

I moved to the North West in 2000 to lead the Co-op's farming business, and still live here.

Originally a Chartered Engineer, I've spent most of my career in food: including at Mars and Fonterra (New Zealand's dairy co-op). Since leaving the Co-op in 2011, I have worked at board level, including the Met Office, Natural Environment Research Council and AF Group, a farmer purchasing co-op serving 4000 members. I was Groceries Code Adjudicator for 7 years and regulated 13 large retailers, including the Co-op: my role was to monitor, encourage and ensure compliance with a legally binding code of practice on how suppliers should be treated.

Why am I interested in working with the Co-op again and representing you as members?

I took over the farming business when it was loss-making, but we quickly returned to profit. We took some courageous decisions like getting out of livestock farming and investing in produce packing. Most of our successes came by putting co-op values and principles heart and centre of Co-op Farms: we shared machinery; centralised professional expertise, like procurement and marketing; so farmers focused on what they did best - producing food efficiently and responsibly. We launched an education project, over 250k children visited our farms, learning where their food came from. We developed a range of "Grown by us" products for Co-op shops. Each farm ran their own wildlife project because some decisions are best taken locally. We welcomed Co-op members onto farms. The farm business improved simply by living the Co-op values of co-operation, education, concern for the community and local decision-making.

As Groceries Code Adjudicator, I listened to suppliers and ran annual surveys so that I could make retailers aware of the issues their suppliers were experiencing. I investigated Tesco and found them in breach of the Code by delaying payments to suppliers; Tesco's behaviour improved dramatically as I ensured that they implemented all my recommendations. I also investigated the Co-op and found them in breach of varying agreements without reasonable notice. There was no malice, but I found poor governance controls, missing documentation and systems that did not match policies. A highly effective Co-op team worked through my recommendations, and with new practices in place, Co-op was voted by their suppliers to be the second most compliant retailer the following year. A remarkable improvement.

We need more diversity in the food and farming sector and I run a network with over 600 members, helping women network and find role models and mentors.

I now chair Red Tractor, the assurance body telling customers that food is British and farmed with care.

I'd bring to the Co-op a focus on organisational culture and colleague progression; food supply chain experience with insight about future opportunities, such as forecasting to reduce food waste; and a desire to listen and advocate for members, especially the young who are passionate to campaign on issues which shape their future society.

I know that co-op values and principles in action make for better business.