

MILK DIGEST

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RABDF CRITICISES MIGRATION COMMITTEE'S FINAL REPORT FOR FAILING UK DAIRY FARMERS

The final report into migration from the European Economic Area, published last month by Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), has been heavily criticised by the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RABDF) for letting down the myriad of UK industries which rely on skilled manual EU workers, of which dairy farming is one.

The MAC's call for evidence gained over 400 responses, including a comprehensive submission from the RABDF, alongside the NFU. However the organisation says the key role played by stockpeople and herd and dairy farm managers from the EU, who fit between manual and highly skilled in their training and abilities, has been ignored.

RABDF policy director Tim Brigstocke says many EU nationals currently working in the UK fall into this skills 'gap', and fill roles in many industries – including dairying – which British workers simply do not want to take up.

Mr Brigstocke explains: "The problem is particularly acute in England and while it is encouraging that the MAC recognises the need for a scheme for seasonal fruit pickers, for example, to avoid

fruit sitting 'unpicked and rotting on trees', we believe there is failure to appreciate a much bigger and long term problem in other sectors."

He says he's concerned the MAC could be banking on the fact that farmers won't allow a lack of labour in the dairy sector to result in cows 'going un milked or unmanaged' in the same way. "But the more likely outcome is unbearable strain on those dairy farmers who are short of labour, leading to more farms ceasing production and possible mental health challenges for those remaining in business.

"This is why this issue is a huge concern for our sector. Demand for milk and dairy products remains strong in the UK, so we risk undermining our own industry with its high standards and high productivity, and instead supplying our markets from abroad with milk produced under different regimes but using those very workers we have no access to."

The RABDF has carried out several surveys since 2014 looking at access to overseas labour. Farmers have reported increasing issues recruiting labour; in 2014 results showed 40% of farms had encountered difficulty with staff recruitment,

by 2016 this number had risen to 51%, proof that a lack of access to skilled labour could be disastrous to many UK dairy farms.

A survey of the British public in 2016 indicates that British nationals will not fill this gap as they are largely unwilling to work in the industry for reasons ranging from unsocial hours to rural locations and not wanting to work with animals or machinery.

An evaluation of these survey results can be accessed online at www.rabdf.co.uk/labour





Meet the Gold Cup finalists

Finalists in the 2018 NMR/RABDF Gold Cup competition have been announced and include five Holstein herds and one cross-bred herd across Scotland, England and Northern Ireland.

Tom and Karen Halton, Halton Farms, Cheshire



This 560-strong herd calves all year round and comprises three-way-cross Holstein Montbeliarde cows. There are also 300 followers on the unit's 222 tenanted hectares.

Herd average yield stands at 10,300 litres of milk, at 3.90% butterfat and 3.30% protein, with a somatic cell count of 125,000 cells/ml. Calving interval is an impressive 373 days.

They started with 350 commercial Holsteins and Tom's interest in cross-breeding began eight years ago. The herd has expanded using home-bred Holstein, Montbeliarde, Swedish Red three-way crosses.

Health is important to the Haltons and they won NMR's HerdWise Johne's best practice competition in 2016. No females that test positive in the Johne's testing scheme, or their daughters, are used for breeding dairy replacements.

They also took advantage of their urban position two years ago when they began direct sales of raw milk from a vending machine at the farm gate.

The bulk of their milk is sold through a broker, County Milk, which allows the couple to spread risk across three contracts.

Stephen and Mark Montgomery, Co Londonderry



Stephen and Mark Montgomery run their 180-cow pedigree Holstein autumn-calving herd at Gortree Farm.

It's taken the brothers just 10 years to build their impressive herd from nothing.

Following further investments in land, buildings and cattle, the brothers are consolidating their business and focusing on the detail to improve health, fertility and breeding.

The herd has been closed for the past eight years and is currently averaging 10,074kg of milk, at 3.93% butterfat and 3.22% protein. Somatic cell count is 136,000 cells/ml and the herd's calving interval is 375 days.

Stephen selects sires using PLI, as well as butterfat and protein yield. "I'm not looking to breed large cows, but they must be robust and balanced," says Stephen, who uses genomic bulls and is planning to genomically test his heifers this year using NMR's GeneTracker.

The system is simple with cows grazed during the summer and fed a TMR, which is topped up to yield in the parlour, during the winter.

Predominantly autumn calving, 80% of the herd calves between October and December.

James and Eleanor Tomlinson, Preston, Lancs



The all-year-round calving herd, which averaged 11,042kg of milk at 4.37% butterfat and 3.16% protein for the year ending September 2017, generates income through both milk and surplus stock sales. Managed on a conventional system, cows are grazed during the summer and housed in winter.

The cows graze for a minimum of 150 days a year – from early ~~May to mid-October~~ – to meet milk buyer Pakeeza Dairy's 'free range' criteria and command a premium.

The couple registered as a limited company this year, to help streamline the business and increase efficiency. And they've bought more land – 16-hectares next to the farm.

The Tomlinsons are also selling more freshly calved heifers – around 100 head a year, which is 30% more than 2017. "We've been using sexed semen for a while and it's now used across all maiden heifers. This means that we have more surplus heifers to sell," explains James.

The couple plan to invest in a new milking parlour and slurry handling system in the near future. "And then we may look at a more sizeable expansion of the herd."

Meet the Gold Cup finalists

The judges will name the winner and runner-up of the 2018 NMR/RABDF Gold Cup at Dairy-Tech 2019, which will be held at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, on February 6, 2019.

Harvey family, Beeswing, Dumfriesshire



Based at Beeswing, John Harvey says that the herd's success is merely a side effect of good management and the fact that he and the family team are always looking at how they can improve.

The 335-cow herd averaged 13,662kg of milk, at 3.85% butterfat and 3.18% protein, on three-times-a-day milking, for the year ending September 2017.

The herd is permanently housed except for one group, of around 100 mid-lactation cows, which is turned out to graze at the end of May, if conditions are suitable. The unit's 260 head of young stock also graze during the summer.

The herd is fed a TMR, offering maintenance plus 36 litres, and individual cows are topped up to yield in the parlour. Cows and heifers calve all year round, to ensure a level supply of milk for buyer Lactalis.

He and his brother Stuart and mother Margaret work together and cow health is important to them. They began using mastitis vaccine, 18 months ago, to prevent E coli mastitis in the herd. Rates have now dropped from 20% to below 10%.

John says that the family's focus will remain on optimising and improving herd management.

Stowell Farms, Marlborough, Wiltshire



Stowell Farms looks after the agricultural enterprises on the family owned 1,100-hectare Stowell Estate, based in the heart of the Pewsey Vale in Wiltshire.

The livestock enterprises include a 515 cow Holstein herd, managed on a brand-new unit that was built in 2011 and allowed the herd to expand from 140 milkers.

An AD plant was also built on the site to process arable crops from the estate and the slurry produced by the cows. It produces all the electricity required by the farm and 83% of output is fed into the National Grid.

Average yields for this all year round calving herd for the Gold Cup qualifying year to September 2018 was 10,052kg of milk at 3.48% butterfat and 3.05% protein. Somatic cell count averaged 165,000 cells/ml with a 397 day calving interval. Milk is sold to Watson's Dairies.

Farm manager Gavin Davies and herd manager Bryn Moore attribute improvements in herd performance to the team effort. "It's not down to one individual, but to the team, including our vet and nutritionist," says Bryn.

A good health programme is key to their success.

Metcalfe Farms, North Yorks



Metcalfe Farms is owned and run by brothers David, Brian and Philip Metcalfe.

Of the 1,300 hectares farmed, 200 hectares are owned.

A new parlour was installed two years ago, as well as additional cow accommodation. And this allowed the business to increase the size of the herd from 900 to 1,300 cow in just two years. Three herds were purchased to increase numbers.

The Holstein herd averaged 9,136kg of milk, at 3.89% butterfat and 3.19% protein, for the year ending September 2017. Somatic cell count is 155,000 cells/ml and calving interval is 423 days. Calving interval is now 403 and still falling. Yields have now increased to 10,800kg at 4% fat and 3.25% protein with a reduction in SCC to 124,000 cells/ml. This is after the herd expansion - cows are now settled in.

Cows are housed all year round and calving pattern is spread throughout the year, to provide a level supply of milk for milk buyer Paynes Dairies. When running a large herd on a permanently housed system, good health and fertility are essential. And breeding plays a role here. Philip selects sires that score well for type and avoid extremes.

DAIRY-TECH 2019 UPDATE

Dairy-Tech 2019 on 6 February at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire sees the return of the Dairy and Innovation Hub Features. The timetables are now available online at www.dairy-tech.uk

Dairy Hub

This hub will offer advice, guidance, political insight, knowledge and take home messages for current issues experienced on dairy farms. Sessions will focus on staff development, Brexit, emerging food trends, antimicrobial resistance, organics, genomics and whether we can deliver on the Clean Air Strategy.

Innovation Hub, sponsored by Mole Valley Farmers

Designed to expand horizons and ways of thinking, sessions on this year's Innovation Hub will look into topics such as; the possible future of technology in dairy farming including robotics and DIY milk processing, the real-world benefits of virtual reality and the rise of rapid diagnostics. It will also look to answer questions like: What will forage of the future look like? Is your milk really fresh? How to use social media to profile your business?

Skills Studio

New for this year alongside the Dairy and Innovation Hubs is the Skills Studio - a one-stop-shop for students, new entrants into the industry and those looking to develop their skills. Come along to inspire your next career move.

We have been overwhelmed by all the support for Dairy-Tech and have seen now seen over 260 exhibitors sign up. Hall 1 is now sold out and we now only have 5 indoor stands available across hall 2 and 3, and some availability in the outdoor area. Do get in touch soon with your stand requirements or any questions you may have Charles Neale on 024 76 639317 or email charlesneale@rabdf.co.uk

Thank you to all the Dairy-Tech sponsors. We are delighted to welcome GEA on board once again as our registration sponsor.

RABDF members receive **2 FREE! tickets**. To redeem them now please visit www.dairy-tech.uk/visiting



THE TREHANE TRUST

The Trehane Trust hosted their Annual Scholars' Dinner on Tuesday 13 October, the evening before the RABDF Business and Policy Conference. Andy Richardson was the guest speaker talking about the power of real collaboration across the supply chain. Andy is currently Head of Corporate Affairs at Volac and passionately believes in the contribution Agriculture, Food and Drink can make to the UK economy. Tom Levitt, Trehane Trust Nuffield Farming Scholar, also gave a summary of his report. A very informative Q&A followed with both speakers giving our guests a wonderful opportunity to quiz the speakers further. If you would like details of next year's dinner please contact victoriarimell@rabdf.co.uk

Tom Levitt's full report can be found on the Trehane Trust website <http://www.trehanetrust.org.uk/trehane-scholars/2018/11/8/report-from-tom-levitt>

Dairy Student Award 2019

The interview round of the RABDF Dairy Student award took place on 11 December at the Farmer's Club in London. The judges Peter Alvis and Robert Craig from RABDF and Julie Edwards from sponsors Mole Valley selected two of the five candidates to progress to the final round at Dairy-Tech when the presentation will take place.

After the interviews took place all students, lecturers and judges were hosted for lunch at the House of Lords by RABDF President, Lord Curry.



Students Joshua Thompson, Hannah Booth, Steffan Rees, Daniel Williamson and Monty Payne with judges and supporting lecturers from IBERS, Harper Adams

RABDF POLICY CONFERENCE: BRIGHT BREXIT OUTLOOK FOR THE DAIRY SECTOR

At the second RABDF business and policy conference last month the overall consensus from speakers indicated the future, post-Brexit, was looking bright for the dairy sector when compared to its beef and sheep sectors counterparts for example.

Producers with fewer than 100 cows will be put in the most volatile position by Brexit, that's the view of Rob Hitch of Dodd & Co, as these farms are the most reliant on subsidies and have greater reliance on beef markets – which could suffer with an increase of non-EU competition.

Mr Hitch said: "The withdrawal of area-based subsidies, as a result of the departure of unprofitable red meat producers, will push land rental prices down creating more opportunities for dairy farmers to expand."

Waitrose and Partners Duncan Sinclair had sound advice to farmers – focus on the issues behind the farmgate and leave the politics to trade associations and politicians. Quoting the chair of Waitrose Dairy Farmers Brian Barnett he concluded 'change is coming – so the best preparation for Brexit is to be the best we can'.

Whilst there are undoubtedly positives for the sector to take from the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the Gold Cup winners panel discussion highlighted some of their key farmgate concerns with the most poignant being the impact of the potential shortage of overseas labour and increase in staff costs. Somerset dairy farmer Neil Baker said over 40% of cows are milked by European labour – maintaining this access will be one of the

biggest Brexit challenges facing the industry.

After lunch the focus shifted onto cattle health and welfare. The overriding message here highlighted the UK as a world leader in animal health and welfare, which will keep improving, and reaffirmed that we must use this as a USP to strengthen our appeal, especially with potential market uncertainty looming.

Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss kicked things off with an overall industry update where she outlined what was next for animal health and future farming; to improve productivity and reduce

antibiotic use through industry led reduction in endemic disease.

The new UK AMR strategy is essential and includes a 20 year vision and 5 year national action plan to aid reduction in antibiotic usage. Concerns surround the impact of how overuse in farming sectors can lead to resistance in humans, complicating treatment. Fraser Broadfoot from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate explained what steps will ultimately lead to controlling the problem.

"We must prevent use where possible, improve alternatives and control infection via food hygiene and zoonoses he said. Whilst targets have been set for each sector the dairy industry is set to focus on the likes of biosecurity, nutrition and housing, genetics and previous medicine as a way of preventing infection without the use of antibiotics." Progress to date can be viewed in the Targets Task Force Report 2017 and reflect a drop in sales of antibiotics.

Livestock traceability is all about insight with the original programme aims focusing on reducing the cost of traceability whilst improving future responsiveness says Defra's Simon Hall. "The plan is to enable bovine EID as an EU requirement from mid 2019. Going back to traceability insight, this knowledge is a fundamental enabler as it is vital to trade, it inspires customer confidence, underpins disease surveillance and control whilst enabling better animal health and welfare – something as an industry we must strive to continue improving.





ABOUT THE TEAM BRINGING YOU WOMEN IN DAIRY...

THE WOMEN IN DAIRY STEERING GROUP

*RACHEL BOWCUTT,
NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR,
RABDF*

Rachel joined RABDF in January to cover Emily Egan's maternity leave, including the role of National Co-ordinator for Women Dairy. This involves chairing all of the National Steering Group meetings, organising the conference, liaising with group facilitators and acting as the main point of contact for any Women in Dairy queries, marketing and its membership. Rachel has enjoyed getting involved in the Women in Dairy initiative and meeting lots of inspiring women in this industry.



*LISA WILLIAMS,
PROMAR INTERNATIONAL*

Lisa is Head of the Agri-Food division within Promar International and is actively involved with the National Steering Group.



Lisa was one of the key people involved in establishing the national Women in Dairy Group with RABDF and AHDB Dairy, launching the group at the 2015 Livestock Event to great success. In addition she set up the Cheshire WiD group. From this work, Lisa very much has an understanding of the role of women within the agricultural sector.

*SARAH BOLT,
KINGSHAY*

Sarah works for Kingshay (part of The Vet Partners Group) as their Membership Development Manager - delivering well researched, independent information and advice to progressive dairy producers throughout the UK.



Prior to this Sarah worked for AHDB Dairy for almost 8 years in the Knowledge Exchange team. It was whilst in this role, motivated by and in conjunction with her colleague Becky in Cornwall, Sarah set about holding the first discussion group aimed at women. Its resounding success meant that other groups soon followed. Collaboration with RABDF and Promar led to the founding of Women in Dairy as we know it today.

Sarah facilitates the Somerset Women in Dairy Discussion Group.

*REBECCA MILES,
AHDB DAIRY*

Born on a dairy farm in Devon my career has always had an agricultural link – from farming in Portugal for 6 years to my current role as Knowledge Exchange Manager AHDB Dairy.



From an upbringing of 'everyone is equal' I realised that the world is not equal and that's why I started Women in Dairy groups in the South West with Sarah Bolt. We knew we had done the right thing when we had 50 bookings from 250 invitations for the first meeting.

My role on the Steering Group for Women in Dairy is to ensure we are delivering a positive learning and sharing environment and use my connections within the industry for maximum benefit of all women in the industry.

SPOTLIGHT ON... THE NEW! SOMERSET DISCUSSION GROUP

The end of November saw the establishment of a new Women in Dairy Discussion Group, based at the Kingshay offices, in the heart of rural Somerset. The group has been set up by Sarah Bolt, experienced facilitator and one of the founder members of Women in Dairy.

The topic for the first meeting was calf health – with the technical input provided by Ailsa Milnes, Veterinary Advisor, Boehringer Ingelheim Ltd, national sponsors of Women in Dairy.

Being a new group, we started the session with an “ice-breaker” activity, where everyone was given time to talk to someone in the room they did not know, and then introduce them to the rest of the group.

The nineteen attendees were all keen to join in the discussions which followed, and practical tips were readily shared to advance all aspects of calf health and welfare on-farm.



If anyone would like to get involved with the Somerset Women in Dairy Discussion Group, please contact Sarah at Kingshay for further details: sarah.bolt@kingshay.co.uk, mobile 07957 862597

We at Women in Dairy would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year, and thank you for your continued support of our activities.

We've had a busy 2018 with lots of excellent group meetings and of course the Annual Conference where we heard from lots of inspirational speakers. Boehringer Ingelheim have come on board as national sponsor and we've got new groups starting up and down the country (see more about the inaugural Somerset group meeting above!).

We have lots of great things lined up for 2019... watch this space! If you are not already a member and would like to sign up please get in touch with us at womenindairy@rabdf.co.uk

Women in Dairy membership is currently valid until 31st March 2020 at the special offer rate of £65.



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Bluetongue virus detected in Yorkshire



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has urged farmers to increase their vigilance for bluetongue virus after the disease was picked up and dealt with in three consignments of cattle imported from France.

Two consignments were brought to two separate premises in Yorkshire, where the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and the Pirbright Institute identified the disease as a part of routine post-import testing.

All infected cattle, plus one other animal which travelled in the same vehicle and was found to be susceptible to infection, will be humanely culled.

The third consignment was taken to a premises in Northern Ireland where the disease was detected by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Bluetongue does not affect people or food safety, but outbreaks of the virus can result in restrictions on livestock movement and trade. The virus is transmitted by midge bites and affects cattle, goats, sheep and other camelids such as llamas. It can reduce milk yield and cause infertility and in the most severe cases is fatal for infected animals.

Action is being taken to ensure the risk of spread of the disease is reduced, with movement restrictions already in place at the affected premises.

The UK Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, said:

“Farmers must be aware of the risks of bringing animals from disease-affected areas into their flocks and herds. It is vitally important that we keep this disease out.

“This detection is a further example of our

robust disease surveillance measures in action, but I urge farmers to remain vigilant. They need to work with importers to make sure effective vaccination needs are complied with and that all animals are sourced responsibly.”

All cattle and sheep farmers are reminded to:

- discuss their needs with a private veterinary surgeon and carefully consider the risks and the health status of animals before deciding to import stock from regions affected by Bluetongue virus.
- carefully consider what additional guarantees the seller can provide as to the animal's vaccination status before purchasing (for example – by requesting that a pre-export test is carried out to prove immunity to BTv).
- Ensure that imported animals are accompanied by the relevant paperwork to show they meet certain conditions designed to reduce disease risk, such as correct vaccination.
- Prevent the disease spreading by practising good biosecurity on the farm premises.
- Stay alert to any signs of the disease, such as mouth ulcers and drooling from the mouth and nose, and report to APHA if necessary.

Importers should be aware that all cattle and sheep arriving in the UK from countries where Bluetongue is known to be circulating will be restricted until post-import testing is carried out and the animals are confirmed as compliant. Any animals which are infected with Bluetongue will be culled and no compensation will be paid. Any animals in the consignment which are at risk of becoming infected may also be culled.

In addition, all other susceptible animals on the premises will be placed under movement restrictions until we can confirm that the disease has not spread.

Last month a number of organisations across the livestock sector encouraged farmers to think carefully about importing animals from areas that are known to be infected with Bluetongue virus.

Following the interception of these consignments, the UK remains officially bluetongue-free, the risk of the disease remains low and exports are not affected.

Representing You

Clearly all government issues continue to be dominated by Brexit and indeed the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Dairy where RABDF provide the secretariat along with Dairy UK are currently holding an inquiry into exports and the implications of Brexit. A report will be issued early in the New Year. So much still remains unclear but the large numbers of Technical Notices/ Briefing Documents that Defra are issuing shows the huge scale of complexity of the issue, RABDF continues to provide advice when asked.

RABDF represent the dairy farming sector in the Livestock Improvement Programme (LIP), the planned successor to all the current stand alone species specific schemes operated by government. LIP is being co-or-

inated by the farming industry and government working closely together. It is to be hoped that LIP really can provide the much needed replacement for the cattle tracing system at BCMS and other statutory matters as well as providing useful information on a whole range of issues that farming wants/needs to create a sustainable and profitable farming sector.

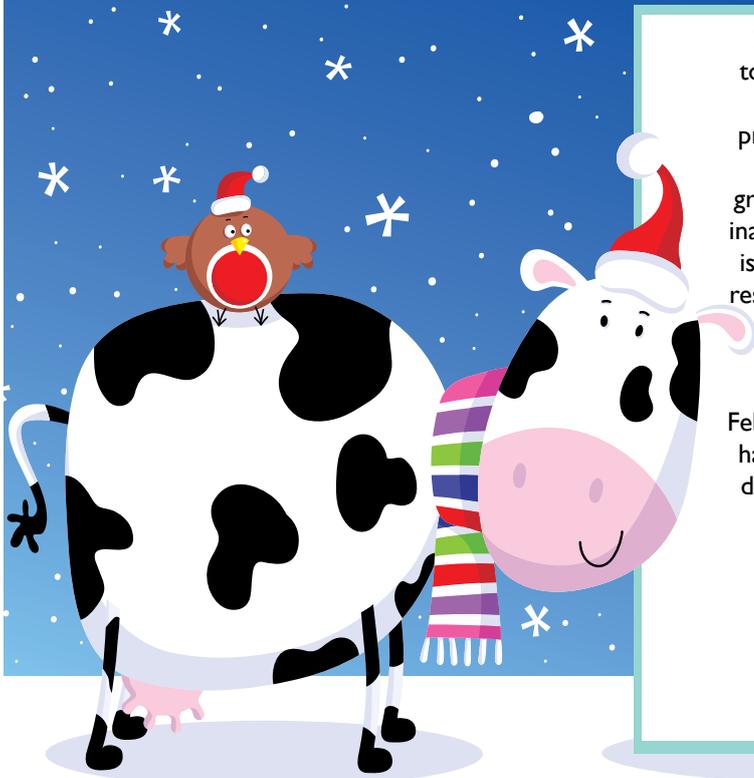
RABDF Council recently had a presentation from the Environment Agency (EA) as they had approached us to work with them. They were extraordinarily critical of the latest version of the Dairy Roadmap. RABDF and the EA had been closely involved in earlier versions. Clearly the indications from the Secretary of State is that the environment will feature very heavily in the future direction of

farming. RABDF believe that farmers are the best custodians of the countryside. A view not shared by all and thus working with the EA can only be of benefit. RABDF has been applauded for its recent response to the government consultation on the Clean Air Strategy.

Finally, please can I reiterate that as a charity, RABDF cannot lobby but what we can do is provide independent and good quality evidence on a whole range of dairy farming issues and this seems to be hugely appreciated. We also have a very strong council made up of well-known and respected dairy farmers. That is a huge unique selling point to government.

Tim Brigstocke,
RABDF Policy Director

Merry*Christmas from all at Dairy House



2018 has been a busy year at Dairy House would like to thank you, our members, for your continued support. With that support we successfully delivered a varied programme of events including the Gold Cup Open Day, the Business and Policy Conference, Women in Dairy group meetings and annual conference and of course, the inaugural Dairy-Tech. We continue to lobby on the biggest issues and respond to government consultations to represent our members, and we continue to champion young talent in the industry through our awards.

We look forward to seeing you at Dairy-Tech on 6 February and at our other events in 2019. As always, if you have any feedback on our work, events or have issues to discuss, please do send us an email (office@rabdf.co.uk) or call the office on 02476 639 317.

Wishing you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

RABDF staff and council

RABDF would like to thank our Corporate Members for their support



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