

## Development begins with UK's first School of Sustainable Food and Farming

**P**lans are in progress to develop the UK's first School of Sustainable Food and Farming at Harper Adams University, based in Shropshire, UK.

Supported by supermarket chain Morrison's and co-partnered by RAFT Solutions Ltd, the school plans to draw on industry networks, academic and practical expertise to develop knowledge and skills for farmers and other businesses in the supply chain who are committed to reducing the environmental impact of food production.

"We are extremely excited to team up with Morrisons and RAFT Solutions to deliver this critically-needed collaboration which will support the transition to a more sustainable food system delivering to both human and planetary health," says Professor Michael Lee, Harper Adams Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

"The initial targets will be centred around how to achieve net-zero UK agriculture. However, the ambition of the school will include wider aspects of sustainability including biodiversity, animal welfare, rural community support, green energy production and farm profitability," he says.

The school will support and further develop production systems research aimed towards more sustainable farming.

The initial research topics will include:

- Livestock breed choice
- Diet composition
- Yield improvement
- Agricultural building design
- On-farm renewable energy
- Precision farming
- Sensors and use of data

Using knowledge gained from the research, the school will seek to develop practical advice and guidance to help farmers adjust their practices to be more sustainable. RAFT Solutions Ltd will play a key role in developing

practical skills training associated with animal breeding and health.

, "We are incredibly proud to support Morrisons in its net-zero ambition, which is true to the very core of RAFT's activity and the vision for Harper & Keele Vet School to make a real difference at farm level with practical and achievable solutions to the sustainability challenge," comments Professor Jonathan Statham, Chief Executive of RAFT Solutions Ltd and Professor of Sustainable Livestock Health and Welfare at the Harper & Keele Vet School.

"The pressures on farming and farmers are intense but there are win-win opportunities where better animal health and welfare are better economically as well as better for the planet.

Reducing the waste of poor health and reproductive inefficiency alongside delivering practical precision livestock farming (PLF) solutions is where our work supports sustainable farming," comments Professor Statham.

### **A significant investment**

"We are making a significant investment into this project as part of our pledge to be the first supermarket to be directly supplied by net zero carbon British farms by 2030.

We look forward to working as a partnership and to bringing the best brains together within the industry - to provide this new breadth of sustainability training for our British farmers," says Sophie Throup, Head of Agriculture at Morrisons.

The school will also provide a platform from which relevant research can be translated and scaled to assist the entire food value chain. Capital investment in real farming projects will enable direct farming engagement with the school, for the benefit of all.

Work placements, apprenticeships and other workforce development initiatives are also being considered to support the need for future sustainable food and farming professionals.