



## **Milestones for the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association 2009 to 2017**

- 2009** The initial 'Grass-Fed Livestock UK' group formed with 34 participants, wishing to promote the benefits of 100% grass-fed beef and lamb production
- 2011** The Pasture-Fed Livestock Association registered as a Community Interest Company
- 2013** Standards for 100% pastured cattle and sheep production registered with the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), including a section on biodiversity and habitat management developed with the RSPB
- 2014** Website developed with a fully traceable system of recording animals and 100% grass-fed produce
- 2015** The Pasture for Life Certification Mark registered with the IPO. The first and only certification covering pasture-based livestock production in the UK and probably in the EU
- 2016** Working with the AHDB Beef and Lamb Stocktake programme, the PFLA presented the positive economic business case for wholly pasture-fed production based on case studies from certified Pasture for Life farms. This resulted in the publication of '*Pasture for Life – it can be done*', which was launched at the 2016 Oxford Real Farming Conference
- 2017** Current membership comprises of:
- ✓ More than 950 supporters
  - ✓ 320 full members
  - ✓ 54 certified Pasture for Life farms and 35 certified Pasture for Life butchers
- 2017** Land under Pasture for Life management:
- ✓ 7,454 ha of land under Pasture for Life management, 66% of which is organic,
  - ✓ An estimated herd size of more than 5,300 cattle and flock size of more than 10,000 sheep managed to Pasture for Life standards
- 2017** Main achievements of the year:
- ✓ Increasing influence at a policy and government level, with many encouraging statements from Government on extensive pasture-based farming and soil being at the centre of UK agriculture
  - ✓ Farmer members actively involved in research on soils with institutions such as Rothamsted Research and academics
  - ✓ The announcement of a three-year, BBSRC-funded research project worth around £600,000, carried out by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) on 'Sustainable and economic and ecological grazing systems – learning from practitioners.' The study will involve 60 Pasture for Life farmer members
  - ✓ Wide coverage on television, radio and in the farming and consumer press, plus tasting events for consumers, chefs and butchers

- ✓ Two full time members of staff – a General Manager and a Membership and Office Manager, based at Farm491 in Cirencester
- ✓ Organic Farmers & Growers appointed to undertake the administration of Pasture for Life certification
- ✓ Further funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) for £40,000 per year for three years to 2019
- ✓ A successful application to the Prince's Countryside Trust Fund to carry out farmer to farmer training in Pasture for Life methods in Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDAs) and Less Favoured Areas (LFAs), worth £13,500 per year for three years
- ✓ The completion of a pilot project into Pasture for Life dairy production. Standards have been established and brought into the family of Pasture for Life production methods
- ✓ The publication of 'The Soil Never Sleeps', an anthology of poems by Adam Horovitz, poet in residence for the PFLA, having spent time on four farms in each of the four seasons

A full list of milestones can be found at: <https://www.pastureforlife.org/about-us/>

### Operating on a shoestring – the PFLA's financial performance

The PFLA has run a very tight ship and continues to do so. The levels of expenditure over the period 2011 to 2017 are shown below:

<b>Total annual PFLA expenditure</b>	
<b>Year ending</b>	<b>Total expenditure (£)</b>
March 2012	6,058
March 2013	20,859
March 2014	37,272
March 2015	58,692
March 2016	69,757
March 2017	95,753
<b>Total</b>	<b>288,391</b>

Since incorporation to 31 March 2017 total income has been from the following sources:

	<b>£</b>
Founder membership fees:	2,400
Bonds purchased by members:	6,500
Donations from members	21,500
Fees from events	30,000
Membership fees	45,000
Certification fees	6,000
Levies on stock sold	3,100
Grants	175,000 (£120,000 from EFF over four years)
<b>Total</b>	<b>289,500</b>

However, the single most important source of 'income', which has not been monetised, has been generated by the professional volunteer input of a few key people, running to an absolute minimum of 70 hours a week or 3,500 hours a year. Valued at a very modest £15 an hour, this equates to £52,000 a year, plus unclaimed expenses. This suggests volunteer inputs over five years to be worth well in excess of £250,000.

The PFLA has demonstrated the ability to establish the *Pasture for Life* brand/certification mark and the means for ensuring its integrity, while building its membership and the number of certified farmers and butchers – and to do so on a shoestring. It illustrates how a small grant can support the work of dedicated volunteers. But it is both difficult and unreasonable to continue to rely on such volunteer input and as the organisation grows, the need for more funding becomes imperative.

In 2016, the PFLA put in a further application to the EFF and is now in receipt of funds to 2019 of £40,000 a year. The membership fee has been doubled from £50 to £100 so that membership income matches the cost of running the membership and office manager.

This period of growth and commitment from a few key individuals has all occurred under the Chairmanship of John Meadley. He has combined the ability to give strategic direction, with day-to-day operations and the legwork needed to simply make things happen.

The directors have been preparing for a new chairman, and understand the new individual will not be able to put in the same level of hours and commitment. The General Manager and directors have taken over many of the roles previously fulfilled by John.

John's key achievements have been to:

- ✓ Set the tone and ethos of the PFLA, which is positive and non-judgemental and promotes the value of what farmer members achieve on their farms
- ✓ Bring together farmers with research institutions and academics and to build the evidence for the benefits of Pasture for Life farming methods
- ✓ Establish the PFLA as a real community organisation with a deep sense of innovation, open-mindedness and mutual support for each other and what can be learnt from one another
- ✓ Develop the PFLA to become an extremely well-respected organisation that is now of interest and relevance to policy and decision makers, academics and farmers, keen to find a new way to farm more profitably through making best use of their grass and pasture

The long-term business plan was based on income from membership and from income on levies charged on Pasture for Life certified meat sold. However, this latter income strand has not been forthcoming in the way envisaged, so the organisation remains reliant on grant funding. At the April 2017 Board meeting the priorities were set to be to:

- a. Increase membership and income from membership
- b. Address the reasons for market failure
- c. Build the market in order to increase levy income.

The Annual Report for 2017 summarises the priorities for the next three years:

*“The absolute priority for the coming year is to ensure that we continue to make positive steps towards building an organisation that can become financially self-sustaining.*

*“During the last year we raised our membership fee from £50 to £100 and it is encouraging to see that the membership continues to thrive and that new members continue to join. We are confident that we are providing real value for money and our reputation as an innovative and mutually supportive membership organisation is contributing to our success.*

*“Directors took the decision during the year to make growing our membership and improving our membership offer the main priority for the forthcoming year. Underpinning this is the work to address the market failures that exist, principally by lobbying government, and to grow the market for Pasture for Life certified produce with particular focus on the demand side.”*

### **Challenges for a new chairman**

The PFLA is looking for a chairman who is keen to review current operations and the assumptions on which future income generation is based, and to ensure the association can make the step change needed to become self-financing, while moving to scale.

The directors are committed to seeing the above priorities to completion during the next three years. In particular they would like to see:

- ✓ Membership fees to cover at least 50% of core operating costs (currently around 30%)
- ✓ Greater financial stability, with security to 2022/2023
- ✓ A strong evidence base established in support of the Pasture for Life approach
- ✓ To have achieved recognition in government policy for Pasture for Life
- ✓ To have at least 25,000 hectares under Pasture for Life certification
- ✓ To have at least 6,000 cattle and 25,000 sheep sold under Pasture for Life certification a year