# UK farmers show cautious embrace of agri-tech amid cost and connectivity concerns



The UK’s largest agri-tech organisation has conducted an extensive survey involving 122 in-depth interviews with farmers across the country to explore how innovation and technology are viewed and adopted within the sector. The research provides detailed insight into farmers’ attitudes towards agricultural technology and the factors influencing their decision-making.

According to the survey, 73% of participants identified technology adoption as the most significant change in farming practices over the past five years. Farmers expressed a clear preference for “practical solutions that make their businesses more efficient and manageable.” The highest priorities highlighted were improving productivity, saving time, and reducing workload on farms. Cost-effectiveness also emerged as a key consideration, with many farmers seeking tools that offer tangible benefits without exposing their operations to unnecessary financial risk. While environmental benefits, such as reducing carbon emissions, are acknowledged, they generally rank secondary to immediate operational needs.

Regarding attitudes to innovation, the study found that 42% of farmers described themselves as ‘moderate’—open to adopting new technologies but cautious, preferring to see clear benefits before making changes. Another 30% identified as ‘progressive’, actively pursuing and integrating new technologies to enhance efficiency and productivity. The report noted that while farmer enthusiasm for technology is “refreshingly open-minded,” a gradual approach to adoption is favoured. Innovations that integrate seamlessly, such as automated feeding systems and straightforward farm management apps, are preferred over rapid or disruptive overhauls.

“Farmers want field-tested solutions that solve real problems,” the report stated. “If it doesn’t reduce workload, improve efficiency, or increase resilience, it won’t be used.” Among the technology areas generating “strong enthusiasm” are automation and robotics, new crop varieties, and data collection and analysis.

The research also identified several obstacles to wider technology adoption on farms. Cost remains a critical barrier, with a demand for affordable, scalable solutions that fit within existing practices. Other challenges include concerns over data security, limited training opportunities, and infrastructural issues such as poor Wi-Fi connectivity in rural areas. Many farmers expressed a sense of disconnection from the research and development process, noting that many technologies are designed without sufficient input from those who will ultimately use them.

Collaboration between farmers, industry stakeholders, and technology developers emerged as a recurrent theme throughout the report. The findings recommend a greater role for farmers in the innovation process—from initial concept to commercial rollout—to ensure solutions truly meet their needs. It advocates for farmer-led research and enhanced knowledge sharing.

“Farmers trust other farmers,” the report explained. “Peer-to-peer learning is more effective than top-down advice. Seeing technology in action on real farms, through demonstrations and trials, builds confidence and drives adoption.” Helen Brookes, engagement director at the UK Agri-Tech Centre, emphasised the importance of involving farmers directly: “By listening closely and involving farmers in identifying problems and co-developing solutions, we can ensure that new technologies are grounded in reality and have meaningful, on-farm application.”

The survey’s findings align closely with other recent agricultural sector research that highlights both enthusiasm for agri-tech and persistent caution due to costs, uncertain returns on investment, limited knowledge or training, and the desire for clearer government support and long-term policy frameworks. For instance, a Barclays report released in April 2025 noted that nearly half of farmers surveyed cited an unclear return on investment as a key barrier, and many called for more guidance from the government. Similarly, a 2023 National Farmers’ Union survey found that only around 20% of farmers had invested or planned to invest in agri-tech, with cost, knowledge gaps, and lack of support cited as major constraints.

To address some of these challenges and promote the uptake of agricultural technology, the UK government recently announced £45 million in funding aimed at advancing cutting-edge agri-tech innovations. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has unveiled three special funds to back research and development projects spanning early-stage innovation to on-farm trials. These projects include technologies such as robots for fruit picking, health-monitoring devices for livestock, and precision irrigation systems designed to optimise water use.

The government’s funding initiative places a strong emphasis on reducing on-farm emissions and capitalises on new opportunities presented by the Precision Breeding Act, legislation that could significantly enhance food production through improved crop yields, reduced pesticide use, and increased disease resistance.

Speaking on the announcement, Farming Minister Daniel Zeichner stressed that the investment aims “to help farmers adopt technology to boost production, profits, and the rural economy.”

The funding initiative arrives amid ongoing protests by farmers over changes to inheritance tax and modifications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive. Many within the farming community contend that these measures constrain their financial capacity to invest in new machinery, technology, and innovation essential for enhancing food security.

This comprehensive survey and government funding announcement together highlight the complex landscape in which UK farmers are navigating agricultural technology. While there is evident enthusiasm and recognition of the benefits agri-tech can bring, practical considerations related to cost, training, connectivity, and policy support remain pivotal in shaping levels of adoption and future innovation in the sector.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.agtechnavigator.com/Article/2025/04/17/put-farmers-at-heart-of-rd-to-drive-innovation-report-demands/> - This article supports the claim that UK farmers are open to technology adoption but face barriers such as cost, knowledge, and infrastructure. It highlights the importance of practical solutions and farmer involvement in the R&D process.
* <https://www.pricebailey.co.uk/reports/current-trends-technologies-uk-agricultural-technology-industry/> - This report outlines current trends and challenges in UK agri-tech, including the adoption of robotics and AI, and the barriers to technology uptake, such as high costs and lack of knowledge.
* <https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2025/04/14/adopt-fund-guidance-now-available-for-innovation-funding/> - The ADOPT Fund announcement provides insight into UK government efforts to support agri-tech innovation through collaborative, farmer-led projects, focusing on productivity, sustainability, and resilience.
* <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/agriculture/our-insights/agtech-breaking-down-the-farmer-adoption-dilemma> - This report explores global agtech adoption, highlighting regional variations and key barriers to wider adoption, including high costs and unclear returns on investment.
* <https://www.agrimarketing.com/s/150276> - This article discusses the adoption of precision technology by ag retailers, highlighting trends such as the increased use of drones and AI, but also notes challenges in implementing these technologies.