Written evidence submitted by TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods (LUN0097)

EFRA Committee: 'Land use and nature' enquiry

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Introduction to TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods

TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods is a global leader in farm and agronomy software. Our digital solutions connect the entire agri-food supply chain, from field-level crop management to retail execution. Our UK operations grew by acquiring two Herefordshire start-ups and now has a network of 5,000 customers covering the whole agri-food supply chain and, geographically, the whole UK.

TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods warmly welcomes the ambitions set out in the Land Use Framework. We believe that the Government must move beyond departmental silos by embracing better use of data and technology to deliver economic growth in our sector, improve farming profitability for farms across the country, and produce world-leading technology.

Executive summary

The UK agri-food sector has significant economic potential. It contributes around £147bn in gross value added to the UK economy each year, and there are 40 times the number of agri-food start-ups there were a decade ago.[1] The Government's Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan for the Industrial Strategy, which quoted these figures, rightly identified agri-tech as a core driver of further economic growth.

We believe that data is agri-tech in itself and is the engine for all other agri-tech, and thus should be the top priority. This is even more significant when considering the challenges the sector faces: increasing input costs, weak farming profitability, a time-pressed workforce, and an unpredictable climate and geopolitical situation. Additionally, tax, compliance regulations, and policies that frequently change between Governments add further

[1] UK Government, '*2025 Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan*', July 2025.

pressure. We believe that harnessing data will help farmers stay in control, increase their profitability, and expand growth in the whole agri-food chain.

TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods has decided to focus this submission on the Land Use Framework. We propose that the Government fulfils the Framework's 'Making land digital' promise by adopting an Open API and Data Standard for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) as a pilot, with the intention of rolling these out across all Defra funding programmes.

This shift to digitisation would turn 'business-as-usual' farm records into ready-made compliance data, removing the administrative friction that currently prevents 70% of England's land from reaching its potential for nature recovery, and simulating successful 'Tell Us Once' Government models that have saved the taxpayer hundreds of millions. Once proven with SFI, we want to expand this to all Government funding and compliance requests for farm businesses, from other Environmental Land Management Schemes and Defra innovation funding to tax and export finance.

Our de-risked, data-driven approach, proven in Canada, is essential for achieving the Industrial Strategy's private investment targets and securing the long-term profitability of the UK's £147bn agri-food sector.

Context: data in agriculture

British agriculture is currently navigating an era of profound instability. Shifting weather patterns, soaring input costs, and the transition away from legacy support systems have left the agricultural sector at a crossroads. As highlighted in the Farming Profitability Review led by Baroness Batters, this reality is starkly evidenced by the fact that nearly 30% of farms in Great Britain were operating at a financial loss by 2024.

With core agricultural activities often proving loss-making for the average farm, producers are left heavily reliant on a complex maze of Government funding schemes to sustain themselves. However, the current paperwork-heavy administrative model for these subsidies is failing to deliver its intended outcomes. Farmers find the existing system disjointed and administratively overwhelming. Because the process has become so burdensome, larger farms with dedicated administrative resources can navigate the system much more easily than their smaller counterparts, effectively creating an uneven playing field.

The Government must transition from a fragmented, manual duplication model to a connected digital ecosystem defined by transparency, ease of access, and auditable data. To fully realise these goals, the strategy must actively support efforts to digitise smart farming by integrating farm management software, precision technology, and supply chain data so that regulatory compliance, subsidy applications, and reporting become seamless byproducts of daily operations rather than additional hurdles.

The design and implementation of the Land Use Framework

Integrating data: how an open API and data standard can fulfil the Framework's 'Making land digital' promise

We are eager to emphasise, in agreement with the Framework, that 'competing' land use demands, including food production, farm business, and nature preservation, should complement each other with the 'right data, the right tools, and strategic direction'.

To enable the Framework to achieve its objectives of strategically re-aligning land use in England, Defra must fundamentally embrace the opportunities of the Industrial Strategy and Smart Data Strategy by embedding better data use throughout its services.

In the 'Making land digital' section, the Framework speaks to the need to modernise and integrate environmental data, address data gaps that planning decision-makers require, and understand, via data, how different land types may be affected differently by climate change.

The Framework speaks about reforming data-sharing and digitising data, specifically for land use and planning. Data is also needed to deliver on Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), both for farm business customers and for Rural Payments Agency officials conducting compliance.

The Framework also emphasises aligning financial incentives with spatial priorities to ensure farmers are fairly rewarded, aiming to double the number of farms delivering for nature through schemes like the SFI.

The 2026 SFI has rightly identified administrative burden as the primary barrier to scheme uptake, and the solution already exists in the data farmers input every day. But we also recognise that farm businesses face other burdensome regulatory and compliance requirements that could be streamlined using data, in tandem with the Government's agenda to stimulate economic growth via deregulation.

Our recommended solution

TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods has developed an offer to the Government setting out how the Government can adopt an Open Application Programming Interface (API) and Data Standard for the SFI to enable farmers to automatically turn routine farm records into ready-made SFI applications, as well as data and compliance evidence. Once piloted via SFI 2026, this could be rolled out across all Defra funding applications.

This would level the playing field for all farmers, reduce duplication of effort for Defra and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), and deliver the high-quality, real-time data the Government needs to target public funds effectively. By enabling the secure, automated exchange of data, 'business-as-usual' farm records could be automatically turned into pre-populated application data and high-integrity compliance evidence, significantly reducing the administrative burden on both farmers and officials running the SFI. The following examples illustrate what farmers gain when that administrative burden is removed and data is put to work.

Tristan Corney, a fifth-generation arable farmer in East Anglia, transitioned from paper diaries to TELUS software to analyse costs, identify patterns, and support his shift toward regenerative agriculture. Using TELUS web applications, he recorded field data in real time rather than retrospectively, calculated precise input rates year on year from mapping and soil analysis, and took on crop recording himself, delivering significant cost savings and an improved return on investment.[2]

Simon Neville, a member of TEAGASC (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority of Ireland) and an arable farmer in County Wexford, moved away from paper notebooks to TELUS's farm management system to improve productivity and ease the burden of legal compliance. Digitising his field records in real time allowed

[2] TELUS, '*How Gatekeeper saved time, saved money, and transformed an East Anglian arable farm*', July 2023.

him to generate compliance reports quickly and import recommendations directly from his TEAGASC agricultural advisor.[3]

Both cases demonstrate that when farm management software captures data as a byproduct of daily operations, compliance becomes straightforward rather than burdensome, exactly the outcome an Open API model for SFI would deliver at scale.

As well as the Framework's objectives, this would meet other Government objectives, such as levelling the playing field for small farms, increasing farm profitability by reducing paperwork and increasing funding application uptake, and using digital services to streamline Government services for people across the country.

This would cost the Government little. A single NHS prescription eligibility API saved over £250 million over manual processing. DWP's 'Tell Us Once' data-sharing service saves over £20 million per year. The Smart Data Strategy also projects £9.6 billion in annual GDP contribution from just four smart data schemes by 2043. With 'Making Tax Digital', HMRC has been driving this change since 2015: the Government estimated that this initiative saves businesses from 26-40 hours per year, equivalent to an economy-wide benefit of £603 million-£915 million per year.[4] The Government also recognises that this will improve compliance and reduce the load on HMRC to track it, cutting the 'tax gap' by an estimated £6 billion per year.[5]

The value of APIs is clear: removing the burden of application processes, promoting productive farm businesses, and reducing administrative overheads. As with other existing Government schemes like 'Tell Us Once' and 'Making Tax Digital', with proven track records and economic value, a similar scheme for farm business funding will reduce administration time, improve efficiency and productivity, manage businesses better, and create a streamlined digital experience.[6]

TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods has begun to work with Defra and the RPA, and would like to help develop a cost pilot proposal with other industry colleagues, beginning with a defined cohort of agri-tech providers and a single SFI application window, to demonstrate that the model works in the field. We would then like to roll out the same method across all funding streams that Defra manages, including every ELMS scheme, the Farming Innovation Programme, and the Farming in Protected Landscapes fund, to multiply the economic benefits by streamlining all of the applications for farm businesses as they already do for their tax.

Policy recommendation: TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods believes the Government should fund a pilot programme in 2026/27 to test an Open API model for SFI applications. This should be supplier-agnostic, giving any software provider the opportunity to benefit from open data and publish more APIs to enable third-party developers to connect with their data or services. It should build on the existing RPA's Land API to define universal data formats and authentication requirements.

Public-private partnerships: achieving the Industrial Strategy's private investment target via a clearer pipeline

[3] TELUS, '*How Gatekeeper Cloud transformed farm record keeping for a TEAGASC member*', December 2023.
[4] HMRC, '*Making Tax Digital: Estimating the wider economic benefit*', February 2025.
[5] Financial Secretary to the Treasury Lord Livermore, September 2025
[6] HMRC, '*Making Tax Digital: Estimating the wider economic benefit*', February 2025.

The Framework aims to diversify financing for land use change by increasing private investment in nature markets and capturing the environmental services farmers can provide.

To reach its goals in terms of food security, economic growth, nature recovery, smart data use, and its commitments across various strategies, the Government must work hand-in-glove with the private sector. Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Emma Reynolds has recognised this: in her address to the 2026 Oxford Farming Conference, she spoke of the barriers that exist for farmers to access private finance, as well as the need to pool public, private, and third-sector resources (link).

The Framework promises 'long-term clarity' for the private sector, but there is no short-term, let alone long-term, clarity to enable the business confidence that we need to invest. We applaud the decision to create five-year Frameworks, but we need a clear breakdown of how every strategy interrelates and how each will progress the Government's ambitions. This would align with the Smart Data Strategy's calls for clear pipelines for investor confidence.

TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods stands ready to partner with the Government, and, as outlined above, we have developed a clear offer to Government to show how data and technology use can help the Government achieve its goals, but the confusion over different strategies and timelines is holding the private sector back. We welcome the short-term funding commitment to SFI, for example, with £5bn dedicated at the 2024 Autumn Budget to the farming budget between 2024-5 and 2025-6, but to maximise the impact, a longer-term look is also needed.

For our farm business customers, the Framework's commitment to clarity on long-term opportunities by 2030 risks being too late. They are under significant input pressure due to geopolitical causes, strain from climate change, and adaptation to delinked payments, and are held back from the private investment they need as businesses.

This needs to be fully integrated with the Farmer Collaboration Fund, which was announced by Defra in December 2025 but has yet to be detailed. We welcome the £30 million in Government funding, but without clarity from Defra, private companies are restricted from fully participating, sharing knowledge, and de-risking agricultural innovation for the Government.

One example of this, which shows what is possible, is TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods' 20-year integration between its Farm Management system and the John Deere Operations Center. Machine data is recorded automatically, compliance and analytics are handled within the same platform, and farmers can make informed operational decisions without re-entering data across systems.[3] Incentivising investment in this kind of proven, integrated infrastructure would deliver immediate and measurable productivity benefits across farms of all sizes.[7]

This approach should also be integrated with the Industrial Strategy's Advanced Manufacturing sector plan and the Smart Data Strategy, both of which TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods welcomes, as covered above.

Policy recommendations: TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods believes the Government should:

[7] TELUS, '*Harnessing the Power of Partnership in Agriculture*', March 2024.

- **Clearly outline its plans for mobilising public-private partnerships** beyond the FIP, covering the entire sector and not just start-ups, to utilise proven technology;
- **Include industry voices**, especially from data and technology leaders **on the Farming and Food Partnership Board,** to deconstruct barriers to public-private partnerships and investment; and
- **Provide a clear pipeline**, in the Farming Roadmap or elsewhere, as to how knowledge and expertise from the private sector can join up with Defra to achieve goals outlined in the Industrial Strategy, Land Use Framework, forthcoming Food Strategy, and on farming profitability and sector growth.

Ending departmental silos: how a focus on data can integrate the Framework with cross-departmental workstreams

To succeed, the Framework must be clearly articulated to a timeline with cross-departmental buy-in and integration with other policies and political priorities, including but not limited to the Industrial Strategy, Farming Roadmap, Food Strategy, and drive for farming profitability and sector growth.

The Industrial Strategy's Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan included data systems within the agri-tech section.
To achieve the Strategy's ambition of a minimum £50m in private sector investment by 2029 and a minimum £20 billion sector turnover by 2035, we need a cross-governmental, joined-up approach between industry and Government.

As part of this, the Smart Data Strategy identifies significant opportunities in the agri-food sector to 'improve transparency, sustainability, and resilience across supply chains' to support our £120 billion, 4-million-job industry. We feel these are complementary to the Framework, but even though the Framework came after both these strategies, it did not mention them.

Policy recommendation: TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods recommends that the Government focuses on digital transformation, via a pilot Open API and Data Standard, to end departmental silos and join up cross-governmental work.

Policy recommendations: summary

For the Government to meet its stated goals of agri-tech sector turnover of a minimum of £20bn by 2035, a 'significant increase in the application of automation', and a minimum of £50m in private investment by 2029, Defra needs to:

- Run a pilot programme for an Open Application Programming Interface (API) and Data Standard for SFI, and other funding applications;
- Include software as agri-tech for funding, providing incentives to invest in farm productivity software such as Farm Management Information Systems (FMIS), farm accounting, and the infrastructure needed to run them (hardware and broadband connectivity, particularly where traditional land-based broadband is unavailable or poor, satellite-based systems could be utilised) to provide support for the development of decision-support tools.

- Clearly outline its plans for mobilising public-private partnerships beyond the FIP, covering the entire sector and not just start-ups, to utilise proven technology;
- Include industry voices, especially from data and technology leaders, on the Farming and Food Partnership Board to deconstruct barriers to public-private partnerships and investment; and
- Provide a clear pipeline, in the Farming Roadmap or elsewhere, as to how knowledge and expertise from the private sector can join up with Defra to achieve goals outlined in the Industrial Strategy, Land Use Framework, forthcoming Food Strategy, and on farming profitability and sector growth.

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