

A green tractor is shown in a field, partially obscured by a green overlay. The tractor is facing right, and the field is filled with green crops. The sky is clear and blue.

# FIVE WAYS TO SUPPORT FARMERS TO TRANSITION TO ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS





# SUMMARY

A transition to alternative-protein production presents a huge opportunity for farmers at a time when climate change is becoming a major threat to farming livelihoods, both directly and indirectly. And, since alternative proteins come in so many different forms, solutions can be tailored to the needs of specific farms as well as end consumers. A just transition from farming animals to alternative proteins can deliver better outcomes for farmers, producers, consumers, and our planet. Doing so will future-proof farming businesses, reduce uncertainty and price volatility, and slash food-related emissions.

However, such a transition comes with risks and complications that require the support of businesses throughout the value chain in order to provide solutions. Read on to learn about the top five ways that businesses can support farmers in the transition to alternative protein – or click [here](#) to access the full ProVeg International report, 'Amplifying Farmers' Voices: Farming perspectives on alternative proteins and a just transition'.





# 1

## Understand farmers' perspectives on climate change

Farmers are worried about climate change and have to deal with its effect on their yields. But it's not as simple as just stopping livestock farming immediately in order to reduce its environmental impact. To successfully transition away from animal agriculture, farmers' needs have to be met and their voices heard. Every farm is unique, and its capabilities are shaped by land, resources, and the local climate. Any transition solutions need to be farm-appropriate and farmer-led.



Climate change is the number one thing our farmers worry about – we just surveyed 2,000 farmers across the US. They're actively looking for solutions – they're front-line environmentalists."

**VANESSA GARCIA POLANCO**

*Federal Policy Director at the National Young Farmers Coalition (USA)*





# 2

## Promote the sharing of knowledge among farmers

Farmers are pragmatic and open to change if they know that their livelihoods will be protected. In order to promote the transition to alternative proteins, farmers must be equipped with knowledge that will guarantee confidence in their decision. This includes information about new methods and opportunities, as well as knowledge of both the local and global market for plant protein.

If this knowledge is made more easily accessible, it can proliferate horizontally within farming communities and promote farmer-led solutions. This is essential since, according to Illtud Dunsford, CEO and founder of Cell Ag Ltd, “Farmers are really receptive to their own community”.



An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural landscape, showing a patchwork of green fields and dark, tilled soil. A white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a large green number '3'.

# 3

## **Support farmers in harnessing opportunities in fermented protein and vertical farming**

With animal farming becoming unviable, modern fermentation and vertical farming are two key technologies that farmers could adopt in the transition away from animal agriculture. Existing farm infrastructure can be retrofitted with fermentation or vertical farming technologies. While this would require significant capital expenditure, it also opens up the potential for substantial long-term benefits and profitability.

However, the adoption of new technologies will require major support from businesses. James Woodward, Sustainable Farming Officer at Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming (UK), concurs. "Farmers won't know how to move their business from livestock to fermented or cultivated meat. To fundamentally change their business would take a huge amount of investment and knowledge."



An aerial photograph of a lush green agricultural landscape. The fields are divided into various rectangular plots, some of which are planted with crops, while others appear to be fallow or in different stages of growth. A narrow, light-colored road or path winds through the fields, and a single, small tree stands out in one of the plots. The overall scene is vibrant and represents a healthy, sustainable farming environment.

# 4

## Ensure that farmers can finance the transition

One of the biggest barriers to transitioning to more sustainable farming practices is capital investment. By promoting both public and private investment in sustainable agriculture, such transitions will become much more viable. Another potential solution for farmers involves the formulation of farming-cooperatives that pool finances.

“Farmers would love to reduce livestock numbers and their climate footprint, but we have to be financially viable to do our environmental work. If you're talking about replacing lost animal income with something else, then money talks.

BRITISH FARMING REPRESENTATIVE





An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural landscape, showing a patchwork of green fields and dark, tilled soil. A single white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a large green number '5'.

# 5

## **Acknowledge and help to mitigate the risks involved for farmers**

Farmers transitioning from grazing cattle to alternative-protein crops will be trading old risks for new ones, such as vulnerabilities to extreme weather or mechanical monopolies. However, with good planning and strong commercial partnerships in place, these risks can be mitigated. Farmers can be supported by the provision of long-term, profitable partnerships as alternative-protein providers and by promoting cooperatives and co-financing with industry partners.

“Risk is a big issue,” emphasises a European agritech expert. “There are regular attempts to grow new crops, which depend on there being an end market [...] Understanding end-market creation is going to be key.”



# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

There are huge opportunities for farmers in the transition towards sustainable alternative proteins, including higher margins and greater security through long-term industry partnerships. In the full report, we spoke to many farming representatives who argued that farmers are open to innovation but they need new knowledge and methods to be made freely available by businesses and governments – and validated by their peers.

We also heard repeatedly that farmers can't shoulder the financial risks of transitioning by themselves, and that businesses should provide long-term contracts and offer a range of partnership options for farmers in order to help minimise the risk of switching to alternative proteins. By harnessing these top five strategies to support farmers, we can help to make alternative protein agriculture more accessible and make the shift towards more sustainable models of food production.

