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Dear Pat,

Thank you for your letter of 30 July to the Prime Minister about genetic technologies in food and farming. Your letter has been passed to Defra and we have been asked to reply.

The government recently set out its agricultural vision through announcements such as the Land Use Framework (LFU), the Good Food Cycle (GFC) and the Farming Roadmap 2050. Together, these strategies aim to deliver a productive, sustainable and resilient food system that supports economic growth, strengthens food security, improves public health and protects the natural environment. They reflect the understanding that food production, nature recovery, climate resilience and thriving rural economies are mutually dependent and require a coordinated, long-term approach.

The LFU establishes a path to multifunctional land use, tailored to local contexts and long-term planning for a sustainable future. Digitalising environmental datasets and mapping systems will address several issues at the heart of farmers and the wider sector. The alignment of national and local plans, commitment to maintaining food production, futureproofing against extreme weather and market shocks, and greater rights and certainty to tenant farmers are all vital to meeting the UK's needs.

The GFC takes a whole-system approach to food policy, aiming to ensure that everyone has access to safe, healthy and affordable food while supporting a thriving food sector. It seeks to strengthen regional supply chains, improve transparency, encourage investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation, and address longstanding challenges affecting health, resilience and sustainability. Developed with input from over 400 stakeholders, in government, industry, charities, academics and citizens, it reflects a commitment to ensuring that food policy serves the public interest.

The Farming Roadmap 2050 brings these ambitions together in a single, farmer-focused vision centred on profitability, productivity, sustainability and resilience. Building on over 15 months of extensive engagement with farmers and stakeholders across the UK, it supports innovation, improved farm management, fairer supply chains, better market access and stronger environmental outcomes, while helping farm businesses adapt to climate, market and geopolitical change.

We are committed to utilising technology, innovation and research as effective tools towards fulfilling the UK's objectives. Defra is supporting advances in agri-tech, engineering biology, digital technologies and precision agriculture to improve productivity, strengthen resilience, reduce environmental impacts and support healthier and more sustainable food production. Innovation must be accompanied by proportionate regulation, transparent governance and independent scientific scrutiny to maintain public confidence.

This approach underpins the implementation of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023, which enable the use of precision breeding technologies that can support food security, improve disease resistance, reduce pesticide use and enhance crop performance. Precision breeding consists of a range of technologies, such as gene editing, that can make the same type of genetic changes that could have occurred through traditional breeding, but in a more efficient and precise way. All precision bred organisms will continue to be subject to independent scientific assessment and regulatory oversight.

Defra's policies place a foundational importance on understanding public views. Alongside engagement with farmers, businesses, scientists, environmental organisations and civil society, policy development is informed by evidence. For example, the Food Standards Agency's Food and You survey series provides insights into public attitudes, behaviours and trust relating to food. More broadly, we are committed to ensuring that our policies reflect the widest possible range of public interests through transparent, evidence-based decision making and ongoing engagement across society.

Yours sincerely,

Ministerial Contact Unit