soil tests, carbon measurements and nutrient records are being collected to ensure robust comparisons. Silage yield and quality will be monitored over multiple cuts and evaluated against conventional grass systems.

ZeroNsil will provide practical evidence on the

feasibility, performance and environmental benefits of low-nitrogen silage systems, helping farmers assess the potential of legumes to reduce input costs and improve sustainability.

## YEAR 1 RESULTS

On-farm progress and early findings indicate the importance of analysing slurry quality to support accurate nutrient management planning. During the first year, the red clover swards delivered slightly higher yields than the grass-only swards, while overall silage quality was broadly similar across both treatments

# Mycotoxins In Grass Silage

AgriSearch is undertaking a pilot project to better understand the prevalence and causes of mycotoxins in grass silage in Northern Ireland.

Recent years have seen a noticeable rise in mycotoxin issues in dairy cow silage across Northern Ireland, with severe cases leading to antibiotic failures in milk tanks and negative impacts on cow health, fertility and production efficiency. Despite growing concern, there remains limited independent evidence on the scale of the problem or the factors contributing to contamination.

Several possible drivers have been suggested, including changes in slurry application methods, the adoption of lighter multi-cut silage systems, increased use of tedding and raking equipment, and the influence of warmer, wetter summers associated with climate change. To help fill the current knowledge gap, AgriSearch has partnered with Queen's University Belfast, whose Food Fortress laboratory provides advanced mycotoxin analysis.

Beacon and GrassCheck farmers were invited to submit detailed information on their silage-making

practices, covering nutrient applications, cutting and harvesting timings, equipment use, ground and weather conditions, additive use, silo management and post-harvest stubble condition. From these submissions, thirteen farms were selected for winter sampling, with silage collected from pit faces, core samples and feed passages. All samples have been analysed by Queen's University to establish a clearer picture of mycotoxin prevalence and potential causes. This work will deliver the first robust evidence base to guide future farmer advice and research priorities.



## UK Dairy Carbon Network

The UK Dairy Carbon Network (UK-DCN) is focused on six priority areas with strong potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while improving on-farm efficiency and productivity. By trialling proven approaches on real commercial farms, the project aims to demonstrate that meaningful emissions reductions can be achieved alongside better performance and greater resilience.

Participating farms receive tailored support, including individual implementation plans designed around their production system, local climate and geography. The programme also promotes shared learning through farm walks, open days and peer-

to-peer activities, enabling farmers to learn directly from each other's experiences and build confidence in practical, evidence-based solutions.

A key objective of the UK-DCN is to share results widely across the industry, accelerating the uptake of practices that deliver environmental benefits and strengthen the long-term sustainability of UK dairy farming. Within the project, AgriSearch leads the Northern Ireland Farm Network and works alongside AHDB, which manages three additional networks in Great Britain, as well as contributing to communication and knowledge exchange across the programme.

The three-year initiative (2024–2027) brings together partners from leading research, advisory and industry organisations across the UK, including universities, research institutes and agricultural development bodies.

### PROJECT PARTNERS

The UK Dairy Carbon Network is lead by AFBI and brings together a consortium of leading research and industry organisations, including Aberystwyth University, ADAS, AFBI, AgriSearch, the UK Agri-Tech Centre, AHDB, Harper Adams University, Newcastle University, Queen's University Belfast, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and the University of Reading.



## Sheep Genotyping Project in Northern Ireland

The arrival of new genomic technologies that directly assess variation in an animal's DNA marks a significant step forward for ram breeders in Northern Ireland. AgriSearch is working closely with AHDB/Signet to support the development of these services, enabling breeders to access more informative genomic data and accelerate progress in both pedigree and commercial sheep systems.

Genomic information allows sheep farmers to move beyond predictions based solely on pedigree and performance, offering major benefits for breeding programmes. It enhances sire and dam verification, identifies key genes related to traits such as scrapie resistance, myostatin and

fertility, and improves the accuracy of breeding values. Genomics is especially valuable for traits expressed only in one sex, expressed later in life, or difficult and costly to measure, including longevity, methane emissions and meat-eating quality. It also strengthens comparisons between flocks and provides previously unrecorded animals with a more robust starting point for evaluation. As genomic evaluations expand, breeders will benefit from more reliable breeding values to inform selection and marketing decisions.

Signet currently provides genomic breeding values for six hill breeds within the Hill Sheep Evaluation. Terminal sire breeds—including Suffolk, Hampshire Down and Charollais—will become

the first in the UK to receive genomic breeding values for abattoir traits following the launch of the new evaluation in 2025.

AgriSearch is supporting this development by funding the genotyping of high-accuracy sires and breeding ewes across hill, maternal and terminal sire flocks. Building a strong genomic dataset will enhance the accuracy of breeding values in Northern Ireland, strengthen links with genomic data generated elsewhere in the UK, and encourage breeders to engage with genomic sampling. This work represents an important step towards the routine integration of genomic technologies into the region's sheep breeding programmes.

# PhD Scholarship Programme

## MODELLING AND OPTIMISING ON-FARM RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION AND CONSUMPTION USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**Principle Supervisor:** Prof. Jim Harkin (Ulster University)

**Co-Supervisor:** Prof. Neil Hewitt (Ulster University)

The proposed PhD research project builds on a recently completed AgriSearch-funded pilot project in collaboration with Dale Farm, Ulster Farmers Union and CAFRE, which established and quantified the opportunity that renewable generation can still offer on the dairy farm when there is a mismatch in the timing of energy generation and

consumption. The proposed PhD project, in collaboration with Dale Farm, ultimately aims to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to lower the impact on the environment by maximising the use of renewable generation and offset the use of the grid supply, therefore minimising the kWh per litre of milk cost. The research will address the cost-effective optimisation of the balance between the scaling of renewable resources, the sizing of storage capacity, and the timing of when generated energy can be consumed/ stored on the farm using

AI. The PhD researcher will undertake a placement with Dale Farm to experience business operations, data recording and understand the on-farm dairy production processes. This will develop the candidate's commercial awareness and increase the opportunity for impact from the research outcomes. The graduating PhD candidate will contribute to improving the competitiveness of Northern Ireland's dairy industry as a new generation of applied research scientist with sector-based AI expertise.

## RUMIBASE NI: DEVELOPING A UNIFIED DATABASE OF LIFE CYCLE CARBON INVENTORY TO ENCOMPASS ALL AGRISEARCH RUMINANT FARM PLATFORMS, AS A FOUNDATION FOR A UNIFIED DATABASE TO ENCOMPASS ALL NI RUMINANT FARMS

**Principle Supervisor:** Professor Nigel Scollan (Queen's University Belfast)

**AFBI Supervisor:** Dr Taro Takahashi

The historic data from across the AgriSearch and affiliated farm platforms (Beacon Farms, GrassCheck, ZeroNsile and ARCZero) represent a wide range of

actual and potential farming systems in NI and therefore have the strong potential to offer invaluable insights into the determinants of climate impacts attributable to physical, geographical and socioeconomic characteristics of individual farms. To realise this untapped potential and establish a methodological

foundation for real-time automated carbon footprinting of all NI ruminant farms, this project will develop a unified database structure and computational framework to quantify/re-quantify life cycle carbon balances and global warming potentials of all ruminant enterprises across the four platforms.

# Trustees' Annual Report

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025.

## CHAIR'S REPORT

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 3 to the accounts and comply with the Charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)"

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

### Nature of governing document and how charity is constituted

'AgriSearch' is the trading name for the Northern Ireland Agricultural Research & Development Council, a charitable company, limited by guarantee with no share capital. It is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

### Methods to recruit and appoint new trustees

The Board of Trustees, who are also the Directors of the Charitable Company, are appointed by the Council. The Trustees appoint three Advisory Committees to consider and monitor appropriate research projects.

Nominations are received from the Ulster Farmers' Union for three farmer Trustees. On behalf of processors (who are levy collectors) DairyUK and NI Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA) nominate one trustee each.

Three farmer Trustees are recruited

independently with the aim of ensuring that relevant differing aspects of farm husbandry are represented as far as possible and that there is widespread representation across Northern Ireland.

Additional independent Trustees are recruited who are not active farmers but have standing within the agricultural community and have experience of a commercial environment.

Members of the charity are approved at the AGM following nomination by the Trustees.

While nominations for Trustees are received from the Ulster Farmers' Union, DairyUK and NIMEA the final decision as to who to appoint is at the discretion of the members of the charity.

### Indemnity provision for trustees

Every member of the Charity undertakes to contribute such amount as may be required (not exceeding £1) to the Charity's assets if it should be wound up while he or she is a member or within one year after he or she ceases to be a member, for payment of the Charity's debts and liabilities contracted before he or she ceases to be a member, and of the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributories among themselves.

Trustees are also covered by a management and corporate liability insurance policy.

### Organisational structure and how charity makes decisions

The Board of Trustees meets five times per year and each of the Advisory Committees meets when required to review funding and expenditure proposals and to identify future research needs.

The three advisory committees consist of farmer members, independent scientific advisors and representatives of the processing sectors. The Beef and Sheep Advisory Committees also have a representative from the Livestock and Meat Commission for NI.

Their role is to identify and evaluate research proposals and recommend projects to the Trustees. Each committee includes one representative of College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) in an advisory capacity.

The Trustees review all proposals from advisory committees, taking into account the finances of the organisation and the strategic direction before deciding to approve the recommendations or return them to the relevant committees for further consideration or rejection.

### How decisions are made

Decisions are taken by the Board of Trustees which meets at least five times a year. Meeting papers which include an agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, Operations and Strategy Manager's reports, financial statements and details of any project proposals being considered for funding are circulated in advance of the meeting.

### Policies and procedures for induction and training of trustees

New Trustees are provided with information about the role and about the Council as part of an application 'pack'. Following selection, new Trustees have an induction briefing from the Chairman and General Manager which provides information and guidelines on their tasks and responsibilities together with an outline of the objectives of AgriSearch. They also receive copies of past Trustee minutes and other corporate documentation.

### Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management

A remuneration committee is appointed by the Trustees and meets on annual basis to consider the remuneration of key management. Its recommendations are submitted to the Trustees for approval.

The remuneration committee is currently made up as follows:

Norman McMordie (Chairperson)  
Crosby Cleland  
Jo-Anne Dobson

A Disciplinary and Grievance Committee has also been established to review the employee handbook and if necessary act as an appeal panel for disciplinary and grievance issues.

The Disciplinary and Grievance Committee is currently made up as follows:

Ian McCluggage  
Norman McMordie  
Alan McCay

The PhD Scholarship committee is currently made up as follows:

Gerry Boyle  
Alan McCay (Chairperson)  
Ian McCluggage

A Governance Committee is appointed by the Trustees and meets on a regular basis to review governance arrangements and ensure compliance with best practice.

The Governance Committee is currently made up as follows:

Gerry Boyle (Chairperson)  
Norman McMordie  
Ian McCluggage

### Relationships with related parties and other charities/organisations with which it co-ordinates in the pursuit of its charitable objectives

Two Trustees, three members of the AgriSearch Sheep Advisory Committee, two members of the AgriSearch Dairy Advisory Committee and three members of the AgriSearch Beef Advisory Committee received payments during the financial year for activity undertaken as "farmer co-researchers" or "Beacon Farmers", these are detailed on page 41 under Related Party Transactions. Farmer co-researchers are appointed on-merit in consultation with the relevant lead scientist. Beacon Farmers were appointed on merit by an independent expert panel.

AgriSearch has a conflict-of-interest policy and each Trustee and Advisory Committee member is asked to complete a declaration of interests. In addition, declaration of conflicts of interest is a standing item at the top of the agenda for every meeting of Trustees.

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

### Charitable objective

The principal activity of the Council is to commission research and development in the agricultural industry. The Charity's objectives are to advance education, for the public benefit, in particular, by conducting and commissioning research into the improvement and development of sheep, beef and dairy farming and to disseminate and publish the useful results of such research and also to promote the improvement of animal health and welfare in sheep, beef and dairy farming in Northern Ireland.

### Aims of charity

Like all industries, the Northern Ireland ruminant livestock sector needs to constantly advance to meet the challenges it faces. These include competitiveness in an increasingly globalised market, meeting government and consumer expectations in the fields of animal health and welfare, reducing the environmental impact of farming, delivery of ecosystem services and improving food quality and safety.

Research and innovation have a major role to play in helping farmers to increase their socio-economic resilience, improve their environmental sustainability and enhance the health status of their herds and flocks.

### Vision:

Driving farm profitability and sustainability through science, research and innovation

### Purpose:

To equip farmers through the application of science, research and innovation to make a difference for the rural economy, environment and society

### Strategy:

Applying our knowledge, network and capabilities and working with others to turn scientific possibilities into sound farm practice

### Values and Principles:

Our values and principles below will be prevalent in all of our activities and

reflected in all of our work.

- Honesty and integrity
- Ethical leadership and good governance
- Accountability to farmers - levy payer led
- Consultation, engagement, and effective communication at all levels of government and the industry
- Collaboration and partnership across all our sectors
- Seeking value for money in all of our research and innovation projects and programmes
- Advocating excellence in all research, science, and innovation activities

In light of significant change within the agri-food sector and AgriSearch's operating environment, the Trustees instigated a strategy review process in November 2024. The review highlighted the need to have a more targeted and focused programme of work with 3 priority areas being identified.

1. Placing the farmers needs at the heart of research and innovation in Northern Ireland
2. Grow and develop our long-term research and innovation platforms
3. The Last Mile - Research into practice

### How achievement of aims furthers objectives

The charity is dependent on the goodwill of its levy funders. Given this, the Trustees have put in place a range of systems to try to ensure appropriate research projects are commissioned, that research findings are innovatively disseminated and that feedback and engagement are sought. Innovative research and development is a key strategy within Government targets. AgriSearch is also committed to innovative research and development and aims to maximise its influence and impact. AgriSearch also seeks

to collaborate with government and industry bodies within Northern Ireland and further afield. By doing so we can leverage our limited levy funds to achieve a much greater impact than by working alone.

It is also the policy of the Trustees that the return on investment of the funds directed to research is analysed and measured to ensure optimum value for money on behalf of the charity's funders.

Increasingly, as research projects reach conclusion, greater emphasis is being placed on the dissemination of findings and the adoption by industry of the key recommendations into every day working practice. Environmental and animal welfare considerations continue to be significant factors in the sustainability of farming and AgriSearch takes increasing notice of these.

### Strategies for achieving aims and objectives

- To build understanding of global advances in production systems, practices and techniques, through the funding of new research, the sharing of knowledge, and widespread innovation and development.
- To leverfund and deliver programmes through collaborative research partnerships, actively seeking partners locally, nationally and internationally, and developing mutually beneficial relationships.
- To communicate more effectively and directly with farmers, increase the number of farmers we reach and increase their active participation.
- To facilitate bottom-up, industry led priorities for research and innovation, based on need.
- To support the NI science community, working to ensure the future capacity and capability of NI scientists and agriculturalists.

### Criteria or measures used to assess success

- Improvements in productivity and efficiency at farm level
- Improvements in systems, processes, and practices
- Increased profitability from farming ruminant livestock
- Reduced carbon footprint per kg of milk/ beef/ lamb
- Increased or more productive use of land
- Strength of AgriSearch profile locally and internationally
- Level of industry/farmer confidence in AgriSearch research models, methods, and outcomes
- Strong collaborative relationships in government, in the agri-food industry, and in the scientific and academic community
- Increase in effectiveness of communication
- Value for money and impact on farming (economic and environmental)

### Statement of compliance with Charity Commission guidance

The Charity has paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the Charity should undertake.

### Main objectives for the year and strategies for achieving them

- To continue to deliver the GrassCheck programme
- To hold a GrassCheck 25th Anniversary Conference
- To continue to deliver our ZeroNside project
- Hold dissemination events to share the learnings from our ZeroNside project
- To develop a 5-year strategic plan
- To develop and an annual strategic business plan to ensure we are delivering on our strategic priorities
- To participate in the building of

further networks and consortia to pool resources, avoid the duplication of research and draw down external funding.

- To continue to engage with funding organisations and industry for future research initiatives
- To continue our membership of and involvement in the Centre for Innovation Excellence in Livestock.
- To increase the reach of our knowledge exchange programme through further on-farm events, seminars and increasing traffic to the website and social media.
- To further develop our communications and knowledge exchange strategy.
- To engage with DAERA to ensure a high priority is given to research and knowledge exchange and ensure co-ordination of research and knowledge exchange activities and maximise synergies.

### Grant-making policy

Investments in research programmes take into account value for money, affordability and the potential for the research to be adopted in practice on farms in Northern Ireland.

Any research proposal must address at least one of the following key pillars:

- Sustainability / profitability
- Environmental Impact
- Animal Welfare/Health
- Food quality/ safety

The Trustees also look for additional external funding in any research projects they approve.

Historically this was mainly obtained through the Department of Agriculture's Evidence and Innovation Strategy, Research Challenge Fund and European Innovation Partnership programmes and the InvestNI funded Agri-Food Quest Competence Centre. AgriSearch has also previously obtained funding from the European Union under the Horizon 2020 pro-

gramme. However, the opportunities for leveraging funding for research projects has greatly diminished in recent years. Thus, AgriSearch is increasingly looking to undertake smaller scale farm-level initiatives which it can fund using its own resources. More recently, AgriSearch has been successful in obtaining funding from DEFRA as part of the UK Dairy Carbon Network consortium and since the year end has been awarded funding as part of an AFBI led Peace Plus application from the CliBeef project.

### Use of volunteers

The charity makes significant use of volunteers in the course of its work. In addition to the Trustees, the members of the three sectoral advisory committees give freely of their time in attending and preparing for committee meetings as well as supporting events run by AgriSearch.

In addition, many of AgriSearch's research programmes are based on commercial Northern Ireland farms who only receive a small payment for the time they spend on these projects and who make their herds and flocks available for research as well as allowing access to farm records and hosting events on their farms.

# TRUSTEES' STRATEGIC REPORT

The following sections for achievements and performance and financial review form the strategic report of the charity.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

### Summary of main achievements

- Held a GrassCheck 25th Anniversary Conference.
- Launched the AgriSearch 5-year Strategic Plan
- We were successful in our bid to become a partner in the UK-DCN project
- We were successful in our bid to become a partner in the Cli-Beef project
- We have appointed 2 PhD researchers who are progressing their studies on the below programmes
  - Rumibase NI: Developing a unified database of the life cycle carbon inventory to encompass all AgriSearch ruminant platforms, as a foundation for a unified database to encompass all NI ruminant farms
  - Modelling and Optimising on-farm renewable energy generation and consumption using artificial intelligence
- Develop a proof of concept nutrient management tool to support farmers make informed decisions
- Held 3 ZeroNsil events 1 farm walk, 1 webinar and 1 workshop
- Under took a mycotoxin research project looking at mycotoxin levels in grass silage
- Commission a sheep genotyping project with Signet
- Commissioned a Social Media Audit and implemented a range of recommendations
- Completed our 2nd round of carbon

benchmarking on farms in the Beacon Farm Network

- Completed the final report for the Super G project
- Website continuously updated alongside use of social media.
- Held 8 workshops for Advisory Committees, Beacon Farmers and GrassCheck farmers and others
- Continued work on “Resilience for Dairy” (R4D) a new Horizon 2020 Thematic Network
- Took a stand at the RUAS Winter Fair

### Investment performance against objectives

Cash flow and reallocation of funds between accounts has been managed to maximize the limited returns available on deposit accounts. The Davy managed portfolio has returned a good performance with a return of 4.1 % this year. The St. James's Place managed portfolio has also returned good performance with a return of 3.1 % this year. The Trustees have reviewed the portfolio and returns and are satisfied with the management of risk and investment income.

### Balanced picture of charity's progress against objectives

While AgriSearch has been successful at leveraging a significant amount of funding from government and other sources in the past, many funding streams which AgriSearch has availed of in the past are no longer open to new applications. Knowledge exchange is a key component of our work. Over the course of the year, we have run or assisted in the running of 14 successful knowledge exchange events.

### Key performance indicators explaining outputs achieved by objectives

Given the straightforward nature of the business, the company's directors are of the opinion that analysis using KPI's is not necessary for an understanding of the development, performance or position of the business.

### Significant positive and negative factors

### that affected the achievement of objectives and how future plans affected

Given the relatively small amount of levy income the commissioning of research projects is dependent on the availability of leveraged funding. Funding competitions for such projects do not follow a regular cycle. In the last three years there have been fewer funding calls open and those that have been open have not aligned particularly well with the goals and aspirations of AgriSearch. As a result of this the Trustees instigated a major review of AgriSearch's strategy.

Further to this they have engaged the services of Dr Sinclair Mayne as an Independent Scientific Advisor to advise the Trustees and management. AgriSearch is now undertaking smaller scale farm-level initiatives which it can fund using its own resources.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

### Review of financial position at the end of the reporting period

The statement of financial activities for the year and the Statement of Financial Position are set out on pages 24 and 25 of this report. The net movement in funds for the financial year is net expenditure spent of (£7,685) (2024: net income received of £366,083). During the financial year Trustees commissioned funding for Sheep Genotyping Project undertaken by Signet at a cost of £6,900. A Mycotoxin Project was also commissioned at a cost of £36,000. When other sources of funding are added, the total expenditure on the related research and development since the formation of AgriSearch in 1997 is over £70m, with the input from AgriSearch amounting to £10m.

### Significant events that affected financial performance and financial position during the period

Events during the year did not give rise to any material financial impact.

The Trustees monitor financial performance on a regular basis and take a low-risk stance on finance.

It is the Trustees' policy to achieve the best financial return on longer term funds with a prudent investing attitude whilst ensuring that sufficient funds are available to meet the operational expenditure of the organisation. Invested funds can be accessed at short notice. Financial risk is considered as part of the Trustees' ongoing assessment of its operating environment and a risk register is maintained.

The organisation is largely dependent on a revenue stream from voluntary levies paid by farmers and agri-food processors. The risk to future financial performance based on this is regularly considered and assessed. Budgets are set for each financial year in light of this. At the end of the financial year, there are no events or

## INVESTMENT POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

The overall investment policy is low risk. During the 2024-25 financial year the majority of funds were held in deposits across a number of institutions as agreed by the Trustees. A portion of funds which are not required in the short term continue to be invested within investment portfolios managed by Davy & St. James's Place. All funds are accessible at less than one week's notice.

### Principal sources of income and how expenditure meets objectives

Principal funding sources are terms-of-trade levies collected on a voluntary basis by Northern Ireland processors of dairy, beef and sheep.

### Reserves policy (including amount of reserves and why held, restricted funds, designated funds, free reserves against reserves policy)

The Trustees have established a policy whereby the company's 'Free' reserves, being funds not committed to third parties for research should represent at least 12 months management and administration costs. At this level, the Trustees are of the view that the company would be able to continue its activities in the event of a significant drop in fund-

ing. The level of unrestricted reserves held at the year ended 31 March 2025 is £835,180. In addition, in order to ensure continuity of operations, further reserves are held for the ongoing commissioning of research, to ensure AgriSearch has the capacity to commission urgent research at short notice to address any emerging critical issues that may arise. AgriSearch works with other stakeholders to ensure maximum leverage of funds. Reserves held can vary depending on the timing of decisions made by co-funders.

Reserves held can vary based on the expected or anticipated timing of research funding calls and the time taken for co-funders to consider applications made under such calls. The Trustees consider that the present level of reserves adequately meets these combined objectives. The level of restricted reserves held at the year ended 31 March 2025 is £35,140. These restricted funds relate to the UK Dairy Carbon Network.

### Risk factors

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring effective risk management, and that internal controls are in place to appropriately manage the risk exposure of AgriSearch. When reviewing risks the Board considers:

- the major risks to which AgriSearch is exposed;
- the potential impact and probability associated with each risk;
- existing internal controls and accountability for them;
- mitigating actions needed to reduce each risk to a level that the Trustees considered to be acceptable.

The Trustees have drawn up a comprehensive and detailed risk register which is formally reviewed by the Trustees every year and is regularly monitored by the Office Bearers' Committee.

The major financial risks are each subject to ongoing monitoring and management. AgriSearch investments are regularly reviewed by the Office Bearers. Income and cost control are subject to detailed review and chal-

lenge on at least a bimonthly basis. An annual budget for non-project related expenditure for the forthcoming year is placed before the Trustees for approval before the start of each financial year. During the year a Financial Control Document was drawn up and adopted by the Trustees and is kept under regular review.

AgriSearch is reliant on the co-operation of dairy and red meat processors to collect producer levies on its behalf.

### PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

- Hold a dairy conference for high performance herd
- Hold a beef conference
- Carry out surveys for Dairy, Beef and Sheep farmers to inform our research priorities
- Hold our Bi-annual Research and innovation Needs Conference
- Articulate research and innovation needs to government, academia and research
- Successfully implement PhD Scholarships Programme
- Maintain and develop our farmer networks
- Commission and launch a new Website
- Implement recommendations from our Social Media Audit
- Recruit 2 independent trustees who will add knowledge and expertise to the board of trustees
- To work with academic and research partners to lever funding for projects
- To participate in the building of further networks and consortia to pool resources, avoid the duplication of research and draw down external funding.
- To continue our membership of and involvement in the Centre for Innovation Excellence in Livestock.
- To increase the reach of our knowledge exchange programme through further

on-farm events, seminars and increasing traffic to the website and social media.

- To further develop our communications and knowledge exchange strategy.
- To engage with DAERA to ensure a high priority is given to research and knowledge exchange and ensure co-ordination of research and knowledge exchange activities and maximise synergies.

## TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;

- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

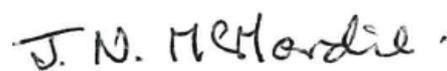
The trustees' annual report and the strategic report were approved on 25th November 2025 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Prof. G E Boyle  
Trustee



Mr I G McCluggage  
Trustee



Mr J N McMordie  
Trustee

# Independent Auditor's Report

## OPINION

We have audited the financial statements of The Northern Ireland Agricultural Research and Development Council T/A Agrisearch (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities (including income and expenditure account), statement of financial position, statement of cash flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

## BASIS FOR OPINION

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance

with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO GOING CONCERN

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## OTHER INFORMATION

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a mate-

rial misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

### **OPINIONS ON OTHER MATTERS PRESCRIBED BY THE COMPANIES ACT 2006**

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

### **MATTERS ON WHICH WE ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT BY EXCEPTION**

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our au-

dit.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES**

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### **AUDITOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with trustees and other management;
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and inspecting legal correspondence; and
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.
- assessed the susceptibility of the company's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:
  - making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud; and
  - considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions; and
- assessed whether judgements and

assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates set out in note 3 were indicative of potential bias.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance; and
- enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are ap-

appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

## USE OF OUR REPORT

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with section 65 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



John Magee (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of  
Aubrey Campbell & Company  
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor  
631 Lisburn Road  
Belfast  
BT9 7GT

# Statement of Financial Activities

## Year ended 31 March 2025

### Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account)

Year ended 31 March 2025

		Unrestricted funds	2025 Restricted funds	Total funds	2024 Total funds
	Note	£	£	£	£
<b>Income and endowments</b>					
Donations and legacies	5	497,747	62,218	559,965	621,451
Investment income	6	18,968	–	18,968	15,163
Other income	7	28,373	–	28,373	–
<b>Total income</b>		<u>545,088</u>	<u>62,218</u>	<u>607,306</u>	<u>636,614</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Expenditure on charitable activities	8,10	(609,505)	(27,078)	(636,583)	(337,974)
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<u>(609,505)</u>	<u>(27,078)</u>	<u>(636,583)</u>	<u>(337,974)</u>
Net gains on investments	12	(21,592)	–	(21,592)	(67,443)
<b>Net (expenditure)/income and net movement in funds</b>		<u>(42,825)</u>	<u>35,140</u>	<u>(7,685)</u>	<u>366,083</u>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>					
Total funds brought forward		878,005	–	878,005	511,922
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<u>835,180</u>	<u>35,140</u>	<u>870,320</u>	<u>878,005</u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

# Statement of Financial Position

## 31 March 2024

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
Tangible fixed assets	17	13,534	9,512
Investments	18	780,292	753,971
		<u>793,826</u>	<u>763,483</u>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Debtors	19	254,665	165,146
Cash at bank and in hand		369,605	513,008
		<u>624,270</u>	<u>678,154</u>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	20	325,311	265,631
<b>Net current assets</b>		<u>298,959</u>	<u>412,523</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		1,092,785	1,176,006
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	21	222,465	298,001
<b>Net assets</b>		<u>870,320</u>	<u>878,005</u>
<b>Funds of the charity</b>			
Restricted funds		35,140	–
Unrestricted funds		835,180	878,005
<b>Total charity funds</b>	24	<u>870,320</u>	<u>878,005</u>

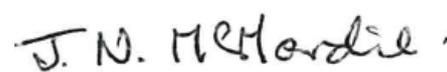
These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 25th November 2025, and are signed on behalf of the board by:



Prof. G E Boyle  
Trustee



Mr I G McCluggage  
Trustee



Mr J N McMordie  
Trustee

# Statement of Cash Flows

## Year ended 31 March 2024

	2025 £	2024 £
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Net (expenditure)/income	(7,685)	366,083
<i>Adjustments for:</i>		
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	5,125	3,410
Net gains on investments	(21,592)	(67,443)
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	(11,067)	(12,060)
Other interest receivable and similar income	(7,901)	(3,103)
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	–	17
Accrued expenses/(income)	2,569	(3,548)
<i>Changes in:</i>		
Trade and other debtors	(89,519)	69,514
Trade and other creditors	(18,425)	(299,313)
Cash generated from operations	(148,495)	53,557
Interest received	7,901	3,103
Net cash (used in)/from operating activities	<u>(140,594)</u>	<u>56,660</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	11,067	12,060
Purchase of tangible assets	(9,147)	(5,301)
Purchases of other investments	(115,457)	(347,276)
Proceeds from sale of other investments	110,728	339,284
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(2,809)</u>	<u>(1,233)</u>
<b>Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>	(143,403)	55,427
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year</b>	513,008	457,581
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of year</b>	<u>369,605</u>	<u>513,008</u>

# Notes to the Financial Statements

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The charity is a public benefit entity and a private company limited by guarantee, registered in Northern Ireland and a registered charity in Northern Ireland. The address of the registered office is Innovation Centre, Large Park, Hillsborough, Co. Down, BT26 6DR, Northern Ireland.

## 2. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS 102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)) and the Companies Act 2006.

## 3. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

### Basis of preparation

revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities and investment properties measured at fair value through income or expenditure. The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

### Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

### Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the Charity's accounting policies, the Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

### Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees to further any of the charity's purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular future project or commitment.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or through the terms of an appeal, and fall into one of two sub-classes: restricted income funds or endowment funds.

### Incoming resources

Incoming is recognised when the Charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

The levy rates charged to the producers are as follows:

Milk 0.02p per litre

Beef 30p per head

Sheep 5p per head

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the Charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known and receipt is expected. If the amount is not

known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

### Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accrual basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure is recognised where there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payments to third parties, it is probable that the settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Grants payable to third parties are within charitable objectives. Where unconditional grants are offered, this is accrued as soon as the recipient is notified of the grant, as this gives rise to a reasonable expectation that the recipient will receive grants.

Expenditure on charitable activities includes costs undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include office costs, management charges and governance costs which support the Council's activities. These costs have been allocated to charitable activities.

### Operating leases

Lease payments are recognised as an expense over the lease term on a straight-line basis. The aggregate benefit of lease incentives is recognised as a reduction to expense over the lease term, on a straight-line basis.

### Tangible assets

Tangible assets are initially recorded at cost, and subsequently stated at cost less any accumulated depreciation and impairment losses. Any tangible assets carried at revalued amounts are recorded at the fair value at the date of revaluation less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

An increase in the carrying amount of an asset as a result of a revaluation, is recognised in other recognised gains and losses, unless

it reverses a charge for impairment that has previously been recognised as expenditure within the statement of financial activities. A decrease in the carrying amount of an asset as a result of revaluation, is recognised in other recognised gains and losses, except to which it offsets any previous revaluation gain, in which case the loss is shown within other recognised gains and losses on the statement of financial activities.

### Depreciation

Depreciation is calculated so as to write off the cost or valuation of an asset, less its residual value, over the useful economic life of that asset as follows:

Fixtures and fittings - 20% straight line

IT Equipment - 20% straight line

### Investments

Fixed asset investments are initially recorded at cost, and subsequently stated at cost less any accumulated impairment losses. Changes in fair value are recognised in net income/ (expenditure) for the year. Transaction costs are expensed as incurred.

### Investments in associates

Investments in associates accounted for in accordance with the cost model are recorded at cost less any accumulated impairment losses.

Investments in associates accounted for in accordance with the fair value model are initially recorded at the transaction price. At each reporting date, the investments are measured at fair value, with changes in fair value taken through income or expenditure. Where it is impracticable to measure fair value reliably without undue cost or effort, the cost model will be adopted.

Dividends and other distributions received from the investment are recognised as income without regard to whether the distributions are from accumulated profits of the associate arising before or after the date of acquisition.

### Investments in joint ventures

Investments in jointly controlled entities accounted for in accordance with the cost model are recorded at cost less any accumulated impairment losses.

Investments in jointly controlled entities accounted for in accordance with the fair value model are initially recorded at the transaction price. At each reporting date, the investments are measured at fair value, with changes in fair value taken through income or expenditure. Where it is impracticable to measure fair value reliably without undue cost or effort, the cost model will be adopted.

Dividends and other distributions received from the investment are recognised as income without regard to whether the distributions are from accumulated profits of the joint venture arising before or after the date of acquisition.

### Impairment of fixed assets

A review for indicators of impairment is carried out at each reporting date, with the recoverable amount being estimated where such indicators exist. Where the carrying value exceeds the recoverable amount, the asset is impaired accordingly. Prior impairments are also reviewed for possible reversal at each reporting date.

For the purposes of impairment testing, when it is not possible to estimate the recoverable amount of an individual asset, an estimate is made of the recoverable amount of the cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs. The cash-generating unit is the smallest identifiable group of assets that includes the asset and generates cash inflows that largely independent of the cash inflows from other assets or groups of assets.

For impairment testing of goodwill, the goodwill acquired in a business combination is, from the acquisition date, allocated to each of the cash-generating units that are expected to benefit from the synergies of the combination, irrespective of whether other assets or liabilities of the charity are assigned to those units.

### Financial instruments

A financial asset or a financial liability is recognised only when the charity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at the amount receivable or payable including any related transaction costs.

Current assets and current liabilities are subsequently measured at the cash or other consideration expected to be paid or received and not discounted.

Debt instruments are subsequently measured at amortised cost.

Where investments in shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably, the investment is subsequently measured at fair value with changes in fair value recognised in income and expenditure. All other such investments are subsequently measured at cost less impairment.

Other financial instruments, including derivatives, are initially recognised at fair value, unless payment for an asset is deferred beyond normal business terms or financed at a rate of interest that is not a market rate, in which case the asset is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt instrument.

Other financial instruments are subsequently measured at fair value, with any changes recognised in the statement of financial activities, with the exception of hedging instruments in a designated hedging relationship.

Financial assets that are measured at cost or amortised cost are reviewed for objective evidence of impairment at the end of each reporting date. If there is objective evidence of impairment, an impairment loss is recognised under the appropriate heading in the statement of financial activities in which the initial gain was recognised.

For all equity instruments regardless of significance, and other financial assets that are individually significant, these are assessed individually for impairment. Other financial assets are either assessed individually or

grouped on the basis of similar credit risk characteristics.

Any reversals of impairment are recognised immediately, to the extent that the reversal does not result in a carrying amount of the financial asset that exceeds what the carrying amount would have been had the impairment not previously been recognised.

### Defined contribution plans

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised as an expense in the period in which the related service is provided. Prepaid contributions are recognised as an asset to the extent that the prepayment will lead to a reduction in future payments or a cash refund.

When contributions are not expected to be settled wholly within 12 months of the end of the reporting date in which the employ-

ees render the related service, the liability is measured on a discounted present value basis. The unwinding of the discount is recognised as an expense in the period in which it arises.

### Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the Charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

## 4. LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

The company, being a company limited by guarantee, does not have share capital. The liability of members of the company is limited to £1 per member.

## 5. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025£
Donations			
<b>Donations and Gifts</b>	479,256	-	479,256
Grants			
<b>Grants receiveable</b>	18,491	62,218	80,709
	<b>497,747</b>	<b>62,128</b>	<b>559,965</b>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 204£
Donations			
<b>Donations and Gifts</b>	470,561	-	470,561
Grants			
<b>Grants receiveable</b>	150,890	-	150,890
	<b>621,451</b>	-	<b>621,451</b>

## 5. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES (CONTINUED)

### Donations and Gifts

Milk Levy	327,911	–	329,948
Beef Levy	131,370	–	122,231
Sheep Levy	19,975	–	18,382
	<u>479,256</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>470,561</u>

### Grants for Core Activities

DAERA Research Challenge Fund	–	–	124,247
Brook Hall Estate ARCZero	–	–	18,423
Newcastle University Super G	18,491	–	8,220
UK DCN	–	62,218	–
	<u>18,491</u>	<u>62,218</u>	<u>150,890</u>

## 6. INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds £	<b>Total Funds 2025 £</b>	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £
Income from other investments	11,067	11,067	12,060	12,060
Other interest receivable	7,901	7,901	3,103	3,103
	<u>18,968</u>	<u>18,968</u>	<u>15,163</u>	<u>15,163</u>

## 7. OTHER INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds £	<b>Total Funds 2025 £</b>	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £
Refund for project commitment Phd-02	<u>28,373</u>	<u>28,373</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>

## 8. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £
Research and development in the agricultural industry.	481,590	22,244	503,834
Support costs	127,915	4,834	132,749
	<u>609,505</u>	<u>27,078</u>	<u>636,583</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £
Research and development in the agricultural industry.	222,481	–	222,481
Support costs	115,493	–	115,493
	<u>337,974</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>337,974</u>
		2025 £	2024 £
Staff costs		127,284	124,400
Legal and professional fees		4,388	5,175
Dissemination costs		40,264	37,585
		<u>171,936</u>	<u>167,160</u>
Grant funding activities		309,654	55,320
Share of support costs		102,418	87,592
Share of governance costs		25,497	27,902
<b>Unrestricted fund expenditure</b>		<u>609,505</u>	<u>337,974</u>
Staff costs		19,423	–
Grant funding activities		2,821	–
Share of support costs		4,834	–
<b>Restricted fund expenditure</b>		<u>27,078</u>	<u>–</u>

## 9. RECOMCILIATION OF PROJECT COMMITMENTS

	2025 £	2024 £
Grants to institutions		
Opening commitments	543,600	833,998
Queen's University Belfast	298,784	–
University of Ulster	131,392	–
Digital Catapult	–	20,000
Signet	6,900	–
(Decreased)/Increased project in year	(168,852)	(64,678)
Paid during the year	(290,366)	(245,720)
	<u>521,458</u>	<u>543,600</u>

## 10. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY TYPE

	Activities undertaken directly £	Support costs £	Total funds 2025 £	Total fund 2024 £
Research and development in the agricultural industry.	503,834	107,252	611,086	310,072
Governance costs	–	25,497	25,497	27,902
	<u>503,834</u>	<u>132,749</u>	<u>636,583</u>	<u>337,974</u>

## 11. ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT COSTS

	Analysis of support costs activity £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Staff costs	59,627	59,627	58,843
Premises	7,996	7,996	7,051
Communications and IT	14,270	14,270	5,784
General office	936	936	1,361
Finance costs	4,310	4,310	3,992
Governance costs	25,497	25,497	27,902
Support costs - depreciation	5,125	5,125	3,410
Support costs - other costs	14,988	14,988	7,150
	<u>132,749</u>	<u>132,749</u>	<u>115,493</u>

## 12. NET GAINS ON INVESTMENTS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £
Gains/(losses) on other investment assets	21,592	21,592	67,443	67,443

## 13. NET (EXPENDITURE)/INCOME

Net (expenditure)/income is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2025 £	2024 £
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	5,125	3,410
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	–	17

## 14. AUDITORS REMUNERATION

	2025 £	2024 £
Fees payable for the audit of the financial statements	5,760	5,000

## 15. STAFF COSTS

The total staff costs and employee benefits for the reporting period are analysed as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Wages and salaries	188,034	167,765
Social security costs	13,831	11,537
Employer contributions to pension plans	4,470	3,942
	206,335	183,244

The average head count of employees during the year was 6 (2024: 6). The average number of full-time equivalent employees during the year is analysed as follows:

	2025 No.	2024 No.
Operations Manager	1	–
Strategy Manager	1	–
Finance Officer	1	1
Research Manager	1	1
Farm Liaison Office	1	–
Project Officer	1	1
General Manager	–	1
Field Officer	–	1
Student Researcher	–	1
	6	6

No employee received employee benefits of more than £60,000 during the year (2024: Nil).

## 16. TRUSTEE REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

None of the Trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration during the year (2024: £nil). Trustees were reimbursed travel expenditure totalling £3,656 (2024: £1,634). In addition, two trustees received payments totalling £4,000 (2024: £4,550) for taking part in projects including Beacon Farm Network and Grasscheck.

## 17. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixtures and fittings £	IT Equipment £	Total £
<b>Cost</b>			
At 1 April 2024	5,791	15,223	21,014
Additions	839	8,308	9,147
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<u>6,630</u>	<u>23,531</u>	<u>30,161</u>
<b>Depreciation</b>			
At 1 April 2024	3,814	7,688	11,502
Charge for the year	874	4,251	5,125
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<u>4,688</u>	<u>11,939</u>	<u>16,627</u>
<b>Carrying amount</b>			
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<u>1,942</u>	<u>11,592</u>	<u>13,534</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>1,977</u>	<u>7,535</u>	<u>9,512</u>

## 18. INVESTMENTS

	Other investments £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>	
At 1 April 2024	753,971
Additions	115,457
Disposals	(110,728)
Fair value movements	21,592
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<u>780,292</u>
<b>Impairment</b>	
<b>At 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025</b>	<u>—</u>
<b>Carrying amount</b>	
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<u>780,292</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>753,971</u>

All investments shown above are held at valuation.

## 19. DEBTORS

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade debtors	220,678	160,509
Prepayments and accrued income	5,614	4,637
Other debtors	28,373	–
	<u>254,665</u>	<u>165,146</u>

## 20. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade creditors	–	2,369
Accruals and deferred income	20,020	12,651
Social security and other taxes	6,298	5,012
Other creditors	298,993	245,599
	<u>325,311</u>	<u>265,631</u>

Other creditors relates to project expenditure committed to by the charity.

## 21. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR

	2025 £	2024 £
Other creditors	<u>222,465</u>	<u>298,001</u>

Other creditors relates to project expenditure committed to by the charity.

## 22. DEFERRED INCOME

	2025 £	2024 £
Amount deferred in year	<u>4,800</u>	<u>–</u>

## 23. PENSIONS AND OTHER POST RETIREMENT BENEFITS

### Defined contribution plans

The amount recognised in income or expenditure as an expense in relation to defined contribution plans was £4,470 (2024: £3,942).

## 24. ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE FUNDS

### Unrestricted funds

	At 1 April 2024 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and losses £	At 31 March 20 25 £
General funds	<u>878,005</u>	<u>545,088</u>	<u>(609,505)</u>	<u>21,592</u>	<u>835,180</u>

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and losses £	At 31 March 20 24 £
General funds	<u>511,922</u>	<u>636,614</u>	<u>(337,974)</u>	<u>67,443</u>	<u>878,005</u>

### Restricted funds

	At 1 April 2024 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and losses £	At 31 March 20 25 £
UK DCN Fund	<u>–</u>	<u>62,218</u>	<u>(27,078)</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>35,140</u>

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and losses £	At 31 March 20 24 £
UK DCN Fund	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>

## 25. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £
Tangible fixed assets	9,718	3,816	13,534
Investments	780,292	–	780,292
Current assets	592,946	31,324	624,270
Creditors less than 1 year	(325,311)	–	(325,311)
Creditors greater than 1 year	(222,465)	–	(222,465)
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>835,180</u>	<u>35,140</u>	<u>870,320</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £
Tangible fixed assets	9,512	–	9,512
Investments	753,971	–	753,971
Current assets	678,154	–	678,154
Creditors less than 1 year	(265,631)	–	(265,631)
Creditors greater than 1 year	(298,001)	–	(298,001)
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>878,005</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>878,005</u>

## 26. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The carrying amount for each category of financial instrument is as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
<b>Financial assets that are debt instruments measured at amortised cost</b>		
Financial assets that are debt instruments measured at amortised cost	<u>249,051</u>	<u>160,509</u>
<b>Financial assets that are equity instruments measured at cost less impairment</b>		
Financial assets that are equity instruments measured at cost less impairment	<u>780,292</u>	<u>753,971</u>
<b>Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost</b>		
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost	<u>541,478</u>	<u>558,620</u>

## 27. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET DEBT

	At 1 Apr 2024 £	Cash flows £	At 31 Mar 2025 £
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>513,008</u>	<u>(143,403)</u>	<u>369,605</u>

## 28. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS

The total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	£	£
Not later than 1 year	3,492	3,492
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	–	3,492
	<u>3,492</u>	<u>6,984</u>

## 29. RELATED PARTIES

During the year there were members of the Agrisearch advisory committees and Board of Trustees who were involved as farmer co-researchers in projects which Agrisearch co-funded. The advisory committees are in place to review funding and expenditure proposals.

A total of £11,820 (2024: £10,400) was paid out to three members of the Beef advisory committee, two members of the Dairy advisory committee and three members of the Sheep advisory committee.







  
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