

## Strategic Farms confirmed in project to increase productivity

AHDB Beef & Lamb has announced a countrywide network of Strategic Farms, which have been selected to drive improvements and increase productivity across a variety of farming systems. Working closely with AHDB and industry experts, the 13 Strategic Farms will track improvements in areas including health, nutrition and genetics, with the overall objective of increasing the number of stock meeting target specification. For a minimum of two years, the farms will take part in activities and trials to produce clear advances in on-farm productivity, using new techniques and monitoring performance. Clive Brown, AHDB Beef & Lamb Head of Knowledge Exchange, said: "After receiving a high number of applications, we've managed to narrow it down to 13 farms across England, from Cumbria to Cornwall. We've made sure there are a mix of farm types and systems, including sucklers, sheep, store producers, upland farms and three beef finishers. Together the participants are a typical representation of British beef and sheep farms across the country." "Consultants have now visited all of the farms and are in the process of working with AHDB's benchmarking tool, Farmbench, to set relevant targets for each of the producers to work to. We'll then be looking to implement new practices and for each of the Strategic Farms to share their learnings at on-farm events to help us reach as many farmers as possible." The Strategic Farms will also look to accelerate innovation, trialling new technologies to aid performance monitoring, gathering data and using digital tools to aid decision-making and discuss production costs. Commenting on the launch, Joe Howard, Strategic Farmer from Nottinghamshire said: "Being a mixed farm, we've only recently put grass back into the rotation for the benefit of the soil, which has led to us being able to introduce a beef enterprise. I'm now looking to develop that and make sure it's a major contributor to the farm margins. "Being part of this initiative will allow me to be critiqued both by professionals and peers, to really push what we're doing and produce a product that is not only sellable but what the market place really wants." The farms are part of AHDB's wider Farm Excellence Platform, which inspires industry to improve performance and succeed through knowledge exchange. Regular Strategic Farm events will offer producers a platform to share their progress and learnings through farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange. Over the coming months, updates will be regularly posted on AHDB Beef & Lamb's website, as well as social media channels. To find out more information about the Strategic Farms visit <http://bit.ly/2xAEGJt>

**The Elbridge Herd of Sussex will be taking part!!!!**

*Look out for updates and on farm events*

### **E H Holdstock**

Based on the family farm in Kent, Verity Garrett is looking to improve grassland management and nutrition by joining the Strategic Farms. Based at Elbridge farm, E.H. Holdstock and son is a mixed live-stock, arable, potato, and top-fruit farm, covering 620ha. The farm is home to 230 Sussex cows plus followers, six Sussex bulls, 100 Romney x Suffolk ewes, 80 Romney ewes and five rams. The farm's Sussex herd is the second largest herd of this breed in the country and alongside their winter forage are fed on waste potatoes and arable bi-products. By becoming a strategic farm, Verity hopes to be able to produce more consistent carcasses, as well as increasing the profitability of the livestock side of the business. With improvements already made to silage quality over the last year, grassland management is another key focus, as she wants to get the best out of the area they currently have.