

Testimonials – AHDB AgriLeader Forum

CHAD STEVENS (2025)



Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to secure a bursary to attend the AHDB AgriLeader Forum – a two-day event that brought together some of the most forward-thinking, progressive minds in British agriculture.

Held in the financial district of London, the event offered a welcome chance to get off the farm, change perspective, and immerse myself in personal and professional development.

The theme, “Leading ourselves to lead others,” resonated with me deeply. In farming, it’s easy to get caught up in the day-to-day demands of livestock, land, and business. Rarely do we take the time to step back and look at ourselves – not just as farmers, but as leaders, decision-makers, and role models. This forum challenged us to do just that. The concept that before we can effectively lead teams, families, or businesses, we must first understand and lead ourselves, formed the foundation for many of the discussions.

One of the most memorable talks for me was from Anna Mosley, whose session focused on performance, burnout, and the often unrealistic expectations we place on ourselves and others. Her message about giving 80% initially struck me as odd – surely, we should always aim for 100%? But as she unpacked the concept, it

began to make sense. I’m someone who often judges others by my own work “standard,” expecting a level of perfection that can be difficult to maintain. Anna’s talk gave me space to reflect, and to consider the impact of that mindset – not just on myself, but on those around me. Her talk was both liberating and grounding, and I’ve found myself returning to her words multiple times since.

Throughout the two days, I was struck by the energy and optimism in the room. It was inspiring to be surrounded by fellow farmers and rural leaders who weren’t content to sit still, but who were actively seeking better ways to run their businesses, lead their people, and shape the future of the industry. From breakout workshops to informal conversations over coffee, there was a strong sense of shared purpose. It reminded me how powerful it can be to connect with like-minded individuals who understand both the challenges and the unique opportunities of modern farming.

Of course, the value of the forum wasn’t just in the speakers or the setting – it was in the people. I met some fantastic individuals along the way, many of whom I hope to stay in touch with. It’s easy to become isolated on farm, but events like this prove how vital it is to get out, meet new people, and experience new ideas. Learning in any form is always a positive, and this event certainly reinforced that.

The AgriLeader Forum was a fantastic two days: energising, insightful, and genuinely useful. I left feeling more self-aware, more inspired, and more connected to the wider farming community. I’m grateful to Future Farmers for providing me with this opportunity and would definitely recommend it to others.

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MIKE MORLEY (2024)



Held on the 30 and 31 January 2024, I was kindly awarded a bursary place to attend Agrileader at the Hilton in Manchester.

From the opening introductions from Izak van Heerden and Mark Campbell, knowledge exchange managers, to the final speech about UBUNTU (an African saying about caring for others and yourself), the atmosphere was positive and lively. Just what I needed having left a wet farm following 30mm of rain the day before.

The theme was Networking. How to engage with others that were attending, improve listening skills and ask questions of experienced people and mentors within your field, whilst learning how to engage your employees further within your own business and in turn maximising production.

Walking into lunch on my own on the first afternoon, I was fairly nervous and stood back, not having the confidence to speak to anyone. By lunch the following day, I had met and knew lots of the others attending and had no worries about asking about their business and experiences. I soon found the room full of likeminded inquisitive agri-business people.

The first speaker was Dr Stephanie Fitzgerald, a chartered clinical psychologist. She talked about mental health and wellbeing for

yourself and others within the workplace, how to recognise signs in yourself and others given the difference in characters. She talked about how some of us were introverts and some extroverts and what qualities and floors both brought to the way we conduct ourselves within business and networking. She made so many points and observations during her speech, I think she would have hit a chord with every person in the room at some point.

Following this, three panellists were introduced, Laura Ryan founder of the Global Meat Alliance, Phil Halhead, a dairy farmer and founder of Norbeck Genetics and Phil Jarvis Land, Estates Director of Albanwise Ltd. They spoke about themselves and welcomed many questions and discussions within the room. All three were very different characters and explained how they approached business, employees and networking from different angles. All have been successful in how they conduct themselves within business.

In the evening, we were invited to drinks, canopies and dinner at the national museum of football. A fantastic place if you love football!

This gave everybody a chance to mingle and network, made a little easier with a few beers on board. During the evening, I met some inspiring people from the agri-buisness world. A young couple who with her husband had managed to form a contract farming business with a dairy farmer to get a foot on the ladder, to a chap who had turned his dairy farm in Chepstow into a huge portfolio of diversified businesses. Amongst the crowd were also a few well-known faces of the industry who have been excelling on social media.

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The next morning, we were introduced Marcus Childs who literally bounced onto the stage and took everybody along with his infectious positivity. Marcus talked about resourcefulness and self-belief in individuals, positivity between colleagues and trust between organisations and customers. He talked about fresh habits for goal setting and mental health for daily use at work or home. He has worked with a wealth of well-known brands, politicians and sports people. A great speech that I could have listened to for hours.

I'd like to thank the Future Farmers of Yorkshire for awarding me the bursary to stay the Hilton hotel where everything took place, it was a real treat and I would urge anyone who has thought of attending the AgriLeader conference to go. Any nerves soon disappear and you come away with the infectious positive atmosphere that everyone in attendance has, whilst making friends and been inspired with business techniques.

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NATALIE MOORE (2023)



I was delighted to be offered a bursary to attend the AHDB AgriLeader Conference 2023 in Stratford upon Avon.

In only its second year there were about 80 people present from all over the UK, half of which it seemed had been last year and had come back for a second time. The aim of the conference was to bring together like-minded people where they could network with each other but also hear from speakers completely unrelated to agriculture for a change.

The first session on Tuesday morning was a panel session. In the afternoon there was a motivational speaker talking about future use of artificial intelligence in the workplace and in the evening there was a drinks reception, a three-course meal and an after-dinner speaker.

Then, on Wednesday morning there was a very interactive session with a psychologist which got people up and about and interacting with each other and left you with completely different ways of thinking about things in your life and in your business.

The highlight of the conference for me was the evening reception. The main course was an exceptional piece of slow cooked beef which

melted in the mouth, and it was an absolute pleasure to be served something that was a complement to British Agriculture for a change!

The after-dinner speaker was England rugby and World Cup winning star Katy Daly-McClean, and the session was set up in an interview format allowing her to give an honest and open view on her life and career. I have absolutely no interest in rugby whatsoever, but she was so easy to relate to; she was a down to earth northern lass who had made it in a male dominated world.

As a child, Katy was the only girl on the rugby pitch at her local club, but she never let this put her off and she just kept going until she made it to the top but as she pointed out although she won the World Cup eventually, they had many occasions when they were runner up and where all their hard work was left unrewarded and it's the mindset that you then have to put on to go and repeat the last four years of hard work to try and lift that trophy the next time round.

The whole conference was about becoming a better leader, changing the way you think, learning to listen to and value the opinions of others around you and ultimately work better as a team.

The conference definitely got you thinking, it was well worth going to and as usual with all these events that Future Farmers fund members to go to, I came away with a few new friends and I would like to thank Future Farmers and the Yorkshire Agricultural Society for the opportunity to go. I would definitely go again.

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NICK GRAYSON (2022)



As soon as I saw the line-up of speakers for the AgriLeader Forum I knew I had to go.

Usually, on the journey home from such events you go over the key points in your head

and feel re-energised about your own business for a day or so. Never has an event had me still thinking about the ‘take home messages’ several weeks down the line.

The most refreshing thing was that virtually none of the speakers had any idea about agriculture at all. They were simply the best people possible to speak about leadership and positive mindset. The event had a very strong emphasis on networking, which felt great after the last couple of years!

Usually at these events I would make a beeline for everyone I know and spend the conference with them, but we were allocated seating for the entirety of the event. This allowed me to network, and speak to more people, and I have returned home with a few more friends which I still speak to regularly. The networking continued well into the early hours of day two and we had some fantastic thought-provoking conversations.

A standout moment of the conference for me was at the final session of day one when we heard from Ben Akers, the founder of Talk Club. Talk Club is a talking and listening club for men that hopes to keep you mentally fit by providing a secure and private space to share and support others. I couldn’t quite believe I was sat in a room filled with farmers, listening to someone talk about the importance of men’s mental health.

The point from this session that I still think about today is trying to ask people ‘how are you out of 10?’ rather than the usual ‘how are you’, to try and encourage more communication than the usual ‘fine thanks!’. My friends and I regularly ask each other how they are out of 10 now, it’s been a great tool for us all to use to open up more.

Rebecca Roberts took the first session of day one. Rebecca is a mindset coach and spoke about comparing our own lives to a computer keyboard. She explained that, without the spacebar nothing else on the keyboard makes any sense, and we should live our own lives like this and always ensure we maintain our ‘space bar’. We should create space, and time for ourselves so that we can see things more clearly. This concept struck a chord with me and is something I am making a conscious effort to try and uphold in my own life.

I would go as far as to say that the AHDB AgriLeader forum has been the best conference I have attended and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Future Farmers of Yorkshire for giving me the opportunity to attend.

