



**Christine
Tacon**

Professional Experience

With a robust background as a chartered engineer and environmentalist, I have cultivated a career in food with roles at Mars and Fonterra, New Zealand's dairy co-op. I led the Co-op's farming business, the UK's largest, and served as a non-executive director for organisations including the Met Office, and the Natural Environment Research Council. Additionally, I was the first Groceries Code Adjudicator, regulating the supermarket sector to ensure fair treatment for suppliers. I now chair Red Tractor, where we audit farmers and processors against the standards we set for food safety, animal welfare and the environment so we can assure you that British food is farmed with care. I also chair a not-for-profit recruitment and training organisation dedicated to nurturing talent within the food industry through apprenticeships and secondments within our member businesses, which include growers, suppliers, and supermarkets.

Quantifiable achievements

During my time at the helm of the Co-op farming business I led a turnaround from loss to profit, taking courageous decisions like getting out of livestock farming and investing in produce packing. By instilling Co-op Values at the core of our operations and fostering collaboration between our farms we not only improved efficiency but also promoted a culture of community engagement, evidenced by the 250k children visiting our farms. Each farm ran their own wildlife project, recognising some decisions are best taken locally, and we welcomed Co-op members onto farms. The farm business improved through living the Co-op values of co-operation, education, concern for the community and local decision-making.

As Groceries Code Adjudicator I had the power to ensure supermarkets complied with fair trading practices. I listened to suppliers and ran annual surveys to measure progress and identify issues. I launched a statutory investigation into Tesco and found them in breach of the Code by delaying payments to suppliers; Tesco's behaviour improved dramatically as they implemented my recommendations. I also investigated the Co-op and found they had breached the Code by changing agreements without reasonable notice; I made recommendations that significantly enhanced their governance controls. A highly effective Co-op team developed and embedded new practices and, the following year, Co-op was recognised as the second most compliant supermarket.

Vision statement for the Co-op

Drawing upon my unique insights and experiences, I want to enhance Co-op's commercial performance and resilience by fostering closer partnerships with suppliers and farmers, seeking longer-term contracts for grower certainty and collaborative forecasting to minimise waste. I am committed to promoting employee and member engagement by nurturing an organisational culture rooted in empowerment and inclusivity.

Engagement with members

A Member Nominated Director is accountable to you: I will listen to you and advocate for the topics you care about. I want to engage with members of all demographics, especially the young. By championing Co-op Values and Principles, I believe we can not only drive business success but also empower our community to shape the future of our Co-op together.
