

LMC Celebrates Generations of Farming at Balmoral 2025



Head of marketing and communications Lauren Patterson and education and consumer promotions manager Emma Brownlee with pupils from Knockbreda Primary School.

Reflections on a tremendously successful Balmoral Show

The Balmoral Show 2025 served as a valuable platform for the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) to engage with key stakeholders across Northern Ireland's agri-food sector. LMC staff and board members connected with industry leaders, while beef and sheep farmers gained insight into the Commission's ongoing initiatives on their behalf.

The event also offered an important opportunity to showcase the nutritional excellence of Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured (NIFQA) beef and lamb, and to highlight the dedication of the local farming families behind this world-class produce.

'Generations of Dedication' was the bespoke theme developed by the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) for this year's Balmoral Show, celebrating the enduring legacy and adaptability of Northern Ireland's farming families.

LMC Head of Marketing and Communications, Lauren Patterson explained, "This year, our stand told the story of three Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured (NIFQA) farming families whose agricultural heritage spans generations. Their stories reflect a proud tradition—but also a forward-looking approach, as they continue to adapt, overcome challenges, and seize opportunities to ensure a sustainable future producing world-class beef and lamb."

Throughout the four days of Balmoral Show 2025 there was plenty happening both on the LMC stand or courtesy of events taking place throughout the show grounds, involving Commission staff.

Lauren Patterson highlighted the Commission's continued commitment to supporting the beef and sheep sectors at Balmoral Show 2025. "LMC sponsored five high-profile beef and sheep classes at this year's Show. These sponsorships reflect our ongoing efforts to work alongside all beef and sheep farmers in striving for a sustainable future across the industry."



LMC Chief Executive Colin Smith with Beef Champion of Champions.

"LMC sponsored five high-profile beef and sheep classes at this year's Show. These sponsorships reflect our ongoing efforts to work alongside all beef and sheep farmers in striving for a sustainable future across the industry."

The Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured (NIFQA) cookery demonstrations, hosted on the LMC stand, also attracted strong public interest.

"Consumers are increasingly interested in the origin and production of their food, there appears to be a growing interest in building a relationship with wholesome natural produce and the story behind it" Lauren added. "Balmoral

provides the ideal setting for the public to explore these topics in an engaging and enjoyable environment. Visitor numbers to our stand continue to grow year-on-year, which is a very encouraging sign."

A key highlight of LMC's itinerary at Balmoral Show 2025 was hosting Key Stage 2 pupils from Aghnacloy Primary School, Knockbreda Primary School, Portlengone Primary School, and St Mary's Primary School—winners of the LMC's 2025 Balmoral Competition.

The initiative was designed to give young students a hands-on introduction to Northern Ireland's agri-food sector.

"It was a privilege to have the children with us," said Lauren Patterson, LMC's Head of Marketing and Communications. "They enjoyed a full day of activities, including a visit to the LMC stand and a guided tour of the Show grounds, where they learned about the farm-to-fork journey in an engaging and educational setting."



Sheep Young Handlers at Balmoral Show.

Exports will continue to drive beef and lamb sustainability in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland, with a population of approximately 2 million, produces enough food to feed five times that number—underscoring the vital importance of export markets to the region's agri-food economy. At the core of this output is the production of Farm Quality Assured beef and lamb.

Identifying and securing high-value markets for red meat is more critical than ever, especially in light of significant political and economic developments over the past three years. These include a change of UK government and the negotiation of key trade agreements with major global players such as the United States, European Union, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

The evolving international trade landscape, combined with fluctuating global tariffs, presents increasing complexity for exporters. Navigating these challenges will be essential to ensuring long-term profitability and sustainability for Northern Ireland's red meat sector.

LMC Chief Executive, Colin Smith fully recognises the need for Northern Ireland beef and lamb sectors to be fully cognisant of all these factors. But there is also a political dimension to all of this, which could be of an even more fundamentally significant.

Reflecting on the evolving political landscape, Colin Smith commented on the impact of recent UK government decisions. "The new Labour government has now been in office for a year, and during that time, it appears to have prioritised food security over food self-sufficiency. This shift in focus has raised concerns within the farming community."

He continued, "Support for Labour among farmers is clearly waning, particularly given the government's recent handling of agricultural issues. Inheritance tax reforms are just one example, and many within the sector feel farming has been sacrificed at the expense of other interests—particularly in trade negotiations such as those with the United States."

These developments underscore growing tensions between policy direction and the needs of UK agriculture at a time when global competitiveness is more vital than ever. These aforementioned agreements follow-on from free trade deals arrived at by the previous Conservative governments with Australia and New Zealand. When fully

operational these arrangements could provide beef export quotas of 170,000t and 60,000t annually for the respective countries.

Colin Smith again, "But that's not the end of the story. The EU continues to progress a trade deal with the Mercosur block which will could see almost 100,000t of beef from South American countries coming into Europe on an annual basis."

He added, "This may not impact directly on the UK beef market. But it could have a very significant indirect effect. The question arises: what happens to the significant tonnages of UK beef that are currently exported to the EU in the wake of the Mercosur deal's full implementation. The prospect of significantly reduced beef export trading levels is a very real one in these circumstances."

But even in the here and now the Commission's Chief Executive is concerned about imported beef making its way on to UK supermarket shelves.

He explained, "UK supermarkets are the most significant purchasers of farm quality beef and lamb produced in Northern Ireland. It is crucially important that this commitment to the local red meat sector is maintained into the future."

Significantly, LMC Chief Executive Colin Smith has observed a growing political focus on environmental sustainability in Northern Ireland.

"The current debate around the new Nutrient Action Programme is a clear example," he noted. "Environmental priorities are increasingly taking precedence over food production. While sustainability is essential, we must find a way to balance these goals and deliver truly sustainable growth that supports both our environment and our agri-food sector."

The Commission's Chief Executive concluded, "But the bigger picture remains equally concerning. The current Labour government appears to believe it can import its way out of a food supply deficit scenario," he stated. "This is a highly risky approach to managing one of the UK's most strategically important industries."



LMC Chief Executive Colin Smith.

LMC looks forward to a very busy June

The Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) will be actively involved in upcoming local events celebrating Northern Ireland's agri-food sector.

The Ballymoney Show takes place on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th June, where LMC will host cookery demonstrations on Saturday featuring Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured (NIFQA) beef and lamb.

LMC is also sponsoring Northern Ireland's Open Farm Weekend, held on Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th June. Lauren Patterson, Head of Marketing and Communications, commented, "As part of our partnership, LMC will deliver live cookery demonstrations on selected farms, showcasing the preparation, cooking, and sampling of NIFQA beef and lamb recipes."

Participating farms include Ballylagan Organic Farm (Straid), Glebe Farm (Limavady), and Carmean Aberdeen Angus (Magherafelt). Visitors will also have access to beef and lamb recipe books at all NIFQA farms involved in the event.

For more information on Open Farm Weekend visit – openfarmweekend.com