

Meet the finalists

The pile of entries has been sifted, scrutinised and shortlisted by our expert panel of judges. The quality, as ever, is so high it has not been easy. Here are the three finalists for each category

Arable Farmer of the Year

1. David Miller, Wheatsheaf Farming Company, Hampshire

Investment in cover crops is reaping soil health, fertility and yield dividends on the 1,600ha of combinable crops.

2. Charles Matts, Brixworth Farming Company, Northamptonshire

Charles oversees 2,239ha of combinable crops across five farms. He is focused on adding value where possible with higher-value markets.

3. Graham Potter, The Grange, North Yorkshire

Precision farming technology has improved soil fertility, cut production costs and boosted grain quality on this 195ha wheat, rape, fodder beet and cover crop business.

Beef Farmer of the Year

4. Gary Fitzpatrick and John Toland, Moss Hill Calf Farms, Armagh, Northern Ireland

Gary and John run the only dedicated calf-rearing unit in NI, rearing 5,000 calves a year. They have slashed fixed costs and increased production.

5. Meilir Jones, Gop Farm, Flintshire, Wales

Attention to detail is the focus for beef finisher Meilir Jones, who has invested in technology to measure individual cattle performance. He uses EID to monitor the 1,300 cattle he buys.

6. Gary Allis, Furze Hill Farm, Bilsby, Lincolnshire

A switch in strategy from finishing bulls and heifers to a dedicated unit rearing and finishing 1,400 Holstein bulls a year for Rose beef has secured a market and expanded the business.

Contractor of the Year

7. Spring Farm Partnership, Felthorpe, Norfolk

Oliver Arnold runs a contracting operation that serves 350 clients across Norfolk and Suffolk. It requires careful book balancing to keep the huge machinery fleet up-to-date. He is also a keen adopter of GPS technology.

8. RG Contracting, Port William, Wigtownshire

The can-do attitude of Russell and Lorraine Gaw has seen their business grow from a single Case IH 885XL and JF forager back in 1994 to a 12-strong tractor fleet. Loyalty and enthusiasm are hallmarks of the team.

9. Bartlett Contractors, Hinton St Mary, Dorset

The Bartlett family's contracting business has been running since 1959. A strong focus on machinery purchase and depreciation costs ensures the business is on a sound financial base.

Dairy Farmer of the Year

10. Brian Yates, East Logan Farm, Castle Douglas, Kirkcubrightshire

Brian is a great role model for the next generation at East Logan. He has increased herd size to 276 pedigree Holsteins, invested in new housing, a biomass boiler and water recycling.

11. Adrian Smith, Brook House Farm, Middlewich, Cheshire

A grassland-based system enables Adrian to keep production costs low, but yielding an impressive 5,120 litres for his 202 Holstein Friesians.

12. Peter and Di Wastenage, Wastenage Farms, Budleigh Salterton, Devon

An NZ-style dairy and a tight-knit, well-trained team has enabled this enterprising couple to expand the business to more than 1,000 cows.

Diversification Farmer of the Year

13. Martin Hamilton, Mash Direct, County Down, Ireland

In 2004 Martin started on a journey to transform his 560ha family farm into an agrifood business producing potato and vegetable mash as well as a plethora of ready meals.

14. Richard and Fraser Manners, John Manners, Northumberland

Brothers Richard and Fraser have added a haulage company, combine spare parts and recycling business, a workshop and holiday cottages to their 260ha of crop and pasture farm. They have achieved massive growth while keeping customers satisfied.

15. James Hewetson-Brown, Wildflower Turf, Hampshire

James, with his wife Claire, began Wildflower Turf by producing soil-less lawn turf on their 280ha arable farm in 1983. They created a unique production system and expanded at a phenomenal rate in a very short time.

Farmworker of the Year

16. Matt Johnson, Newhouse Farm, Alresford, Hampshire

Matt is obviously a man of many talents. He is a key arable worker, a workshop wizard and makes time to look after the farm's small breeding ewe flock.

17. Roger Knibbs, Adstockfields Farm, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire

Roger has a wide range of responsibilities that include managing a suckler herd and buying and selling stock. He is also getting his teeth into shaping a grain treatment facility.

18. Peter Little, SRUC Crichton Royal farm, Dumfries

Peter is a senior herdsman at a 500-cow dairy farm with a difference, producing milk but also carrying out important research. So there are milking teams to organise, research personnel to liaise with and meticulous records to keep.

Farm Adviser of the Year

19. Alastair Hayton, Synergy Farm Health, Dorset

Alastair is a director of this 27-vet practice, which services more than 1,000 farm clients. He personally advises 13 large dairy farms, runs training and acts as an expert witness in legal cases.

20. Charles Mayson, Cross Compliance Solutions, Herefordshire

A hands-on approach combined with detailed reports that will pass any inspection are central to this business, which has rapidly expanded to more than 1,000 clients.

21. Iwan Edward Price, Cara, Carmarthenshire

Iwan is one of three directors of a livestock nutrition and financial consultancy covering more than 400 farms in south Wales. Improving his clients' lifestyles, as well as their profits, is at the heart of his philosophy.

Farm Employer of the Year

22. Trumpington Farming Company, Cambridgeshire

General manager David Knott works closely with the Pemberton family to foster a loyal team of 15 working on 1,300ha at Trumpington Estate and a further 700ha on neighbouring land.

23. Metcalfe Farms, Leyburn, North Yorkshire

There is a waiting list of people wanting to work at the 1,000ha mixed farm run by David and his two brothers, Brian and Philip. Loyalty bonuses and a structured career path is central to the team culture.

24. Russell Smith Farms, Duxford, Cambridgeshire

Robert Smith's attitude to sharing rewards and ideas has created a motivated, tight-knit, full-time team of seven, and casuals that come back year on year to this 1,000ha arable and potato business.

Farm Manager of the Year

25. Robin Asquith, Comondale, North Yorkshire

In just two-and-a-half years, farm operations manager Rob Asquith has boosted livestock productivity and trebled the number of care farming placements on this mixed hill farm.

26. Tim Hassell, Goodwood Estate, West Sussex

Bottling and processing milk, a butchery and cheesemaking are just some of the enterprises that Tim is adding to this 1,380ha sheep, beef and arable estate to add value to its organic produce and create more jobs.

27. Mark Wood, Fawley, Herefordshire

Over the past 12 years, Mark has turned a 250ha loss-making arable farm into a 1,000ha beef and arable business while protecting natural resources and encouraging wildlife at the same time.



Local Food Farmer of the Year

28. Charlie Hughes, West Sussex

Charlie's hard graft and drive have transformed his loss-making 250-acre family dairy farm into a profitable, modern business selling raw and pasteurised dairy products, beef, veal and pork all direct from the farm.

29. Sally Bendall, Suffolk

Sally and her husband Robert certainly get the most out of their 140-acre farm – selling vegetables, beef, pork, lamb, goat and eggs through their shop, café and butchery, as well as hosting farm career days and student visits.

30. Richard Vaughn, Herefordshire

Quality is the chief focus for Richard. Having supplied 1,000 beef cattle a year to supermarkets, he now specialises in quality rare-breed beef, pork and lamb, supplying 30% of Michelin-starred restaurants in the UK.

Pig Farmer of the Year

31. Danny Skinner, Insch, Aberdeenshire

Being a Monitor Pig Farm has opened Danny's eyes to new ideas and given him market insight. He is running 440 breeding sows on a weekly farrowing system, has modernised his finishing unit and produces most of his own feed.

32. Rachael Bright, Oak View, Honiton, Devon

A bespoke feed computer system is central to Rachael's plan of producing her own weaners from a 500-sow breeding herd at just 8kg straight on to wet feed, which is helping to maintain health, cut costs and improve growth.

33. Graham Shadrack, AJ Garrod & Son, Norfolk

This bed-and-breakfast business has doubled in recent years to 3,200 fattening pigs and 3,200 weaners. This, combined with a further 7-45kg finishing contract, gives Graham a total of 4,500 pigs in tents to manage.

Poultry Farmer of the Year

34. James Baxter, Dumfriesshire

Four flocks totalling 32,000 birds make up the free-range egg production business for James and his wife Margaret, near Stranraer. The emphasis is on "do it yourself" wherever possible.

35. Dan Wood, Somerset

Blackacre Farm Eggs has been built up over 35 years and two generations to supply "the best free-range eggs in the business". This includes duck and quail eggs, with a customer base that includes Fortnum & Mason in London.

36. Daniel Fairburn, Lincolnshire

LJ Fairburn hit the headlines two years ago when the firm broke away from leading egg packer Noble Foods. It has since built up an impressive customer base, with five major retailers, and invested heavily in both cage and free-range egg production.

Sheep Farmer of the Year

37. Isaac Crilly, Castlederg, County Tyrone

Isaac and his wife have revolutionised the way they manage their 500-ewe flock. Eight years ago, Isaac started buying rams on performance rather than appearance. With his flock now

lambled unaided, he has a lambing percentage of 200%.

38. Richard Roderick, Newton Farm, Brecon, Powys

Richard and his wife have 1,000 ewes on a 650-acre mixed farm and are building a sheep business that will thrive without subsidy. They have focused on finishing lambs on home-grown forage and protein, while improving genetics and meeting market specification.

39. Philip Kent, Treswarrow Park farm, Port Isaac, Cornwall

Since entering into a farm partnership with his aunt and uncle, Philip has focused on cost of production, moving away from traditional breeds and lambing periods. It has been a steep learning curve, but his vision for the future has kept the business growing and the plan on track.

Sustainable Farmer of the Year

40. Graham McIlroy, McIlroy Chickens, Coleraine, County Londonderry

Animal welfare is a top priority for this livestock farm, where fourth-generation farmer Graham diversified into chicken production six years ago. Using the latest technology, his has become Northern Ireland's first carbon-neutral poultry unit.

41. John Pitts, Woodhorn Farm, West Sussex

John says farming is in his blood and in his soul. And he has certainly shown it with a 65% increase in turnover to £4.3m within five years for this diversified 240-cow organic dairy herd and arable business, which includes a composting and recycling enterprise.

42. Bernard Matthews, Great Witchingham Hall, Norfolk

Britain's largest turkey farmer has rolled out the UK's largest biomass installation over the past year, putting wood burning boilers on 30 of its farms to replace traditional LPG burners – improving conditions for birds while saving thousands of pounds.

Young Farmer of the Year

43. Richard Dayment, Crouch Farm, Sussex

Growing up on a mixed farm in Devon instilled a passion for farming in Richard that has persisted. He has worked incredibly hard to find himself manager of a tenanted 450-acre holding.

44. William Willis, Glasgoforest, Aberdeenshire

It was at the tender age of 19 that William began to run the family farm. Glasgoforest is an organic dairy farm that he has worked to modernise over the 11 years he has been farming in partnership with his mother.

45. Matthew Sharp, Rising Sun Farm, Northumberland

You can hardly believe that Matthew is not from a farming family given his achievements in building his own suckler herd. He has also turned around the fortunes of a small community farm in a short space of time.

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