



PATRON: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

# THE ROYAL SMITHFIELD CLUB

Instituted as the Smithfield Cattle and Sheep Society in 1798

Founded as the Smithfield Club in 1802

Granted Royal Status in 1960

A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England No. 65252

Registered Charity No. 212110 VAT Registered No. 140 2265 15

PRESIDENT 2020: GEOFF BURGESS

CHAIRMAN 2020: CHRIS RIDDLE

## The Smithfield Forum

### Review and Forward Plan

September 2020

#### Background:

Since its creation in September 2018 the Smithfield Forum set out to achieve the objectives set at the inaugural meeting by senior representatives from the key organisations in the livestock and meat industry.

The primary role agreed by the group was for the Forum to act as neutral body to bring together the diverse organisations in the British red meat industry to debate the challenges facing the sector and establish actions to be taken by different bodies for the benefit and long term security of red meat production in the United Kingdom.

#### Initial Actions:

Following the September '18 meeting the Royal Smithfield Club, with the active support of the Club's President, H.R.H. The Countess of Wessex throughout 2019, organised a series of actions:

- A major conference at the House of Lords in January at which the Farming Unions, the Levy Boards, the processors including the BMPA and AIMS, Regional Show Societies and livestock breeders all presented their views of the challenges being faced and actions needed.
- Following this, a working party was set up with representatives from all sectors. This group met in March in London, and again in June at the Royal Highland Show, to agree actions to be taken.

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#### Achievements:

Notable progress, including developing and encouraging significant promotional activity across the industry, driven by the farming unions, meat trade organisations, lobbying organisations and the levy boards. This work has started to raise the profile of the importance and significance of U.K. agriculture but considerably more needs to be achieved.

It was agreed that, through no fault of their own, the British public are generally uninformed about our industry and need to be encouraged to understand why British Food production is so important, not just as fuel for our bodies but the wider impact on human health, the countryside and the diverse landscape created by farming. This must also include an understanding of the importance of our industry for the wider economy and the British environment, together with the role that the food processing industry serves and where retailers fit within the bigger picture.

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It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure these messages are constantly being offered in an engaging and informative format which will create a demand for accurate information, in turn creating understanding and support for our activities, as well as our products.

The Forum also engaged with all the major retailers to establish a plan for their involvement in addressing the challenges, in particular that of communicating a clear industry message to the public - their customers.

Again there was clear agreement and commitment to a forward plan to be coordinated by the Forum. The Smithfield Forum has been very successful in pulling together the entire Red Meat supply chain in gaining a consensus that something needs to be done, and actions have been taken by many organisations.

In response to these issues, the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA) started to organise the National Rethink Conference, planned for mid-March this year to address the issues of British Farming and the environment. But, as we are now all too well aware, Covid 19 arrived and all our lives in business and at home changed dramatically. The conference was cancelled and our work in the Smithfield Forum was suspended as everyone concentrated on managing the day to day challenges of running their businesses.

### The Future:

At last we seem to be moving into a new "normal", and even though Covid 19 is still with us and appears that it will remain so for a long time, the need to restart the plan created last year is even more important.

We are proud supporters of the newly launched British Meat website hosted by the BMPA, which is targeted at supplying an informed view of our industry. Our next step is to coordinate discussions across the whole red meat sector, to ensure that our work is focussed and current. Our immediate priorities are that of human health, the environment and animal welfare in a national and global context.

Add to this the rapid approach towards 1st January 2021, with our final exit from the EU and all that this move may bring for UK agriculture, the need for clear positive communication is very clear. Before moving forward with the plans that are proposed, I would like to discuss with you our latest thoughts on priorities, changes that we should consider to our approach and the actions we should now be taking. An action plan needs to be agreed by all, with the continued support of the whole industry and everyone involved in the Forum. The Royal Smithfield Club is committed to the Forum leading whatever is agreed upon.

In the meantime, if you have any thoughts please do contact me so that they may be included in the debate and planning going forward.

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