

Co-operative Farms boss steps down

The head of Britain's largest farming operation has resigned.

Christine Tacon has stepped down from her role as managing director of the Co-operative Farms after 11 years in the role.

Mrs Tacon made the decision after organisational changes within the retailer meant her role was set to change. She said restructuring in the Co-op's food retail executive had given her the opportunity to move away from the business during a strong and healthy period to try different roles in agriculture.

Mrs Tacon joined the Co-operative in 2000 and turned the business' farming operations around from a £6m loss-making enterprise to one which recorded record profits of £4m last year.

She oversaw the firm's strategy to better integrate producers with the rest of the supply chain and helped lead its strategy to improve wildlife and biodiversity on the group's farms. She also helped lead the group's Farm to Fork scheme, which has seen 50,000 schoolchildren visit farms to learn about where food comes from.

Mrs Tacon said she planned to move onto other projects in agricultural media, politics and consultancy once she left her role at the end of the year. "I have the best job in the industry but it's time to move on," she said. "We have created strong relationships with farmers because we honour contracts and act as a buffer – often taking hits in the packhouses to ensure prices are kept and our relationships are maintained.

"But that's not to say we can rest on our laurels. There is a lot of interest in British at the moment from consumers which works in UK farmers' favour. But if we start thinking we can build in extra profit margins, that's naïve. We are still going to have to be outstanding at what we do."



Moving on: Christine Tacon.