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By Nina Pullman

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## The Co-op signs NFU Fruit and Veg pledge

Retailer made the commitment to support its fresh produce suppliers at its inaugural Farming Conference this week



Adele Balmforth, Co-op category trading manager for produce; Matthew Hood, Co-op trading director for fresh and frozen; Michael Fletcher, Co-op commercial director; Lee Abbey, NFU horticulture advisor; Ciara Gorst, Co-op senior agriculture manager

**T**he Co-op has followed the lead of Aldi and Lidl to sign the NFU's Fruit and Vegetable Pledge and guarantee fair treatment of suppliers and growers.

It made the announcement at its inaugural Co-op Farming Conference, held this week (Tuesday 20 September) at Emirates Old Trafford, Manchester.

The pledge requires retailers to commit to the fair treatment of suppliers; advance planning on promotions; investment in horticultural research; and a commitment to increasing the amount of British fresh produce available for customers.

The Co-op said signing the pledge follows the development of its produce sourcing model that, earlier this year, saw it become one of the first retailers to introduce three-year contracts with many of its fresh produce suppliers.

Co-op commercial director Michael Fletcher said: "We're thrilled to be able to announce our support for the NFU's Fruit and Veg Pledge at the Co-op's very first farming conference in the presence of over 300 of our farming group members, suppliers, industry and Co-op colleagues.

"We know our customers care about the provenance of their food and are keen to champion British products wherever they can. By signing up to this charter, we're giving them further assurance on the transparency of our supply chains and making it easier than ever for them to support British farmers and growers."

Guy Poskitt, NFU horticulture board vice chairman, said: "We are delighted the Co-op has signed the NFU Fruit and Veg Pledge. In a week that saw farmers and politicians come together in Westminster to Back British Farming, the Co-op's commitment to our industry shines through.

"It is a real step forward when a retailer makes two commitments to British farming in one week. With Co-op's Fruit and Veg commitment, our British growers have a bright and prosperous future, one that they can thrive on and one that continues to offer British consumers high quality great British food."

Delegates at the Co-op's Farming Conference also heard from Olympic cycling champion Chris Boardman MBE, who spoke about the essential ingredients for successful teamwork, while key suppliers gave their views on effective supply chain networks.

A Co-op 'market stall', featuring produce from Muller, Dunbia, Noble Foods, 2Sisters, Red Tractor, LEAF and Love British Food, was used as a networking lunch, ahead of the inaugural Co-op Farming Group Awards.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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