NUFFIELD
Farming Scholarships

Working Together: How Dairy Farmers & Environmental Organisations Can Achieve Sustainable Food Security & Combat Climate Change.

Written by:

Ruth Grice

September 2024

A NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS REPORT

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NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST (UK)

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A
Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report

Date of report: July 2024

"Leading positive change in agriculture. Inspiring passion and potential in people."

Title	Working Together: How Dairy Farmers & Environmental Organisations Can Achieve Sustainable Food Security & Combat Climate Change.
Scholar	Ruth Grice
Sponsor	Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Long Clawson Dairy
Objectives of Study Tour	At the time of applying for my Nuffield Farming Scholarship, I had a foot in two communities; dairy farming and the environmental sector. For a long time, I treated my two careers as being separate, conscious of the difficulties the two communities had in understanding one another. Yet I believe that if the right relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations can be forged, there is significant potential to be gained by working together. I visited four of the world's largest milk producing countries to find out if symbiotic partnerships between the two communities existed within them. Where they did, I wanted to understand what cultures, policies and conversations were in place to make such partnerships the social norm.
Countries Visited	Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands, United States of America, UK
Messages	1. The relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations is influenced by cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes. 2. Inspiring leaders who believe in the art of the possible and can find common ground between dairy farmers and environmental organisations are able to forge partnerships regardless of predisposed barriers. 3. Individuals within the dairy supply chain, including processors and retailers, can play a critical role in forging partnerships between the two communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

My Nuffield Farming Scholarship was borne out of frustration and anger.

Frustration that dairy farmers and environmental organisations, who should neatly fit together like a hand and a glove, often found themselves at opposing ends of an argument. Anger that these two communities, who both want to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change, consistently fail to develop effective working partnerships in the UK.

Thanks to the generous support of the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust, my lead sponsor, the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), as well as Long Clawson Dairy, I was given the opportunity to unpick how dairy farmers and environmental organisations worked together in other parts of the world with a view to 'stealing with pride' and bringing back key learnings to the UK.

During my travels, I visited Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States. All have established dairy industries, and all are working to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change. By meeting various individuals in both the dairy industry and the environmental community, I learnt that the relationship between them is deeply rooted in cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes.

Within the UK, cultural heritage influences relate in-part to long-established class prejudices. While our country may pride itself on being an inclusive, modern and diverse society, the influence of class structures frame how dairy farmers and environmental organisations work together more than we perhaps realise.

Economic heritage established after the Second World War also influences how the two communities perceive one another. Food shortages and rationing in the 1940s and 1950s led to increases in domestic food production, often at the expense of the natural environment. In the 1980s, globalisation and cheap food imports exacerbated the situation. To remain competitive, the race to the bottom in UK agriculture began, again at the expense of the natural environment.

Political landscapes are often framed in one of two ways: carrot or stick. Statutory policies either reward or penalise dairy farmers for achieving sustainable food security and combating climate change. One method can empower dairy farmers and encourage partnership working with environmental organisations. The other meanwhile uses shame to generate action.

My Nuffield Farming Scholarship has left me with an enormous amount of hope.

During my travels, I found examples of healthy, symbiotic relationships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations. They taught me that even if the foundation stones of cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes are against you, **partnerships are possible.**

Unsurprisingly, it is all about the people.

Inspiring leaders who believe in the art of the possible and can find common ground between dairy farmers and environmental organisations, are able to forge partnerships regardless of predisposed barriers.

Together, dairy farmers and environmental organisations can achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change.

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DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this report are my own and not necessarily those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, or of my sponsor, or of any other sponsoring body.

Please note that the content of this report is up to date and believed to be correct as at the date shown on the front cover.

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

In spring 2022, I received a telephone call from Matt Swain NSch (2002). I'd never met Matt, or spoken to him, but he had listened to a podcast that I had sheepishly agreed to undertake after completing a Just Farmers workshop with Anna Jones NSch (2016).

When encouraging me to apply for a Nuffield Scholarship, Matt explained how the experience could be truly life changing. Independent, lone travelling can have a habit of making you question things in life that you perhaps took for granted, be it personal relationships or career choices.

At the time of Matt's phone call, I was working as a partner in our family dairy farm near Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire. For over 30 years, our family has supplied milk to a local co-operative, Long Clawson Dairy, makers of world-famous Stilton cheese. In addition, I was working for Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust within the environmental conservation charity sector; a sector I had worked in for over 15 years.

At that time, and unknown to Matt, my life was at a bit of a crossroads. A crossroads that would become significantly larger months later, both in a personal and professional capacity. Undertaking a Nuffield Farming Scholarship, as Matt predicted, has been life changing.

Travelling solo to countries I have never visited before, as a self-confessed homing pigeon, pushed me well beyond my comfort zone. It created opportunities to visit parts of Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United States of America that I otherwise would have never done so. It gave me insights into other cultures in ways that can be hard to experience when travelling with others, especially when exploring traditional tourist trails.

Travelling alone made me see life through a different lens. I never appreciated the sense of community you can feel when travelling with others on public transport, or when having a coffee in a busy café. It's a shared experience at a moment in time, which doesn't depend on direct communication. At the same time, seeing others in those situations enjoying the company of those they know made me realise how grateful I am for the people in my life: my family, friends and work colleagues. Seeing the joy in small things has never meant so much since completing my Nuffield travels.

My home sickness was present throughout all my travels. And while it was a feeling I was keen to ignore at first, I decided to embrace it and approach it differently. My love for my family, my strong connection to our farm and our cows, and my desire to positively contribute to the dairy farming industry. My Nuffield experience has led me to understand how my values and beliefs contribute to a vision for my life. It's helped me develop as a person and, I hope, as a leader.

BACKGROUND

My Nuffield Farming Scholarship was borne out of frustration and anger. Frustration that two communities I proudly belonged to in spring 2022, who should neatly fit together like a hand and a glove, often find themselves at opposing ends of an argument. Anger that dairy farmers and environmental organisations, who both want to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change, consistently fail to develop effective working partnerships in the UK.

In spring 2022, I worked for both my family's dairy farm and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. After over 15 years in the environmental conservation sector and six years on the farm, I thought I had found my career sweet spot.

Farming industry organisations had pledged to reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity on farms. Meanwhile, the Wildlife Trusts had committed to ensuring that up to 30% of the UK was able to support wildlife by 2030. They acknowledged that they could only achieve this by working in partnership with farmers.

Pledged commitments to achieving sustainable food security and combating climate change by the National Farmers Union and Wildlife Trusts (L-R)

A happy union that I could play a role in bridging? I was hopeful that it was. The reality, however, was a path strewn with obstacles. Communication between the two communities was often heated, emotional, and littered with shame. There was finger pointing galore. Some of which actively encouraged participation on a public, even political, stage.

I could attend a farming meeting where environmental organisations were discussed. They would be described in ways I had never experienced during my career in the sector. Tree huggers. Anti-farming. Patronising. No real-life business experience. Urban pen pushers sat in an ivory tower. I could also attend meetings within the environmental community where farmers were discussed. They would be described in a way that again, I had never experienced. No care for the environment. No care for wildlife. No care for soil health or water quality. Manual labourers. No understanding of urban communities.

And yet I believe that the two communities share key values and beliefs. Both feel passionate about the natural environment and see themselves as custodians of the landscapes they manage. And both are proudly rooted in local communities. So why don't they typically work together to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change? What is standing in their way?

MY STUDY TOUR

Thanks to the generous support of the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust, my lead sponsor, the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), as well as Long Clawson Dairy, I was given the opportunity to find out why dairy farmers and environmental organisations don't typically work together in partnership.

I planned visits to four countries that have established dairy industries and that are known to be proactively working to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change. They included Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States.

I also planned visits to selected events and conferences in the UK which included sessions about sustainable food security and climate change issues, including the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers' (RABDF) 'Down to Earth' event, Groundswell, and the Oxford Farming Conference.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

When I started my Nuffield journey, I didn't appreciate the importance that a country's cultural heritage could play in the relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations. Understanding the impact that both have on day-to-day life in the UK can be incredibly difficult to detect, until you experience what it looks and feels like elsewhere in the world.

Poul Bank Petterson, Director of Agriculture at Arla in Denmark, put it beautifully and succinctly. For him, describing the difference in situation between the UK and Denmark was like comparing the Vikings to Downton Abbey.

For Poul, Scandinavian culture has evolved from the Vikings. Conquering new land while simultaneously thriving at home depended on high levels of community trust. Leaders leaving home depended on others to keep things going, while welcoming them home with open arms on their return.

Poul Pettersson & Claus Fenger, Arla member

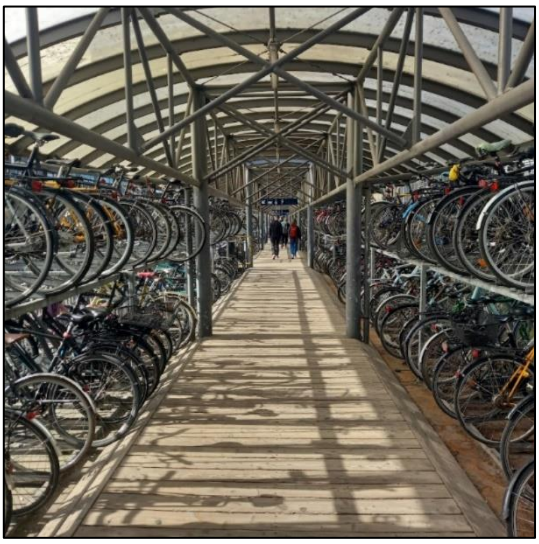
Viking memorial in Norrtälje, Sweden

This high level of trust, Poul believed, still existed in Scandinavian cultures to this day. And I felt it throughout my time in both Denmark and Sweden. Hosts I stayed with would leave me in their homes unattended and encourage me to use their possessions as my own. Tour guides in Copenhagen and Stockholm shared stories of people losing wallets in the middle of the city centres, only to have them handed into the police with money intact. On the same tours, stops outside the country's respective political headquarters were made in the absence of guards, police, or railings. And tales were shared of Denmark's royal family blending seamlessly into city life.

The Scandinavian culture of trust, it felt, fed into a culture of social equality. Social housing in the heart of Copenhagen sat next to multi-million Euro apartments, both looking identical from the outside. The children of families from both would attend the same school, with little regard for respective household incomes. This social norm was not something that I was accustomed to in the UK.

High numbers of residents in both countries used public transport or bicycles to get between destinations, with no social stigma attached to doing so. Other public facilities in Scandinavia were

second to none. Indulging in one of my favourite pastimes during my travels, pool swimming, was a real pleasure. Facilities were plentiful, well-maintained and used respectfully by all.



Bike Park, Aarhus train station, Denmark

Outdoor 50 metre swimming pool, Stockholm

Scandinavian civic pride, built on a historical culture of public trust, radiated from my visits to Aarhus, Viborg, Stockholm, Skövde and Norrtälje. It felt as though, culturally-speaking, Denmark and Sweden had the foundations for two different communities coming together and finding common ground.

By contrast, Poul Bank Petterson's view of the UK being built on a cultural heritage of 'Downton Abbey', could not be more different. To Poul, UK culture has evolved from the feudal system: the haves and the have-nots. The landed gentry and the serfs.

It was a difficult mirror in the face moment, when I like to believe that modern UK society is becoming more inclusive and less tolerant of social stigmas. But maybe we are kidding ourselves? Maybe it is harder than I thought to escape cultural foundations that have been alive and kicking in the UK for centuries. And maybe that in itself is impacting how dairy farmers work, or don't work, in partnership with environmental organisations.

Potentially for some UK environmental organisations, dairy farmers are seen as the landed gentry. Land is inherited, passed down on a silver plate regardless of merit or work. All while environmental organisations must fight tooth and nail to raise the money needed to buy scraps of wildlife-rich land, as and when paltry opportunities arise.

While dairy farmers outwardly complain about poor financial margins, some are publicly seen using large, expensive pieces of machinery to work the land, while others are seen driving luxury cars for personal travel. Digging up the soil with little regard for the environment. Polluting the air with large, oversized cars. The pound sign influencing every decision. This is a mindset felt by Dutch citizens, who accordingly to Natasja Oerlemans, Head of Food & Agriculture at WWF Netherlands, were aghast when protesting farmers drove through major cities in large expensive tractors. All while raising awareness of tight financial margins and unfair supply chains.

On the other side of the coin, those working or volunteering for environmental organisations can be seen as the poor relation by dairy farmers. Tree huggers with no real concept of how to manage the land. Individuals who don't have to make a profit to feed their families. Who work 9am – 5pm and have weekends off and six weeks of annual leave each year. Always complaining. Successes are never enough, there is always more that could have been achieved. People who do not understand working

rural life. Or what it is like to run a business that operates on a price-taking basis in an ever-increasingly volatile global market.

Some perceptions may well be true for both communities. But it feels hugely unjust that both stereotype the other without making the effort to understand life on the other side of the fence. Instead of achieving a greater understanding of one another, as UK culture and society shifts and evolves, it feels as though the two communities are in stalemate. As though they can't break through long-held prejudices.

In Sweden, I witnessed a further way in which cultural heritage can influence the relationship between the two communities. After finding fame with Pippi Longstocking books in the 1940s, author Astrid Lindgren went onto write 'Min ko vill ha roligt' (My cow wants to have fun) with Kristina Forslund. The book contained articles that were published in magazines between 1985 and 1989, which advocated for better animal rights and criticised mass food production methods.

In 1988, 'Min ko vill ha roligt' led to the development of 'Lex Lindgren', an animal rights law that included strict rules about cattle grazing outdoors in Sweden. The laws prevail today. If you farm in the south of Sweden, your cows must graze outdoors for a minimum of 120 days. As you move further north, it decreases to 90 days and then to 60 days. As you travel through parts of Sweden today, seeing cows grazing outdoors is a familiar sight. And it's something that the public strongly supports, not just for animal welfare reasons, but for nature conservation benefits too.

Woodland cover in Sweden is significant, with around 70% of the country being under tree cover. As the number of dairy farmers in Sweden has declined over recent decades, woodland cover has increased through natural regeneration. If this were to happen in the UK, it would be hailed as a success story for wildlife by environmental organisations. Yet in Sweden, the opposite is true. There is overwhelming support for livestock grazing to continue where possible, to maintain a mosaic of habitats.

Gustav & Sophia Kämpe's cattle grazing, near Mölltorp, Sweden

Could it be that the Swedish public is more in-tune with the benefits of their country's rural economy? Do they have a better appreciation and understanding of the positive impacts dairy farming can have on landscape and habitat protection? As UK communities become increasingly urbanised, and compared to Sweden much more densely populated, have we lost our collective knowledge of the link? Could this also be negatively impacting how dairy farmers and environmental organisations perceive one another in the UK?

ECONOMIC HERITAGE

The Netherlands is an agricultural powerhouse. After the United States, the country is the biggest exporter of agricultural produce in the world, exporting some € 65 billion of agricultural produce each year (17.5% of total Dutch exports). Of the milk produced by the Dutch dairy industry, over 65% is sold around the globe[1]. Coupled with this, the agricultural and horticultural sectors account for 10% of the Dutch economy and employment.[2]

The country is also known for being a world leader in use of cutting-edge technologies across all agricultural sectors, including dairy. For example, Lely Industries N.V. is one of the world's leading dairy technologies companies and has been based in the Netherlands since its establishment in 1948. Technological advancements, such as those created by Lely, bring efficiencies, not only in terms of resources, but also in terms of carbon emissions.

Dairy farmers who I visited on my travels were keen to adopt new technologies. They want to be as efficient as possible. If you were unaware of the adverse relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations in the Netherlands, you could assume that the two communities shared a lot in common given that efficiently run dairy farms tend to have a lower adverse impact on the environment, including having lower carbon emissions.

So why are there challenges in developing positive relationships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations in the Netherlands? As I learnt about the country's economic heritage, I began to wonder if it has in turn influenced how the two communities view one another.

The Netherlands has exported agricultural products for centuries. André Hoogendijk, Director at BO Akkerbouw, painted the picture beautifully, setting the scene in the 1400s when Dutch traders exported food to Berlin, Paris and London. As the country grew rich on its agricultural export trade, it became part of its DNA. This can certainly be seen today with the dairy cooperative Friesland Campina, which proudly exports products to over 100 countries around the world[3].

Coupled with a belief that agricultural exports are essential for the country's economy is a strong drive to secure sustainable domestic food security. Before I set off on my travels to the Netherlands, my Nuffield mentor David Gardner recalled a story of his father air-dropping food supplies into The Hague in 1945. Thousands of Dutch citizens on the brink of starvation were rescued by the efforts. This monumental event, still within living memory for older generations, has shaped domestic food security policies in the Netherlands to this day. Never again did the Dutch want to face starvation on such a mass scale.

I believe that the struggle I sensed between the dairy industry and environmental organisations was, in part, nestled in a societal push away from these two cultural norms. It felt as though an increasing number of younger Dutch citizens feel uncomfortable with their country being a net exporter of food commodities. For some people that I met on my travels, including dairy farmers, the idea of producing milk to supply baby and infant formula markets in Africa and Indonesia, for example,

[1] https://www.darigold.com/third-largest-dairy-producing-country-sustainability/#:~:text=So%2C%20it%20comes%20as%20no,milk%2C%E2%80%9D%20van%20Velde%20says
[2] https://www.government.nl/topics/agriculture/agriculture-and-horticulture#:~:text=Agriculture%20and%20the%20economy,its%20largest%20trade%20partner%2C%20Germany
[3] https://www.frieslandcampina.com/about-us/who-we-are/

struck a chord of neo-colonialism. Particularly when some of those markets could sustain and develop their own domestic dairy industry.

FrieslandCampina produce dairy products that are exported to over 100 countries.

For others, there was a push back to producing milk in the Netherlands to export elsewhere because of the carbon emissions and water quality issues that the industry creates. How can the Netherlands ever realise its goals to reduce emissions and improve water quality if their domestic dairy industry is producing products for a global market?

I also sensed that people were pushing back against the need for the Netherlands to produce more than the amount of food required by the domestic population because of fears of starvation. While the events of 1945 are still a living memory for older people, this will peter out in years to come.

The impact of economic heritage on the relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations that I felt in the Netherlands, can also be seen in the UK.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the UK was as equally driven to increase food production. Sadly, this was often at the expense of the natural environment. When working for the Wildlife Trust movement, I shared stories with supporters about the 97% loss of native wildflower meadows since 1945[4], often citing intensive farming as the major contributing factor. By shaming the agricultural sector, I was unknowingly playing my own part in creating tension and distance between the two communities.

Following my Nuffield travels to the Netherlands, I now wonder if I mistakenly and naively neglected crucial parts of the story- largely because of my own life experiences and the lens through which I viewed the story.

Post-war policies to increase UK food production alleviated the country from food shortages and rationing in the 1940s and 1950s. I have never known hunger in my lifetime. The nearest to food shortages that I have encountered took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, when sourcing plain flour and dried yeast became challenging. Had I relied on a ration book for sustenance between 1940 and 1954, I would likely have welcomed policies to increase food production. Potentially, regardless of the environmental cost.

[4] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/18/losing-97-percent-britain-wildflower-meadows-matters-butterfly

I also don't know how it must have felt for farmers who were asked to plough up their fields for the common good, when it possibly went against every grain in their body. Species-rich grazing land that had successfully sustained their livestock for generations. Often, sustainable farming practices that we are embracing today were my ancestors' bread and butter.

In contrast to the potentially negative impact of economic heritage on how dairy farmers and environmental organisations work together in the UK and the Netherlands, the situation felt quite different in the United States. During my visit to Chicago and Wisconsin, it felt as though their economic heritage had a positive impact on partnership working and wider societal norms.

I hadn't visited the United States prior to my trip, so all experiences were new; including travelling around Wisconsin in a hire car! I was amazed by the ease at which I could travel between destinations, with dual carriageways often seeming to lead to the front door of where I was travelling. Time was money, and so time was not to be wasted in slow-moving traffic.

The origin of some of the relationships I learnt about between dairy farmers and environmental organisations felt unashamedly transactional. Such as that between Wisconsin based dairy cooperative Foremost Farms and Nestle.

To meet their sustainability goals, Nestle funds nature-friendly farming initiatives on Foremost Farms supplier farms, via a delivery partnership with the Nature Conservancy. Regardless of the success of initiatives on the ground, when funding ends, the partnership stops. No negotiations, no realignment of the goals, and no guarantee that that the environmental improvements gained through the initiative will continue.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

I don't think I ever appreciated the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, influence that politics can have on how two different communities work together. As with cultural heritage and economic heritage, I saw how political frameworks can influence partnerships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations during my travels.

The impact I witnessed was three-fold.

Firstly, I heard stories of environmental organisations lobbying governments to develop policies that would encourage and reward sustainable, environmentally friendly farming methods.

Secondly, I heard stories of how such government legislation was directly impacting how dairy farmers operated their businesses.

And lastly, I heard stories of how sustainable farming legislation was shaping public opinion, in terms of how they viewed their domestic dairy industry.

I have personal experience of the impact of all three, from the perspective of the UK Government's quest to eradicate bovine tuberculosis. My Nuffield scholarship is partly rooted in the antagonistic relationship I felt between the Wildlife Trusts, my former employer, and dairy farmers, over how to eradicate this devastating disease.

As with achieving sustainable food security and combating climate change, both dairy farmers and environmental organisations are ultimately on the same page with regards to bovine tuberculosis. Both communities want to see the disease eradicated in the UK. And both sides share an equal amount of frustration at the way in which the Government's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) deliver their strategy to eradicate the disease.

Yet despite these shared stances, dairy farmers and environmental organisations are at opposite ends of the quest to eradicate bovine tuberculosis. Instead of holding policy makers to account, the two communities have cast blame upon one another for the situation.

A relationship that has its foundations in policy and political lobbying, has evolved to intentionally involve members of the public. It can sometimes feel like a drama triangle in a manipulative, emotionally abusive relationship. The environmental organisations publicly pitch badgers as the victims, dairy farmers as the persecutors, and their organisations as the rescuers. An impossible position for individual dairy farmers to defend themselves from.

From personal experience, when attending meetings with fellow farmers to discuss bovine tuberculosis eradication strategies, I would not disclose that I worked for a Wildlife Trust. And when a bovine tuberculosis cull area was approved by Defra in the area where we farm, I considered leaving my employment with the Wildlife Trusts. To this day, I have never shared my support of the local badger cull with my Wildlife Trust colleagues, knowing the negative impact it will have on relationships I value and respect. Despite having to say goodbye to over 70 of our animals over a 6-year period as a result of the disease.

I fear in the case of eradicating bovine tuberculosis, the chasm that exists between dairy farmers and environmental organisations has become too large to repair. In fact, it has become so significant that

it influences how the two communities work, or do not work, together to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change. The two separate issues have in effect morphed into one.

This personal experience of the impact that politics can have on the relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations was my yard stick for my Nuffield travels.

My experience of travelling to all four countries assured me that from a political perspective, they are committed to achieving sustainable food security and to combating climate change. The way in which this commitment is delivered politically significantly influenced the relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations.

Broadly speaking, I heard stories of two camps: was the political framework 'carrot' or 'stick'? Did government policy reward and encourage dairy farmers to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change, or did it penalise them if they failed? In Denmark and the Netherlands, I found similar stories of fractious relationships that were influenced by politics. Yet in Sweden and the United States, I found a different story.

In Sweden and the United States, the political climate felt as though it was firmly in the 'carrot' camp.

Lisa Ehde, now Global Head of Agriculture at Arla, outlined how the Swedish government began to target increased domestic food production in 2018[5]. I sensed this drive when undertaking one of my favourite pastimes when travelling abroad: visiting local supermarkets. In Sweden, all Arla packaging incorporates the red Arla Cow logo, to ensure consumers know that the product is made from 100% Swedish fresh milk[6]. There was a huge pride in sourcing milk domestically.

Arla dairy products in Sweden, proudly displaying the Arla cow (Credit: Arla)

While the Union flag adorns many products in UK supermarkets and is known to increase sales of home-grown food products, it does not always feel as though the UK government is as keen to drive an increase in domestic food security. As Defra's Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) has evolved since the UK left the European Union, many initiatives within it, such as the Landscape

5 https://www.government.se/contentassets/16ef73aaa6f74faab86ade5ef239b659/livsmedelsstrategin_kortversion_eng.pdf

6 https://www.arla.com/our-brands/arla-ko/

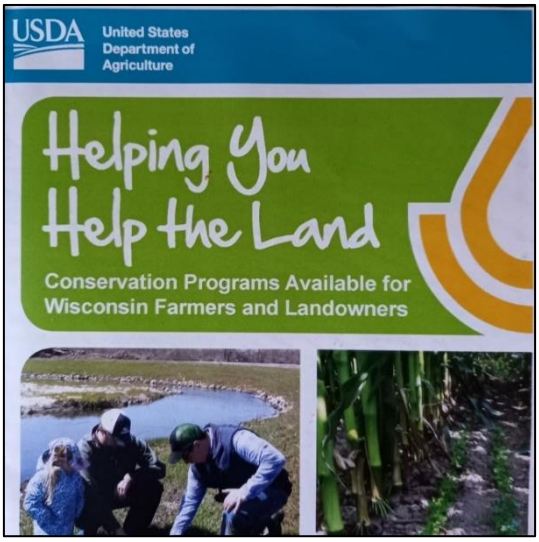
Recovery Fund, appear to financially support environmental projects in favour of those that produce food.

As with Sweden, I felt a sense of government policy encouraging domestic food production while in the United States., particularly during the World Dairy Summit in Chicago. Many American speakers at the conference outlined a stance to combat climate change within the industry that differed from their European counterparts. For them, the key to achieving climate-friendly, sustainable dairy farming was through finding efficiencies, as opposed to a European model of reducing cattle numbers.

Having a political framework that is more 'carrot' than 'stick' appeared to positively influence the relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations.

In Sweden, I heard about a strategic level working relationship between the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Arla. There was also a notable absence of antagonistic relationships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations at a grassroots level.

In Wisconsin, I was overwhelmed with stories of effective partnership working between both communities, at both state and local levels. Whether it be the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) designing grant programmes to support sustainable farming incentives, or the Nature Conservancy facilitating similar initiatives on behalf of Nestle and Foremost Farmers by working directly with farmers on the ground.



A leaflet for farmers, produced by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

It felt as though dairy farmers in Sweden and the United States were empowered to take actions that suited their businesses, to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change. And as a result, environmental organisations worked with them as respected delivery partners, to support them in achieving their goals.

This balance of power felt quite different in both the Netherlands and Denmark, where the political framework for dairy farmers to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change felt very much in the 'stick' camp.

In the Netherlands, I met with several dairy farmers who shared stories of having to radically reduce the size of their herds to meet with strict phosphate reduction targets set by the Dutch government.

In Denmark, a looming threat of carbon emissions taxes, which would be paid for by individual dairy farmers failing to meet new regulations, was divisive. The industry was tasked with either finding solutions to lower carbon emissions in the short-term or face financial penalties for failing to do so. In late June 2024, while drafting this report, the introduction of emission taxes for Danish farmers was announced.

While on my travels, it felt as though the Dutch and Danish governments did not have confidence in their respective dairy industries finding ways to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change. Not without penalties and statutory instruments to make them do so. And yet, frustratingly, many people I met within the Danish and Dutch dairy industries were genuinely committed to achieving both. Many embraced new technologies and working methods to reduce carbon emissions, increase soil health, maintain clean water systems and increase biodiversity.

You could argue that this is because of government intervention, or the threat of it. But I believe both dairy industries would achieve both regardless. Both industries clearly take pride in being among the world-leaders of sustainable, efficient dairy production, particularly given their respective cultural and economic heritage.

Regretfully, the political framework in the Netherlands and Denmark appeared to negatively impact relationships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations.

Prior to meeting representatives at FrieslandCampina, a cooperative comprising of almost 10,000 dairy farmers, I was impressed to read of a partnership they had developed with Natuurmonumenten, one of the Netherlands's largest environmental NGOs. The partnership formed a critical part of the cooperative's sustainability programme; 'Nourishing A Better Planet'. By working together, the two organisations aimed to encourage nature-inclusive farming and biodiversity, by linking up farmers and forest rangers.

Yet when I met Guus van Laarhoven (Global Lead Regenerative Farming) and Arnoud Smit (Programme Leader Sustainability), I was sorry to hear that an announcement was made in April 2023, stating that the collaboration had ended. Just four years into its delivery. There were numerous reasons behind the decision, one of which was lack of support for the partnership from FrieslandCampina farmer members.

A further story of the fractious relationship between Dutch dairy farmers and Natuurmonumenten was shared with me during a meeting with fellow Nuffield scholar, Carina van der Beek. Carina and her family rent their farm from Natuurmonumenten. They are committed to developing and delivering joint conservation goals with the organisation, on land they have farmed for generations. So much so that they converted to an organic dairy farming system at Natuurmonumenten's request. And yet to Carina and her family, the relationship is volatile and distrustful. So much is dependent on who their relationship manager is at Natuurmonumenten. Some individuals have been good to work with, others not so. In recent years, one member of Natuurmonumenten staff went as far as asking the family to leave their farm and their home.

A meeting with Marie Gang Larson and Merete Myrup from the Danish Dairy Board prompted a discussion about the friction caused by the two communities having different operating business models. The dairy industry relies on sales of dairy products to consumers to thrive. Whereas many environmental organisations rely on financial donations from the public, grant sources and the government to operate. Launching public campaigns about controversial issues is emotive and a proven model to generate income. I spotted an emotive poster campaigning for nature-friendly

farming on a number of trains in Denmark, which in turn were seeking for financial support from the public.

The Danish and Dutch governments may feel that their stance is the only way their respective dairy industries can achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change. But it was frustrating to see the negative impact the approach had on relationships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations. Strict government policies have inadvertently shamed the dairy industry. They have set the tone which others then observe, including environmental organisations. And they corner dairy farmers. To quote Anne Berg Olsen, Farm Liaison Manager at Thise Mejeri in Denmark, “regulation stops creativity”.

PEOPLE

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata he tangata.
"What is the most important thing? It is people, it is people, it is people."

Despite the challenges partnerships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations faced in some of the countries I visited, there was a ray of hope. There was a magic ingredient that could overcome barriers created by cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes. People.

Whenever I encountered successful, symbiotic relationships between dairy farmers and environmental organisations, there was always a leading light who was driving change. Someone who believed in the potential of bringing the two communities together. Someone who found the shared beliefs, values and common ground.

Often, these individuals were not active dairy farmers. Most represented either farming co-operatives or environmental organisations. Their leadership style was one of incredible humility and they weren't always senior leaders within the organisations they represented. Crucially, these individuals were outstanding leaders who had taken the time to develop a non-judgemental understanding of the dairy farmers they wished to work with. Time and time again, these individuals ensured that farmers were in the driving seat.

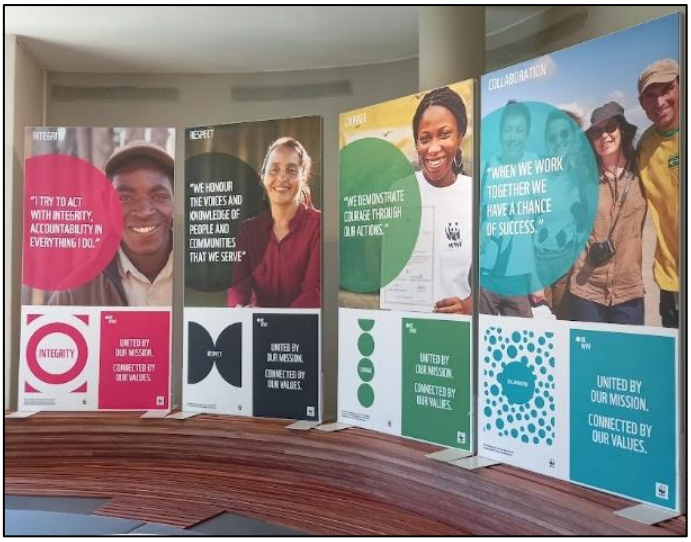
Natasja Oerlemans, Head of Food & Agriculture at WWF Netherlands, was one of these individuals. Natasja is a fierce advocate of stopping deforestation, avoiding land competition for animal feed, fuel and human food, eating locally produced food, using agroecological principles to grow food and providing equitable access to food.

While she is brutally honest about farming's contribution to biodiversity loss on a widespread scale, she is aware that this isn't due to farmers' disregard for the natural environment. She believes it has happened because farmers are caught in a system. She acknowledges that many Dutch farmers feel as though they are victimised from multiple angles.

This perspective felt incredibly familiar. From my own experiences of dairy farming, the industry is often at the mercy of statutory policies and market forces that can make or break our businesses be it methods to control bovine tuberculosis or milk prices that sometimes barely meet the cost of production. What became of farmers who refused to make their land more productive in the years following the Second World War, or who rejected government incentives to make fields larger and more efficient by taking out hedgerows? Was it more likely that they would decrease their financial margins and increase chances of losing their businesses and livelihoods?

Natasja is a firm believer that farmers are part of the climate solution. To do so, she knows that they need viable business models, coherent political legislation, knowledge and innovation, as well as shared goals and values.

In early summer 2023, prior to my visit, Natasja and her team spent 2 days working and living on a dairy farm they were initiating a partnership with. She believed that until she had experienced life on their side of the fence, even for a snapshot in time, it wasn't possible to start working together.



WWF Netherlands - second banner from the left:
"We honour the voices and knowledge of people and communities that we serve".

For Anne Berg Olsen at Thise Mejeri in Denmark, it's all about empowering the farmers. Thise Mejeri is an organic dairy co-operative that is owned by over 70 dairy farmers. The business prides itself on being market leaders when it comes to sustainable dairy farming.

In October 2022, Thise Mejeri's farmer-owners proactively decided to cease all use of soya in their animal feed to reduce carbon emissions. While others in the wider industry are increasingly following suit, at the time this decision was considered bold and innovative. Yet for Anne, it was an unsurprising outcome. Anne uses her role to empower and support her farmers. She is driven to understand their personal motivations. The approach is subtle, but effective. It enables Anne to speak her farmers' language. For creatively to flow freely, and for the farmers to share their story without fear of judgement.

Lauren Brey of the Edge Dairy Farming Cooperative, Dana Christel & Randy Zogbaum of the Wisconsin DATCP, Paul Meuer at the Tall Pines Conservancy, Ricardo Costa at The Nature Conservancy, and Sara George of Wisconsin Women in Conservation all took a similar approach.

Artwork created during a farmer meeting facilitated by the
Edge Dairy Farming Cooperative, Wisconsin

For them, putting farmers in the driving seat is critical to successful partnerships with environmental organisations. Building mutual respect and ensuring effective communication was seen as essential.

While strategic objectives of partnerships between farmers and environmental organisations may be framed by government bodies-which in the case of Wisconsin were largely to improve water quality-deciding to deliver initiatives has got to be farmer-led. At both Tall Pines Conservancy and the Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, active farmers form part of the Board of Directors. This sends a clear message to the wider farming community that farmers are in positions of leadership.

The results speak for themselves. The working partnership that Ricardo Costa at The Nature Conservancy developed with Chris and Brenda Conley in Neosho was for a three-year period, during which funding was provided by Nestle. Hearing them speak with sadness about the inevitable end of the funding period was at first disheartening. But it was also clear that the relationship will continue, even if in a personal capacity. The lessons learnt on both sides will continue to flourish, to ensure that sustainable food security is achieved, and efforts are made to combat climate change.

This respectful, collaborative way of establishing partnerships was endorsed by Jolanda Jansen, a communications consultant at St. Anna Advies in the Netherlands. For Jolanda, the principles she uses to improve communication between veterinarians and livestock farmers also apply to building partnerships between dairy farmers & environmental organisations. Her five key ingredients include:

- Looking at what you have in common.
- Being interested in each other's opinions
- Asking questions.
- Finding out what motivates people.
- Acknowledging that change takes time.

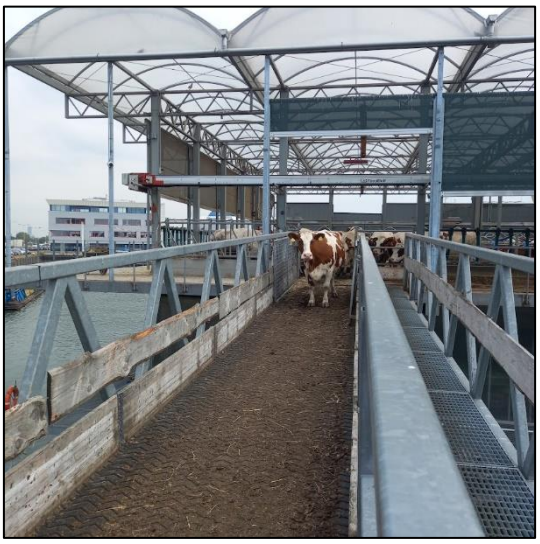
These key ingredients to achieving better communication are almost identical to those used by Sara George in her work at Wisconsin Women in Conservation. Being acutely aware of the mistrust between the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and some small-scale farmers in Wisconsin, particularly those in minority communities, Sara prioritises empowering individuals within the industry. She is driven by building bridges over building walls. For Sara, language is key.

A case study from 'Portraits of Love on the Land', a publication produced by Wisconsin Women in Conservation

L-R: Ricardo Costa (Nature Conservancy), Brenda & Chris Conley (High-Gem Holsteins & Normandes)

The same can also be said for Hans-Erik Kuypers, Forest Ranger at Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands. Hans-Erik is expert at building relationships, which in his role has mainly been between different factions within the environmental movement. All of whom believe that Oostvaardersplassen should be managed differently, for the benefit of wildlife. Quietly and successfully, Hans-Erik can find the sweet spot, by being a good listener, open-minded, kind and respectful. And most of all, by following his North Star.

Konik ponies at Oostvaardersplassen



Meuse-Rhine-Issel cows at the Floating Farm, in the industrial heart of Rotterdam

The founders of the Floating Farm in Rotterdam, Minke and Peter van Wingerden, follow the same principles. Connecting residents and public bodies (in the heart of the Netherlands' second city)with dairy farming has been a challenge from the inception of their business. But they've achieved it. The farm has become a social hub- with the bonus of using a climate-resilient circular production system to help achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change.
Throughout my travels, I feel lucky to have met so many individuals who are committed to building respectful and symbiotic partnerships between communities that typically struggle to do so. Their passion, commitment and ability to see the art of possible was truly inspiring.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The relationship between dairy farmers and environmental organisations is influenced by cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes.

2. If cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes create barriers to dairy farmers and environmental organisations working together, it is possible to overcome them.

3. Inspiring leaders who believe in the art of the possible and can find common ground between dairy farmers and environmental organisations, are able to forge partnerships regardless of barriers created by cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes.

4. The key ingredients needed to bring dairy farmers and environmental organisations together include:
    - Looking at what you have in common.
    - Being interested in each other's opinions.
    - Asking questions.
    - Finding out what motivates people.
    - Acknowledging that change takes time.

5. Only by working together dairy farmers and environmental organisations can achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change.

6. Individuals within the dairy supply chain, including processors and retailers, are well placed to foster partnerships between the two communities.

7. Financial incentives are critical to initiating and delivering environmental initiatives on dairy farms, even if they make good business sense in the long-term. These can be provided through the supply chain, or through government grants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It feels easy to make recommendations in this report, based on what I have learnt during my travels. The challenging side of making recommendations is doing so in the knowledge that sometimes the reasons for dairy farmers and environmental organisations not working effectively together in the UK run deep.

Cultural heritage. Economic heritage. Political landscape. They span generations.

I could recommend that dairy farmers wipe the slate clean, contact their local Wildlife Trust, and find that common ground needed to work together. But for some dairy farmers in the UK, the hurt and shame caused by the fundamental difference in opinion regarding how bovine tuberculosis should be eradicated is significant. Some dairy farmers have taken their lives because of the stress and trauma caused by this terrible disease. It is a hugely painful and sensitive subject. Having experienced the loss of over 15% of our own dairy herd over a six-year period, I know the feeling firsthand. And it's one made worse by politicians using the topic as a divisive tool in the 2024 election campaigns. Knowing full well that they are intentionally using long-standing cultural divides to attract votes and gain power. The analogy of the UK being stuck in a culture of Downton Abbey is alive and kicking.

I am equally aware of the average number of hours a UK dairy farmer works. Few have the time resources to proactively seek out partnerships with environmental organisations.

But I am forever an optimist.

It is possible for dairy farmers and environmental organisations to work together to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change.

For those working in roles within the dairy supply chain, and those within environmental organisations, I urge you to reach out to one another.

- Meet face-to-face.
- Listen to one another with open ears. When doing so, imagine you are Louis Theroux interviewing an unconventional community off the beaten track. **No judgement. No shame. No assumptions. Be curious. Be kind.**
- Set ground rules. Discuss what you agree to disagree on and leave them at the door.
- Find your common ground.
- Find funding opportunities to financially support environmental initiatives on dairy farms. It is important for environmental organisations to acknowledge that this is not because dairy farmers are avaricious. Incentives are needed because financial margins in dairy farming can be hugely volatile. Dairy farmers rarely set the price they receive for their milk, and they are at the mercy of the weather and politicians. Both factors are also unpredictable. Financial incentives provide a level of critically required reassurance.
- Celebrate successes. From little acorns, mighty oak trees grow.

AFTER MY STUDY TOUR

My Nuffield Scholarship has been the life changing experience that Matt Swain predicted.

In May 2023, I left the Wildlife Trust movement to work for Long Clawson Dairy, as Farm Liaison and Sustainability Manager. The dairy is a small cooperative of 33 dairy farmers based across Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire and is famous for making award-winning Stilton cheese. Our family is one of the 33 farmer owners and has been so for over 30 years.

I now combine work on the family dairy farm with my job at Clawson, within which I can build partnerships with environmental organisations, to achieve sustainable food security and to combat climate change.

In January 2024, I initiated a meeting the Woodland Trust, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and Leicestershire County Council's Forestry Team at Long Clawson Dairy, to scope ways in which we can work together in the future (see below photo). In spring 2024, over a third of Clawson farmers planted over 90 six-foot native trees on their farms, with thanks to Leicestershire County Council's Forestry Team. A partnership success that led from our initial meeting in January 2024.

I began my Nuffield journey feeling frustrated and sceptical about the potential for dairy farmers and environmental organisations to work in partnership to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change.

But I know now that they do exist. They can transcend barriers created by cultural heritage, economic heritage and political landscapes.

You just need one magic ingredient: an inspiring leader who believes in the art of the possible. Someone who finds the common ground and follows their North Star.

I plan to use my roles on the family dairy farm and at Long Clawson Dairy to do just that, and once I have successfully achieved that goal, I aspire to become a champion of that approach across the dairy sector to drive pro-active partnership working. I recommend anyone, whether within the dairy industry of environmental sector, to do the same where opportunities exist.

We are better together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While my name rests on the front cover of this report, it has by no means been a solo endeavour.

I could not have undertaken any of it without the support of my family and friends; my sponsor; my employer, Long Clawson Dairy; my colleagues; the team on our family farm; the Nuffield Farming Scholarships community; and of course, the numerous people who took the time to meet me on my travels.

I am incredibly grateful to everyone who has helped and supported me along the way. You have enabled me to undertake a life-changing experience, which will not be forgotten.

I would like to extend a special thank you to:

- **My parents**, for encouraging me to submit my application, supporting me throughout my travels (including the dog sitting) and report writing.
- **Matt Swain** NSch (2002) for inspiring me to consider undertaking a Nuffield and supporting me throughout the application process alongside **Alice Jones** NSch (2019).
- **David Gardner** NSch (2010) for his support as my Nuffield Farming Scholarship mentor. I have enjoyed and appreciated unpicking my findings with you along the journey.
- The **Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)** for being the lead sponsor of my scholarship and making all the above possible.
- **Long Clawson Dairy** and **Kim Kettle** for enabling an unforgettable trip to the World Dairy Summit in Chicago (and to the **NFU Dairy** team & **Dairy UK** team for taking me under their wing for the week!)

I will endeavour to implement my findings. To be someone who can champion partnership working between dairy farmers and environmental organisations, to achieve sustainable food security and combat climate change.

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