

**PRESS RELEASE**

***Under strict embargo until 8 October 2024***

**Oxford Farming Conference unveils speaker lineup for 2025 event**

The Oxford Farming Conference (OFC) is delighted to announce the speaker lineup for the 2025 conference, themed, "Facing Change, Finding Opportunity." Taking place from 8th-10th January 2025, the conference will draw a diverse group of experts, pioneers and changemakers from across the globe to address the critical issues facing agriculture today.

Over the course of two days, more than 30 visionary speakers will inspire and inform delegates, covering critical topics from sustainable livestock production and cutting-edge scientific advancements, to innovative food policies and farm diversification strategies. Among the headline speakers are the Consul General of India in Birmingham, **Dr. Venkatachalam Murugan,** record-breaking adventurer and motivational speaker **Olly Hicks**, and acclaimed environmental strategist and author **Gaia Vince**.

The renowned OFC Oxford Union debate will bring some humour and theatrical contributions to the event, tackling the motion, “This house believes that UK agriculture needs more grazing livestock, rather than fewer, to be truly sustainable.” Arguing in favour of the motion are **Professor Jude Capper** from Harper Adams University and **Rob Havar**d of Phepson Angus. Opposing them are **Henry Dimbleby**, co-founder of Bramble Partners, and **Colin Ferguson**, a dairy farmer and NFU Scotland's Dairy Vice Chair.

**Dr. Venkatachalam Murugan** brings his vast expertise in international relations and food security. A seasoned diplomat, Dr. Murugan has served in key roles across Tokyo, Prague, and New Delhi, shaping food security policy at an international level.

**Olly Hicks** is an inspirational speaker and triple world record holder for his maritime expeditions. He is the co-founder of Algapelago, a regenerative ocean farming company focused on sustainable seaweed cultivation to combat climate change and support marine ecosystems in the UK and beyond. Currently, Olly is preparing for the first solo row around the world.

**Gaia Vince** is a science writer and broadcaster exploring the interplay between human systems and the planetary environment. She is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Anthropocene Institute at UCL and a host of BBC Inside Science. Her first book, Adventures In The Anthropocene won the Royal Society Science Book of the Year Prize. Her latest book, Nomad Century: How To Survive The Climate Upheaval, explores global migration and planetary restoration in a radical call to arms.

**Geoff Sansome**, Chair of the 2025 Oxford Farming Conference said,“Whether it's global food security, grassroots innovation, or the need for inclusive food systems, the remarkable array of thought leaders are ready to guide us through the immense challenges - and opportunities - that lie ahead. The future of farming is at a critical juncture, and next January’s event is certain to inspire us all to take bold steps toward a more sustainable and resilient future."

Returning to OFC after his 2016 keynote, **Dr. Bram Govaerts**, Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), will deliver the Frank Parkinson Lecture, focusing on innovations in plant breeding for sustainable development.

Other keynote speakers include Interim Chair of the Climate Change Committee, **Professor Piers Forster,** who will bring over three decades of research expertise in understanding and addressing climate change.

**Tim Burnhope**, Group Director of Special Projects at JCB, who will address the role of hydrogen fuel in reducing carbon emissions in agriculture.

PIC’s Genetic Service Manager for Europe, **Dr Craig Lewis,** will explore innovation in genetic selection as a route to greater welfare and sustainability in animal production.

Executive Director at SEGES Innovation, **Lisbeth Henricksen** will speak on Denmark’s leadership in sustainable agriculture, exploring strategies for driving innovation in food production and farm management.

Executive Director of The Food Foundation, **Anna Taylor OBE** will focus on the policy frameworks required to address food insecurity and improve public health through a more sustainable food system.

Using his lived experience, **Dominic Watters** will highlight the intersection of poverty and food insecurity, urging policymakers and farmers alike to consider the role of food access in sustainable agricultural transformation.

Farmer and entrepreneur, **Barb Stefanyshyn-Cote** will share her personal journey of transformation from managing a large grain farm in Canada’s Prairies to founding a small, premium distillery.

Co-founder of Hodmedod, **Nick Saltmarsh**, will outline his mission to increase diversity on farms and in food for the benefit of farming and farmed landscapes, the environment, individual health and food culture.

To view a full list of speakers or purchase a ticket for OFC25, taking place from 8th-10th January 2024, visit [www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk/).

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors:**

For more information on the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC):

**Website:** [www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk/)

**Twitter:**[@oxfordfarming](http://www.twitter.com/oxfordfarming)

**YouTube:** [OxfordFarmingConference](https://www.youtube.com/oxfordfarmingconference)

* The OFC is one of the only external events to be allowed to host a debate in the Oxford Union. It has a long and proud history going back to 1936 and a strong reputation as one of the UK’s leading agricultural events. It always takes place in Oxford in the first week of January and is based at the Oxford Examination Schools. It offers a vibrant programme of speakers, panel and politics sessions as well as networking.
* OFC is a charity that invests in agricultural education and knowledge-sharing. It attracts over 650 delegates every year, including many people from the wider food chain, retail, NGOs, scientific organisations, media, policy-making bodies and governments from around the world.
* HRH Princess Royal is patron of the OFC.
* The dates of the 2025 OFC are 8th - 10th January 2025.
* Geoff Sansome is the chair for OFC25 and the theme is 'facing change, finding opportunity'.