

The state of AI in UK farming

October 2026 edition

21 developments from September 2025 to September 2026,
each dated and each with its source.

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In short

On most UK farms AI shows up in three places. It is in the parlour camera that scores mobility and body condition, in the satellite or trap data that times an input, and in the chatbot someone uses to draft a form. The working tools are mostly in dairy: camera systems are now on hundreds of thousands of cows, and a major retailer has put one across its whole milk pool. Arable decision tools such as satellite nitrogen and AI pest traps are still at the trial stage with named growers and agronomists, not off-the-shelf products. Government money has gone up, but most of it goes to robotics and to developers rather than to farmers buying kit. Surveys show plenty of farmers trying general chatbots, very few paying for them, and trust still lagging. Rural broadband, not price, is often what stops a farm using these tools.

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- ➔ Camera-based AI for lameness and body condition is the most established AI tool on UK livestock farms: CattleEye monitors over 200,000 cattle on more than 140 farms, and M&S is putting it across all 46 of its dairy suppliers.
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- ➔ AI decision tools for arable farms are still being proven in trials, for example satellite nitrogen advice from Messium and AI pest traps in Tracer-Pest, rather than sold as finished products.
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- ➔ Most new government agri-tech money in 2026 goes to robotics, automation and commercialising products, not to grants that help farmers buy AI tools.
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- ➔ Many farmers use general-purpose generative AI, but few pay for it or trust it: McKinsey found 17% use and 4% paying, and only 6% count AI as a trusted source for decisions.
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- ➔ The biggest practical barriers are connectivity and the risk of trying something new, not interest: 42% of farmers cite poor connectivity, and 76% of Tesco suppliers say getting new tech onto farm is challenging.
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Livestock is where AI on UK farms is most commercially mature, and dairy leads by a distance. Overhead cameras that score mobility and body condition are moving from early adopters into supply-chain requirements. Beef and sheep have far less on offer: the main new arrival is virtual fencing, and its UK launch has not been confirmed.

3 Sep 2026

M&S extends AI welfare cameras to all 46 farms in its milk pool

Marks and Spencer is extending AI cattle monitoring to every farm in its British milk pool and says it is the first retailer to do so. The system uses existing parlour cameras to assess mobility, lying time, feeding time, social interactions and body condition, which feed into a 'cow comfort score'. CattleEye's chief executive is quoted, and M&S says a further £7m is available for agricultural innovation over the next five years. The article does not say who pays for installation or subscriptions.

Why it matters This is the first time a UK retailer has made AI welfare monitoring standard across its dairy supply. Other milk buyers may follow, so farmers on other contracts should ask whether it could become part of their terms and who would pay.

Source: [FarmingUK](https://www.farminguk.com) farminguk.com

24 Mar 2026

Halter raises US\$220m and plans UK and Ireland launch of virtual fencing

New Zealand's Halter, which makes solar-powered collars for virtual fencing and herd management, raised NZD 377m (about US\$220m) in a Series E round led by Founders Fund. The round valued the company at US\$2bn. Halter said it would expand into the UK, Ireland and South America 'later this year', without giving a month.

Why it matters For grazing dairy and beef herds, collar-based fencing and monitoring could cut the time spent moving stock and checking animals. We have not found confirmation that a UK launch or UK pricing has happened yet.

Source: [AgNavigator](https://www.agnavigator.com) agnavigator.com

10 Mar 2026

GEA opens Belfast software lab for CattleEye lameness AI

GEA is opening a software development lab in Belfast with 20 new roles focused on CattleEye and its DairyNet app, with support from Invest Northern Ireland. GEA says CattleEye, which it bought in 2024, is used on more than 140 farms across the UK, Europe, the US and Australia and monitors more than 200,000 cattle in 23 countries. The system detects and predicts lameness and provides body condition scores.

Why it matters Development of one of the main lameness-detection AI systems is based in the UK, and the system is now big enough to be widely tested. It is worth asking your vet or milk buyer about it before you rely on manual mobility scoring alone.

Source: [GEA](https://gea.com) gea.com

1 Dec 2025

AI mobility scores feed new US hoof-health breeding values

A joint project between the US Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding and the University of Minnesota used millions of CattleEye mobility assessments. Preliminary analyses put the heritability of mobility at 10 to 30%. Two new traits, hoof health and mobility, are being developed for national genetic indices. The release says farmers could select bulls with substantially lower lameness risk within three to five years.

Why it matters Camera data is starting to be used for breeding as well as treatment. If similar indices reach UK sire catalogues, mobility data from your own herd could inform bull selection. That is a US development for now.

Source: [GEA](https://gea.com) gea.com

Cropping decisions: nitrogen, pests and harvest

3 developments

AI in arable is mostly at the trial stage with named farms, agronomists and grain merchants. Satellite nitrogen advice and AI pest traps have published accuracy claims or field trials underway, but neither has been independently checked at scale on UK farms. Robotic harvesting is still mostly in horticulture.

23 Jul 2026

Tracer-Pest project trials AI traps for bean seed fly and swede midge

Tracer-Pest, an Innovate UK-backed project, is developing smart traps that use imaging and machine learning to identify bean seed fly in onions and swede midge in brassicas, with data sent to growers in near real time. P.E. Simmons & Son leads, with P.G. Rix Farms, Farmacy, the University of Warwick, B-hive Innovations and the British Growers Association. The article does not give the funding amount.

Why it matters Automated pest counts could replace hand-checking traps and help time sprays. It is a field crop trial, so wait for results compared against current monitoring before paying for it.

Source: [FreshPlaza](https://freshplaza.com) freshplaza.com

11 May 2026

Fieldwork Robotics secures £3m to move raspberry-picking robots to farm trials

Fieldwork Robotics raised a £2.2m equity round led by Elbow Beach Capital, which brings its package to about £3m with grant funding. A two-year trial is running on farms in Norfolk and Staffordshire. The company expects fleets of harvesting robots to start working on farms in 2027, depending on trial results.

Why it matters This shows where robotic harvesting has got to: commercial use is at least a season away and depends on trial results. Harvesting robots for arable and livestock farms are further off still.

Source: [FarmingUK](https://farminguk.com) farminguk.com

19 Mar 2026

Messium satellite nitrogen tool scales up with Frontier and Hutchinsons

Massium uses hyperspectral satellite imagery and AI to give nitrogen recommendations without tissue sampling. It reports more than 85% accuracy against lab samples after a first UK trial season in a very dry 2025. Massium is working with Frontier to bring on 30 to 60 more UK farmers, and Hutchinsons agronomists have committed to bringing 100 farmers into the programme. The company has raised £3.3m and plans to expand into barley.

Why it matters If you buy through Frontier or use a Hutchinsons agronomist, you may be offered this in 2026. The 85% figure is the company's own, from one dry season, so compare it with your usual sampling before cutting back.

Source: UK Agri-Tech Centre ukagritechcentre.com

AI assistants built into farm software are the most likely way most farmers will meet AI day to day: asking questions of your own records rather than of a general chatbot. The big machinery brands are launching these first in the US, while smaller UK and Irish firms are building tools around compliance and paperwork. Independent evidence on accuracy is thin.

1 Sep 2026

John Deere opens early access to 'JD' AI assistant in Operations Center

John Deere launched JD, an AI assistant built into its Operations Center that answers questions using the farm's own machine and field data, such as fuel use during tillage or which sprayer operator covers the most acres per hour. Early access opened to US customers on 1 September. Deere says it will be more widely available later in the year and will eventually come to the G5 cab display. Operations Center can also take data from non-Deere equipment.

Why it matters Many UK arable farms already put their data into Operations Center, so this is likely to be the first AI assistant many of them see. No UK date has been given.

Source: [Mobility Engineering Technology](https://mobilityengineeringtech.com) mobilityengineeringtech.com

9 Jun 2026

Suffolk start-up AgroPulse puts farm admin AI on WhatsApp

Agroinsights Technologies, based in Stowmarket, showed AgroPulse AI at Cereals 2026. It says the service offers more than 120 AI tools through WhatsApp, covering livestock records, spray plans, invoice scanning, cost tracking and Red Tractor compliance. A Raspberry Pi-based device, Pulse Edge, runs the AI on the farm when the internet drops and is in use on two Suffolk farms. The article gives no pricing, and the company is raising a pre-Series A round.

Why it matters It is aimed at the paperwork that takes up farm office time, and the offline device addresses poor rural connectivity. It is early-stage, with very few farms using it, so try it on low-risk tasks first.

Source: [Farmers Guide](https://farmersguide.co.uk) farmersguide.co.uk

15 Sep 2025

Herdwatch launches Herdi AI assistant inside livestock records app

Herdwatch, an Irish livestock management software firm, launched Herdi ('herd intelligence'), an AI assistant inside its app. Herdwatch says it combines herd records, compliance, breeding information and prices to answer herd-specific and general questions. The article gives no user numbers or pricing.

Why it matters Herdwatch took on Farmplan's livestock software customers, so some UK beef, sheep and dairy farmers may already have this in an app they use. Check its answers on compliance questions against the official rules.

Source: [TechCentral.ie](https://www.techcentral.ie/news/2025/09/15/herdwatch-launches-herdi-ai-assistant-inside-livestock-records-app/)

Defra's innovation budget has grown, with £123m available in 2026-27, and the 25-year Farming Roadmap promises better access to technology and simpler digital admin. Most of the money goes to developers and research partnerships, with robotics getting a dedicated round, rather than to farmers buying AI tools. Meanwhile the main body that helps farmers adopt agri-tech is being cut sharply.

18 Sep 2026

UK Agri-Tech Centre consults on cutting staff from 130 to 50

The UK Agri-Tech Centre, formed in 2024 from a merger of three government-backed agri-tech bodies, is consulting on cutting its workforce from about 130 to about 50, with up to 80 jobs at risk. Its new strategy from 2027 focuses on helping farmers adopt technology. Innovate UK funding continues under existing agreements until March 2027.

Why it matters The centre runs on-farm trials and Adopt-style projects that test AI tools in real conditions. A much smaller team may mean fewer independent trials, at a time when farmers need evidence before they buy.

Source: [Farmers Weekly](https://www.farmersweekly.co.uk) [fwi.co.uk](https://www.fwi.co.uk)

3 Aug 2026

Defra opens £20m robotics and automation round, now including livestock

Defra and Innovate UK opened a £20m Farming Futures competition for robots and automated systems that plant, tend and harvest crops. Livestock projects are now eligible; one example given is Roboscientific's breath-analysis test for respiratory disease in dairy cows. The round is part of a £53m boost, bringing farming research and technology funding to £123m this year.

Why it matters Farms can join these projects as partners, which is a way to trial kit without paying the full cost. The release does not mention AI, so AI tools are funded here only as part of automation projects.

Source: [GOV.UK \(Defra\)](https://www.gov.uk) [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

25 Jun 2026

Farming Roadmap promises single digital farming account and £123m innovation pot

Defra's 25-year Farming Roadmap, launched on 24 June, adds £53m to the Farming Innovation Programme, bringing this year's total to £123m. It also sets up a new £30m Farmer Collaboration Fund. It commits to eventually replacing several government services with a 'single digital farming account' and to improving data quality and standards. The coverage reports no specific commitments on AI.

Why it matters A single digital account could cut admin time more than any AI tool, and standard data formats are what farm AI assistants need to work properly. No timetable has been set.

Source: [Farming.co.uk](https://www.farming.co.uk)

14 Apr 2026

£50m public-private package to bring up to 12 agri-tech tools to farms

Ministers announced £8m of government money alongside about £40m of private investment through the Investor Partnerships strand of the Farming Innovation Programme. The aim is to move up to a dozen agri-tech tools into practical farm use. The examples named were biological products (FA Bio's fungal biopesticide and Rhizocore's tree fungi), not AI tools, although the headline mentions AI and robotics. A further £5m round was announced for spring.

Why it matters The money goes to companies taking products to market, not to farmers. Despite the AI headline, the first named products are not AI.

Source: [FarmingUK](https://www.farminguk.com) [farminguk.com](https://www.farminguk.com)

4 Mar 2026

Seven firms share £560,000 to build satellite and AI farm tools

After a Defra and Innovate UK hackathon, seven British companies each received £80,000 in Space Commercialisation Credits to develop satellite and AI tools. The winners include x10NI, which makes digital farm simulations giving soil-health data, and Gentian, which uses AI satellite analysis to monitor habitats and biodiversity.

Why it matters Satellite AI for soil and biodiversity is being shaped around evidence for environmental schemes. These are early-stage firms, so do not expect products ready to sell for a while.

Source: [FarmingUK](https://www.farminguk.com) [farminguk.com](https://www.farminguk.com)

There are no solid UK figures on how many farmers use AI. The best large dataset is international, and the US surveys measure use in very different ways. What the evidence does agree on is that many farmers have tried AI chatbots, few pay for them, and trust and connectivity hold back further use.

29 Sep 2026

Tesco supplier survey: 58% adopted an innovation, 76% find it hard

Tesco surveyed 151 farmers in its UK supply chain between 27 July and 21 August. 58% had introduced an innovation in the past year, up from 46% in 2025, but 76% said getting new technology onto farms was challenging or very challenging. 48% wanted subsidised trials before committing, nine points more than last year. The survey asked about technology in general, not AI specifically.

Why it matters Farmers' main concern is the risk of buying something that does not work. Paid-for or subsidised trials are what would most help AI tools spread.

Source: [FarmingUK](https://farminguk.com) farminguk.com

9 Sep 2026

McKinsey: 17% of farmers use generative AI, only 4% pay

McKinsey's biennial Global Farmer Insights survey of 5,500 farmers in ten countries found 17% use generative AI for farm tasks and 4% pay for a tool. Only 6% named generative AI or AI search as a trusted source for decisions, against 56% for agronomists. Planned spending fell 24 percentage points because of high input costs.

Why it matters Farmers are mainly using free general chatbots for planning and research, and still rely on their agronomist for decisions. That is a sensible approach while the tools remain unproven.

Source: [Claims Journal \(Bloomberg\)](https://claimsjournal.com) claimsjournal.com

19 Jun 2026

Bangor and Gloucestershire universities study AI use on Welsh farms

A UKRI-funded study led by Bangor University and the University of Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Institute is looking at how AI and digital tools are used on Welsh farms. It is also looking at whether those tools could help with net zero and what skills farmers need. It invited farmers already using these tools to take part, including at the Royal Welsh Show on 22 July.

Why it matters This is one of the few UK studies looking at how farms actually use AI, as opposed to what developers claim. Its findings could shape support under the Welsh Sustainable Farming Scheme.

Source: [Farmers Weekly](https://fwi.co.uk) fwi.co.uk

18 Jun 2026

US survey: 75% of farmers have tried ChatGPT-style tools, trust lags

A MorganMyers survey with Ag Access found 75% of US farmers and ranchers have used tools such as ChatGPT or Gemini, and nearly half of those use them weekly or more. Dairy producers, farmers under 35 and larger operations use them most. Smaller operations, farmers aged 51 and over and row-crop producers use them least.

Why it matters The US pattern, with dairy and younger farmers leading, probably applies in the UK too, but there is no comparable UK figure. Treat headline usage numbers as a measure of people trying AI, not of it shaping decisions.

Source: [AgWired](https://agwired.com) agwired.com

12 Mar 2026

UK Agri-Tech Centre chief: AI must earn its place on farm

Steve McLean, chief executive of the UK Agri-Tech Centre, wrote that AI is starting to deliver measurable benefit on farms. He cited Fotenix's crop diagnostics and Hoofcount's early lameness detection as tools tested on working farms. He also noted that cost and servicing concerns are slowing uptake of autonomous machines such as Robotti and AgBot.

Why it matters Even supporters of the technology are saying any tool should be judged on measurable return on a working farm, not on promises. That is a sensible test to apply to any sales pitch.

Source: [Farmers Weekly](https://farmersweekly.co.uk) fwi.co.uk

29 Jan 2026

Connectivity named as the main barrier to on-farm AI

The UK Agri-Tech Centre, citing a 2025 national survey, reported that 42% of farmers see poor connectivity as a major barrier to new tools and 8% of farms have no internet at all. 47% of farms with full fibre said it gave them access to precision tools they could not use before. The piece also described ChirrupNano, a bioacoustic device that identifies more than 100 bird species, now being rolled out to more than 100 farmers.

Why it matters Most camera, satellite and assistant tools need reliable data links. Check your coverage before signing up, or choose tools that work offline.

Source: [UK Agri-Tech Centre](https://ukagritechcentre.com) ukagritechcentre.com

What to watch next

↑ Whether Halter actually launches in the UK

Halter said in March it would expand into the UK and Ireland during 2026, but we have found no confirmed launch date or UK pricing. Watch for collar costs, subscription terms and whether the system works on hill ground with patchy mobile signal. It would be the first big AI-based herd management system aimed at grazing beef and sheep farmers as well as dairy.

↑ Results from the arable trials

The Messium nitrogen scale-up through Frontier and Hutchinsons, and the Tracer-Pest field trials, should produce data from the 2026 season. Look for independent comparison with tissue sampling and with hand-checked traps, not just company accuracy claims. That evidence will decide whether these become standard agronomy services or stay as pilots.

↑ Whether other milk buyers follow M&S on AI cameras

M&S has made AI welfare monitoring standard across its dairy supply. The open questions are whether other retailers or processors write similar requirements into milk contracts, and who pays for the cameras and subscriptions. Who controls and can use the cow data is also unresolved.

↑ UK release of machinery-brand AI assistants

John Deere's JD assistant is in US early access, with wider release promised later this year and a version for the cab display to follow. UK farmers already using Operations Center should watch for a UK date and any extra cost. They should also check how it handles data from non-Deere machinery.

↑ Funding awards and the future of the UK Agri-Tech Centre

Registration for the £20m robotics and automation round closed on 30 September 2026, so awards should follow. At the same time the UK Agri-Tech Centre is shrinking towards about 50 staff, with Innovate UK funding agreed only until March 2027. Whether independent on-farm trials survive the cuts will affect how farmers judge AI tools.

How this report was made

Every development here was found in a public source dated from September 2025 to September 2026: trade press, regulators, journals and company announcements. Each one names its source, so you can read the original.

All 21 source links were checked on 12 Oct 2026. Nothing here is advice; it is a record of what happened.

The next edition, and the guides behind this one, are at farmersai.co.uk/report/