****News Release
16 November 2022

*Embargoed until 2:30pm*

**QMS and AHDB announce 9 New Monitor Farms at AgriScot**

Nine farms across Scotland are about to embark on a journey of transformative change as QMS and AHDB announce Scotland’s Monitor Farms for 2022 to 2026.

Launched in autumn 2003, the Monitor Farm Scotland Programme initiative is managed by Quality Meat Scotland with support from AHDB with funding from the Scottish Government. It aims to help to farms reach full economic, social, and environmental sustainability, by optimising production. Over the next four years, industry and experts will be brought together to help them assess the farm’s performance, explore opportunities, and develop solutions to the challenges they face.

Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon said: “I am delighted to see the range of farms taking part in the Monitor Farm Project.

“This long-running programme is ideally placed to support the wider agricultural sector to optimise production, contributing to our food security while helping meet our climate change and net zero targets.

“Innovation and sustainability has never been more important for an industry facing the significant challenges of the on-going war in Ukraine and against the backdrop of Covid-19, Brexit and the cost of living crisis.

“I would encourage farmers and crofters to engage with the programme and benefit from the shared knowledge and experiences that come from the Monitor Farm Project.”

“We are delighted to welcome onboard all nine farms and the families that run them,” says Beth Alexander, Monitor Farm Programme Manager. “During its lifetime, the Monitor Farm initiative has pioneered new ways of working, experimented with fresh ideas and, most importantly, improved the productivity and profitability of the businesses it has worked with. The journeys these farms go on will be as unique the farms themselves.”

This cycle the Monitor Farm Programme will be supported by an in-house delivery team with each farm sitting under one of three regional advisers. The farmers will have a management board of 10-12 as well as the community groups providing support and input.

“The benefits of the programme extend well beyond the gates of the individual Monitor Farms,” says Beth. “The launch meetings on each Monitor are open to the whole farming community, who are very much welcome to come along and join the discussions. We want the learnings and the example set by Monitor farms to benefit all farmers across the whole of Scotland.

“The nine farms chosen to take part this year, reflect the diverse tapestry of livestock and mixed farming across Scotland. So, wherever you’re based, whatever the scale or set-up of your farm, you can follow a Monitor Farm with similar opportunities and challenges.”

The Monitor Farms this cycle are:

**South Ayrshire Monitor**

A total of 1770 acres are farmed by John and Allison Andrew in partnership with son David. Rowanston comprises 320 acres of owned land, with an additional 100 acres of neighbouring land rented annually. The 1350 acre hill farm of Blair lies 3 miles away and is rented on an MLDT from Kilkerran Estate. The Andrews have 150 hill suckler cows. Replacements are homebred and all progeny finished on farm. Approximately a further 200 store cattle are bought in for finishing each year. There’s also a flock comprising 550 hill ewes and 450 low ground ewes.

The first meeting date is: **30th November 2022**.

**Strathspey Monitor Farm**

Auchernack Farm is an 800ac livestock farm based in Strathspey. It is run by Malcolm and Sammie Smith who farm alongside son, Calum. They have 140 suckler cows and 120 store cattle and focus on store calf production using predominantly Limousin sires.

The first meeting date is: **5th December 2022.**

**Banff and Buchan Monitor Farm**

Sauchentree Farm, at New Aberdour, on the north-east coast of Scotland, is run by Bruce Irvine in partnership with his father and mother. In total, Bruce farms 650ac with cereals, sheep and cattle with livestock providing fertility for the arable side.

The first meeting date is: **6th December 2022.**

**Deeside Monitor Farm**
Meikle Maldron, in the northeast of Scotland, is run by Duncan and Claire Morrison who moved to the farm in 2016.

In total, Duncan and Claire farm 226 ha as a wholly suckler enterprise with 220 suckler cows comprising commercial Aberdeen Angus and Pedigree Aberdeen Angus and Stabilisers. Of the 220 cows, they own 120 and lease a herd of 100 stabiliser cows.

The first meeting date is: **7th December 2022**.

**Stirlingshire Monitor Farm**

Lands of Drumhead and Blairfad total 1,250ac and are situated on the boundary of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. They are farmed by the Duncan family, who have a stratified system with the hill farm at Inveruglas producing replacements for the lowland units. In total, the Duncan’s are calving 180-190 calves each year, and have a flock of 2,300 sheep. Three of Bruce and Shona’s four children are looking to return to the farm from full-time education. Bruce’s parents and father’s cousin also continue to be involved at their respective holdings.

The first meeting date is: **13th December 2022**.

**Roxburghshire Monitor Farm**

Cowbog is a mixed tenanted farm, with two holdings and a contract farming arrangement with the Roxburghe Estates. In total, husband and wife team, Robert and Lucy Wilson, together with Robert’s parents, farm 242ha.They’ve 100 suckler cows plus followers, and 20 finishing cows. All are pure bred Herefords. The Wilson’s also have a small flock of sheep and 160ha in arable or forage production over the 3 farms.

The first meeting date is: **14th December 2022**.

**Dumfries Monitor Farm**

Barnbackle is a 500ac beef and sheep farm run by Richard McCornick, partner Hayley Currie and Richard’s parents, Andrew and Janice. Richard’s brother Craig and wife Michelle are also involved, although farming in Ayrshire but still involved. Barnbackle runs 150 suckler cows, 20 store cattle, 700 ewes. The cows are sim-luings and calve in spring and autumn.

The first meeting date is: **15th December 2022**.

**East Lothian Monitor Farm**

Castleton Farm is a 169ha farm run by Stuart McNicol and his father, Bill, who works on the farm part-time. Stuart’s wife, Jo manages the Agritourism enterprises.

The arable acreage produces wheat, malting spring barley, spring beans, and cover crops

which are grazed by sheep. Stuart only ploughs when necessary, the majority of crops are established with a strip-till.

The first meeting date is: **11th January 2023.**

**Argyll Monitor Farm, Craig Archibald**

Craigens Farm is a 2000ha tenanted unit on the west coast of Islay. Craig Archibald and his family focus on producing Angus and Charolais yearling calves for the store market and fat lambs. In addition to the 220 suckler cows, 200 stores, 1,000 ewes and their lambs, the farm has arable land. 20ha is producing barley grown for a local distillery and 10ha is growing forage rape.

The first meeting date is: **17th January 2023**.

For further information on each Monitor Farm and to sign up to the launch meetings, visit www.monitorfarms.co.uk

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.