

Public shows support for British farmers

BRITISH farmers have received a huge thumbs up from consumers.

The importance of food security, quality produce and animal welfare were just some of the reasons why they think farming matters.

An independent survey of 1,002 people, commissioned by the NFU, found 75pc think of farmers favourably or very favourably – up from 68pc in 2005.

And with a growing demand for food as the world's population grows, 86pc agreed farming would be more important than ever in the future.

Peter Kendall, NFU president, said the public's growing interest in where food comes from had pushed the public perception of farming to a five-year high.

He said: "When we are looking to effect change on government or retail policy, then that is what really matters.

"When people think about what farmers do, it seems obvious, but not many people realise we are providing the building blocks for our food and drink manufacturing sector that is worth £22bn to our national economy.

It is the largest manufacturing sector we have."

He said the survey showed people believe farmers have many key roles, both for agriculture and the environment.

"But their highest priority for us is to produce food and to look after our animals to the highest standards," said Mr Kendall.

"The reality is we should be doing both, while producing more and impacting less."

The survey also found:

- 52pc agreed or strongly agreed that farmers should grow crops for biofuels
- 17pc do not think GM crops should be grown in Britain but 52pc said their trust in farmers would not be undermined if they came out in favour of GM crops
- Just under half the people surveyed said they try to buy British produce and a third said they source regional produce.