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**Farmers encouraged to participate in sustainability assessment**

THE Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) is encouraging farmers to avail of the opportunity to take part in a voluntary, ground breaking, farm sustainability assessment.

The Food Futures Sustainability Pilot launched on Monday 6 June. The project was developed to capture, credit and drive positive behavioural change to enhance the sustainability of Northern Ireland agri-food production. Food Futures sustainability outlook has three pillars; people, planet and profit, across which performance is benchmarked.

Encouraging farmers to get involved, LMC sustainability projects manager, Lauren Truesdale said, “Members of the Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIFQAS) now have the opportunity to engage with this exceptionally worthwhile pilot initiative, which can be incorporated into their regular NIFQA inspections. Farmers who do voluntarily participate will be provided with unique information on their farm’s performance.

“As well as offering individual farm sustainability feedback the Food Futures Smart Sustainability Tool will also provide guidance and support for the next step of the journey, unlocking information about the farm’s potential to increase production whilst protecting the local, national and global environment.

“In a broader sense this new sustainability tool will help to make strides in quantifying the wider sustainability footprint of NI farms. In doing so it will enhance consumer confidence in our sustainability claims and provide increased assurance on food provenance. It will also identify areas for knowledge exchange and identify knowledge gaps which may inform future research and development priorities for each supply chain, sector and the wider industry.

“Enabling our industry to progress on its sustainability journey is a key priority for LMC and with industry, government and academic partners we are currently working on the development of a number of important workstreams to improve productivity and build resilience in supply chains. We are delighted to support this new sustainability pilot initiative which utilises the latest science and technology to guide farmers and the wider industry on the journey of continual improvement.”

Food Futures Smart Sustainability Tool has been made possible through a partnership between LMC, QUB, AFBI and AgriSearch. Food Futures is co-funded by InvestNI through the Agri-Food Quest Competence Centre and is a whole supply chain partnership between farmers, processors, industry bodies, government, AFBI and Queen’s University.

To find out more about Food Futures visit: <https://www.food-futures.org/>

**ENDS**

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