



Amidst the uncertainty of what the future holds for UK farming post-Brexit and what the new British agricultural policy will look like, achieving resilience of the agricultural sector will be an important goal.

Researchers from the University of Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) are working with a team of European scientists to develop a novel resilience-enabling framework that can support policy makers and the farming sector to enhance the sustainability and resilience of farms and farming systems.

UK farmers will increasingly have to deal with uncertainties such as a significant reduction or loss of subsidies, access to plant protection products, labour costs, changing trade relationships and more volatile producer prices and exchange rate fluctuations, alongside continuing environmental risks such as extreme weather events.

Additionally, stresses and opportunities due to demographic change, as well as changing societal concerns and consumer preferences, to name a few, play a role. To accommodate the multitude of resulting challenges, the EU-wide group of scientists, working together as part of the [SURE-Farm project](#), indicates the need for policy and agribusiness to look beyond traditional strategies.

The University of Gloucestershire and the University of Aberystwyth are the UK partners in SURE-Farm, which involves 11 case study regions across Europe. The UK case study covers arable farming in the East of England that, alongside farmers across the UK, faces considerable challenges in terms of the uncertainties around Brexit, together with the ongoing pressures of responding to consumer preferences, public perceptions of agriculture and balancing farm business performance with environmental sustainability.

[Mauro Vigani](#), from the University of Gloucestershire, said, “We are excited to be part of this pan-European project. This is a crucial time for British agriculture and a deeper understanding of what makes farms resilient will be important to safeguard UK farming and food production into the future.”

Whatever the future UK agricultural policy landscape ends up looking like, important contributions to resilience are likely to come from the agricultural sector itself, including radical changes in the way goods and services are produced, financed and marketed, involving entrepreneurship and new business models, alongside farmers’ experimentation, innovation and farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange.

Such an understanding of resilience goes way beyond the assumption that policies addressing resilience of agriculture should mainly focus on the robustness of farms and farm incomes. The SURE-Farm team argues that, alongside policy and market instruments aimed at maintaining the stability of the farm business, farms also need to develop the capacity to adapt or transform in the current higher risk environment.

The University of Wageningen in the Netherlands coordinates the project, led by Professor Miranda Meuwissen, who said,

“Challenges differ across agricultural areas in the European Union. For instance, some regions are more vulnerable to climatic or disease risks, while others face a change in consumer attitudes towards agriculture. This will have implications for the pathways towards developing the three capacities of resilience across Europe: robustness, adaptability and transformability. The strength of SURE-Farm is the breadth of its case studies across Europe, allowing for comparative analysis and sharing best practice resilience and risk management tools.”