



April 2015

Produce World urges growers to 'match our ambition'

'Match our ambition' was the main message from Produce World Group's Executive Chairman and CEO Neil Fraser to key growers who came together for their Grower Day at Houghton Hall in Norfolk. Neil explained the rationale behind recent changes at the leading fresh vegetable grower and supplier, as well as outlining its ambitious plans for future growth.

"We have made our plans for growing the company very clear but we can't do it alone. Our key growers are absolutely critical to realising these plans – without growers we don't have a business. We need to get closer to our growers and work with them in a collaborative way to deliver the lowest cost model in the market place. It's not about size for its own sake, but about achieving scale that will help to deliver that model and provide increased profitability for everyone," he said.

Mr. Fraser was speaking at the second annual Produce World Grower Day alongside fellow members of the Group's Management Team, Commercial Director Frank Robinson and Procurement Director Jon Campbell.

Mr. Robinson spoke about the unprecedented degree of change on the High Street, consumer purchasing habits and the consequences for all retailer suppliers including Produce World and its growers. He also emphasised the fact that these changes represented a real opportunity for those who rose to the challenge.

Procurement Director Jon Campbell explained that the Group now had a single procurement team which would work across all categories and would provide more opportunities. He said: "We are working on the basis that it is one business, regardless of the category we are dealing with, and we need one team handling procurement which can share knowledge and, just as importantly, work closely with the commercial team to meet the needs of our customers.

"Moving forward we will be looking at a consolidated grower base, but this will provide opportunities and more long-term contracts will give growers the confidence to invest. By working more closely with our growers, we believe we can create a greater margin for everyone."

Mr Campbell concluded his presentation by urging the growers to 'prepare for growth'. He said: "For those up to the challenge, as our business grows so will your business."

Produce World Group Head of Sustainability and Research Guy Thallon took the audience through '15 things in 15 minutes' delivering a whistle-stop tour of the Produce World Group's 4Life programme which covers Responsible Sourcing, Environmental Sourcing, Community Impact and Workplace Culture. He gave the audience a rapid run-through on an exciting series of projects that includes research and development.

He said: "4Life is our CSR programme which has real commercial objectives at its heart. That includes our extensive research programme which is designed to deliver benefits to our growers and increase margins all around."

Outside speakers included Lord Peter Melchett from the Soil Association and Caroline Drummond from LEAF who provided information on their organisations and set the scene on the future challenges for food and farming. In particular both speakers spoke about healthy eating and the need for the industry to sell the health benefits of fresh vegetables.

Workshops in the afternoon were conducted by Smiths Gore – on succession planning – Agri-Tech East and the Gangmaster Licensing Authority (GLA).

-Ends-



Neil Fraser addresses the Produce World Group grower meeting



Belinda Clarke of Agri-Tech East led one of three workshop sessions

Produce World Group Website: www.produceworld.co.uk **Produce World Group Twitter:** [@produceworld](https://twitter.com/produceworld)

About Produce World Group

Produce World Group is one of the largest expert growers and suppliers of high quality fresh vegetables in Europe. It is a privately owned business, founded by the Burgess family in 1898, and the family ethos and values remain in place. The Produce World Group business is customer and category focused and it is an industry leader in sustainable and responsible agronomy, growing and lean supply chain management.

Its sourcing is a combination of produce from its own farming division Burgess Farms, joint-ventures, and collaborative working with dedicated grower groups, supplying a variety of root vegetables, potatoes, brassicas, alliums, and organic produce to leading retailers, food service and manufacturing customers.

Produce World Group is the UK's only fresh produce company that regularly donates produce to Fareshare, which enables the charity to plan more effectively each year. In October 2014 the Produce World Group was recognised for its work with Fareshare and Feeding the 5000 for redistributing this produce to help tackle food poverty across the UK by winning the CRTG Best Food Waste Initiative of the Year award. The Waitrose Way Awards also recognised this work, with the Produce World Group being highly commended for its entry into the Treading Lightly – Waste award category. In addition, the Produce World Group was highly recommended in the Champion British award category for its work with the BBC primetime TV programme Harvest, which aimed to raise consumer awareness of how the nation's food gets from field to fork.

Produce World Group is leading the way in sustainability, research and innovation in the agriculture sector. In late 2013 the Produce World Group, in collaboration with other commercial organisations and academic institutions, was awarded funding through Sainsbury's Organic Grant to look at innovative pest controls to

improve the growth of organic brassicas. Through Agri-Tech Catalyst funding support, the group is working with Cranfield University to build on the success of the 'Soil-for-Life' project, which aims to inform on-farm decision making and drive innovation in soil management.

Media Enquiries:

For further information, please contact Peter Crowe or Jack Melling at the Produce World press office on 01223 272800 or email peter.crowe@war.uk.com / jack.melling@war.uk.com