Rural SafeGuard
By Optimal Risk Group

THE DEMETER INITIATIVE

A Collaborative Approach to Reduce the Rural Crime Risk

Prepared for consultation with His Majesty's Government, police forces, the private security sector, food retailers, academics, farming representative bodies, and rural insurers

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Version 1. An Optimal Risk Group Initiative

Contents

1. Executive Summary (Bottom-Line-Up-Front)

Rural crime in England and Wales has not fallen to an acceptable level despite years of dedicated police effort; on several measures it has grown more serious, more organised, and more costly to the communities it touches. **The Demeter Initiative** proposes a paradigm shift: rural crime risk is not a problem for the police to solve alone, but a shared risk that farmers, landowners, insurers, representative bodies, academics, foot retailers, the government, **and** the private security sector must manage together, using the disciplines of modern risk management rather than reactive enforcement alone.

The case for treating rural crime this way reaches beyond the farm gate. Government's own resilience architecture, including the 2026 National Risk Register and Defra's statutory food security reporting, now formally recognises agricultural and rural exposures, and food itself as Critical National Infrastructure; independent academic and preparedness-sector research links a reduction in the criminal drain on farm businesses directly to the domestic production capacity that underpins UK food security. **The Demeter Initiative**'s multiagency, risk-based approach to reducing the rural crime risk should therefore be read not only as a policing and farming proposition, but as a contribution to UK food security and national resilience, a case set out in full at Section 9 and Annex B.

This is deliberately not a proposal for private security to police rural communities. Policing remains a state function, exercised under democratic mandate and legal authority that the private sector does not and should not hold. What is proposed instead is a collaborative framework in which the private security sector, and in particular the substantial body of retired police officers, military veterans, and chartered security professionals who have transitioned into commercial and industrial security, contribute the left-of-incident capability that a stretched police service structurally struggles to provide: vulnerability assessment, deterrence, target-hardening, behavioural change, and business continuity planning.

The Initiative takes its name from Demeter, the ancient goddess of the harvest, agriculture, and the fertility of the earth, whose myth is built on cycles of loss, protection, and restoration. The name signals both the stakes involved, food security, rural livelihoods, and the wellbeing of those who live and work on the land, and the collaborative, seasonal, and cyclical discipline that effective risk management demands.

The Demeter Initiative draws on the full suite of UK and international risk management standards [1], the College of Policing's risk management guidance, the newly published NPCC Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028, the National Rural Crime Network's research into serious and organised rural offending[2], the behavioural and psychological research of Dr Kreseda Smith of Harper Adams University[3], and the emerging Rural SafeGuard programme, including its RSG 1001:2026 Farm Security Standard and proposed Certification Scheme, to set out a practical, proportionate, and affordable model that any police force, cooperative, or farming community can adapt to its own circumstances.

The Initiative proposes that a ready supply of suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) rural crime specialists be drawn from the existing membership of the Security Institute, the Association of Security Consultants, the UK Chapter of ASIS International, and the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals, each augmented by an agriculture-specific familiarisation and knowledge-sharing syllabus, an approach already piloted by Rural SafeGuard, coordinated as a national scheme with local and regional delivery, in the way the Sports Ground Safety Authority's regional advisor network and police Counter Terrorism Security Advisors already operate, so that professional support is genuinely accessible to every farm in the United Kingdom. Their remit extends beyond target-hardening: it includes root-cause analysis after a crime has occurred and help for the farmer to prepare a response plan for foreseeable risks so that control of the farm can be regained and retained quickly, minimising the mental health impact of an incursion in the way that business continuity planning is expected to do in any other commercial setting.

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[1] BS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management – Guidelines; BS 31100:2021 Risk management – Code of practice and guidance for the implementation of BS ISO 31000:2018; BS EN IEC 31010:2019 Risk management – Risk assessment techniques; PD ISO Guide 73:2009 Risk management – Vocabulary; PD ISO/TS 31050:2023 Risk management – Guidelines for managing emergency risk to enhance resilience; HM Government, The Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts, May 2023.

[2] National Rural Crime Network, Rural Crime: Serious, Organised and International – Who Victimises Rural Communities? (2024–2026 update), authored by Dr Kate Tudor, available at https://nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/NRCN-OCG-Report.pdf.

[3] Dr Kreseda Smith, Associate Professor in Rural Criminology and Social Science, Harper Adams University, staff profile and published papers available at https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/general/staff/profile/201125/Kreseda-Smith/.

None of this starts from a blank sheet. Rural SafeGuard has already piloted the farm security standard, the certification scheme, and the awareness workshop this paper draws on, and each is modelled on precedent the government has already endorsed elsewhere: the RSG certification tiers mirror the National Cyber Security Centre's Cyber Essentials scheme, and the proposed funding model for farm security reviews mirrors the National Protective Security Authority and National Cyber Security Centre's Secure Innovation Security Reviews. The aspirational knowledge sharing platform proposed later in this paper takes ProtectUK, the police-hosted counter-terrorism advice app and website, as its working template. Food retailers, insurers, and membership bodies are asked to sponsor specific, costed elements of this model, a practical way of meeting existing ESG commitments or enhancing the customer and membership benefits they already offer, while farmers, growers, foresters, and land managers are offered a genuine educational opportunity: a workshop-based introduction to rural crime risk that assumes no prior knowledge and asks for a few hours, not a career change. Membership bodies are asked to go a step further still, by employing or partnering with a dedicated rural crime risk specialist to lead the Initiative on their members' behalf, so that the sector has a single, expert interlocutor for crime reduction rather than relying on occasional, uncoordinated engagement.

The Demeter Initiative also depends on advocacy and reaches beyond the core operational partners named above. The rural crime academic community, including Harper Adams University and the Royal Agricultural University, is asked to continue researching the risk and to help embed crime-reduction education within agricultural courses. The National Rural Crime Network, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the National Association of Local Councils are asked to lobby government for the recognition and funding the effort needs. The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs and the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime are asked to carry the Initiative's principles to the next generation of farmers and to highlight Scotland's distinct cross-border challenges respectively. A fuller, itemised account of what is asked of each of these stakeholders is set out at **Annex A**.

The pending reorganisation of the 43 territorial police force model in England and Wales presents a rare window to embed this collaborative approach into a national strategy from the outset, rather than retrofitting it once new structures have hardened into old habits. It is not the only such window: the recently published Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future[4] offers a parallel, twenty-five-year opportunity to embed crime and business resilience into the long-term framework for English farming. **The Demeter Initiative** is best delivered as a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) led initiative, working in close collaboration with the Home Office, with the Security Minister or the Policing Minister acting as the responsible ministerial offices. Stakeholders are invited to treat this document as an invitation to shape, test, and adopt **The Demeter Initiative**, not as a finished blueprint.

[4] HM Government (Defra), Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future (accessible version), published June 2026, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-roadmap-2050/farming-roadmap-2050-growing-englands-future-accessible-version.

2. What We're Asking of You

The proposals in this paper carry different, specific asks for different readers. This section summarises briefly what **The Demeter Initiative** asks of each principal stakeholder group; a fuller, itemised list of asks for each recipient is set out at **Annex A: Detailed Stakeholder Asks**.

HM Government (Defra and the Home Office) is asked to read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, using public money for public good to remove one of the stressors that weigh on those who grow and supply our food and steward our countryside, forests, rivers, and natural landscapes; to recognise that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task and should be treated like any other business risk, by reducing both its likelihood and its consequence; and to appoint, jointly between Defra and the Home Office, a ministerial sponsor, a lead civil servant, and a single point of contact to take the Initiative forward. HMG is further asked to consider the Initiative for inclusion in the Future Farming Road Map and the Police Reform White Paper; to support farmyard defences through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund; to expand the Secure Innovation Security Reviews initiative to farms and agricultural businesses using AI, robotics, or autonomous vehicles; to endorse Rural SafeGuard as the government's model for baseline protective security in UK farmyards, in the way Cyber Essentials is endorsed for cyber security; and to reform planning regulations so that a farmer can, quickly, cheaply, and against a published criterion, reroute a public right of way that dissects a farmyard or runs unacceptably close to a farmhouse or livestock pens.

The National Police Chiefs' Council, and DCC Nigel Harrison as the nominated rural crime lead, is asked to read, respond to, and endorse the Initiative on the same risk-based footing; to appoint a police lead and single point of contact; to recognise the legitimate contribution of the private security sector, including Chartered Security Professionals and registrants on the Institution of Civil Engineers' Register of Security Engineering Specialists, in supplying suitably qualified and experienced rural crime specialists; to point to the precedent already set by public-private partnership in counter-terrorism and retail crime; and to pledge that the National Rural Crime Team will share tactical guidance and support lawful information-sharing pathways consistent with Information Commissioner's Office principles. The College of Policing (https://www.college.police.uk/) is asked, alongside the NPCC, to read, respond to, and endorse the Initiative, and in particular to formally recognise, or commit to reviewing, the Rural SafeGuard accreditation and certification scheme; the College's ask is set out in full at Annex A.

The agricultural sector membership bodies (the NFU, CLA, NAAC, and equivalent bodies) are asked to endorse the Initiative, appoint an executive lead and single point of contact, and partially fund farm security assurance reviews, protective security awareness courses, and post-incident root-cause analysis; to embed personal safety and property security within agricultural and horticultural education and lifelong learning; and to actively encourage members to take ownership of farmyard defence, understanding that a farmyard can be defended even where the wider holding cannot; and to employ, or partner with, a dedicated rural crime risk specialist to act as sector lead for the Initiative, providing members with a single expert interlocutor and a source of practical guidance, articles, and check-sheets.

The specialist rural and agricultural insurers — NFU Mutual, Cornish Mutual, Allianz, Rural Howden, and others — are asked to endorse the Initiative, appoint an executive lead, and help fund security reviews and awareness training; and, most directly, to offer discretionary premium recognition for farms holding Rural SafeGuard or Rural SafeGuard Plus certification, comparable to the recognition already extended to vehicle tracking and marking schemes such as CESAR.

Food retail organisations, including Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, and others, together with dairy processors such as Arla, already running substantial farmer-support programmes (see **Annex C**), are asked to endorse the Initiative and extend to crime reduction the same commercial logic they already apply to sustainability and animal welfare: discretionary pricing or corporate support for certified suppliers, part-funding of security reviews and training, and crime-reduction awareness within supplier ESG and lifelong-learning offers.

The Agricultural Engineers Association is asked to endorse the Initiative, appoint an executive lead, lobby its members' equipment suppliers to design out crime at the point of manufacture, and continue expanding the CESAR marking scheme, including Micro CESAR marking for ancillary agricultural equipment that has no vehicle identification number.

The rural crime academic community including Harper Adams University and the Royal Agricultural University, is asked to continue researching the rural crime risk, including agricultural crime and the motivation, capability, and attack methods of offenders, and to consider embedding rural crime risk and business resilience education within agricultural and land-based courses, whether as a formal module or as enrichment.

The National Rural Crime Network, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the National Association of Local Councils are asked to work with their stakeholders to advocate the merits of The Demeter Initiative and to lobby government for the recognition and funding needed to support the risk reduction effort, and to use their networks to encourage police forces to adopt the public-private partnership.

The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs is asked to advocate The Demeter Initiative and encourage its members and club leaders to include rural crime risk within their knowledge-sharing opportunities and lifelong learning journey.

The Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime is asked to advocate The Demeter Initiative, encourage its members and stakeholders to include rural crime risk within their knowledge-sharing opportunities, and champion Scotland's distinct challenges, including the cross-border and cross-ferry movement of offenders.

3. Introduction

3.1. Background

Rural crime is a persistent and under-recognised drain on the United Kingdom's agricultural economy, its rural communities, and the wellbeing of the people who live, work, rest, and play within them. Livestock theft, machinery and equipment theft, fuel and fertiliser theft, hare coursing, fly-tipping, and organised incursions onto farmland have, over the last decade, evolved from opportunistic, low-level offending into a feature of serious and organised crime.

The 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, together with Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, carry statutory responsibility for reducing and detecting crime. Rural crime, however, competes for finite officer time and budget against urban demand, safeguarding caseloads, counter-terrorism, and a wide range of other statutory priorities. The result, acknowledged candidly by the National Police Chiefs' Council itself, is that rural and wildlife crime has often been treated as a secondary priority relative to its true cost and impact[5].

This document proposes **The Demeter Initiative**: a collaborative framework through which the private security sector, drawing on decades of operational, commercial, and academic expertise, works alongside police forces, farming representative bodies, and rural insurers to reduce the rural crime risk. It is written to be read by police and crime commissioners, chief constables, farming and agricultural engineering representative bodies, rural insurers, food retailers, and the private security sector itself, as an invitation to collaborate rather than a finished operating model.

3.2. Scope

This paper addresses acquisitive and organised rural crime, principally affecting farms, estates, agricultural contractors, and rural businesses in England and Wales. It does not attempt to resolve wildlife crime, domestic abuse in rural settings, or road safety, although it recognises, consistent with the NPCC strategy, that rural crime teams frequently carry all these responsibilities together and that any national model should be designed with that reality in mind.

The wider rural economy is affected by the same risk in ways this paper does not yet attempt to address. Agricultural suppliers, rural hotels and farm shops, aggregates and resource distributors, and rural sports and leisure venues such as shooting grounds, polo pitches, and golf courses all report a similar exposure to acquisitive and organised crime. **The Demeter Initiative** is deliberately scoped to farms and agricultural businesses for this first edition, so that the model can be proven and refined before it is broadened, but

[5] National Police Chiefs' Council, Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028 (launched November 2025), available at https://www.npcc.police.uk.

the extension of its principles to rural communities and rural businesses more widely is a natural and anticipated direction for future editions of this paper.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, to set out, using an evidence base drawn from policing, insurance, and farming representative bodies, why the current model of rural crime reduction, in which the police are expected to be the principal and near-exclusive actor, is no longer sufficient. Second, to propose a practical, standards-based paradigm, **The Demeter Initiative**, through which the private security sector's experience, capacity, and commercial risk discipline can be lawfully and constructively channelled into rural crime reduction, without displacing or duplicating the statutory role of the police. Third, to persuade the stakeholders who must adopt this paradigm, police leaders, farming bodies, insurers, and the security sector itself, that the pending reorganisation of policing structures is the moment to build this collaboration into the design of the new model, rather than treating it as an afterthought.

5. Vision

The vision of **The Demeter Initiative** is a countryside in which the risk of crime to farms, rural businesses, and the people who depend on them is actively and continuously managed by a coalition of the willing: police forces contributing intelligence, enforcement, and investigative capability; the private security sector contributing vulnerability assessment, deterrence design, and behavioural change; farming representative bodies, insurers and food retailers contributing reach, trust, and financial incentives; and farmers and land managers themselves contributing local knowledge and, increasingly, a proportionate and affordable set of physical, technical, and procedural defences.

In this vision, no single actor is expected to eliminate rural crime alone. Instead, the risk is treated as it would be in any other sector exposed to serious organised threat: assessed, owned, treated using the full range of options available, insurance, avoidance, mitigation, and acceptance, and reviewed continuously as the threat evolves.

This paper draws throughout on established risk management standards, national policing strategy, and academic research; rather than interrupt the argument with citation, the full list of sources is collected at **Annex L: Normative References**.

6. The Demeter Initiative

6.1. Why Demeter

In Greek mythology, Demeter is the goddess of the harvest, of agriculture, and of the fertility of the earth. She is one of the original Olympian deities, daughter of Cronus and Rhea, and her myth is inseparable from the story of the seasons themselves. When her daughter Persephone was abducted by Hades, Demeter's grief was so profound that the earth became barren; nothing grew, and the harvest failed. Only when Persephone was permitted to return for part of each year did Demeter restore fertility to the land, an arrangement mythologised by the ancient Greeks as the origin of the seasonal cycle of growth, loss, and renewal.

The Demeter myth was not simply a story about crops. Demeter presided over the Eleusinian Mysteries, one of the most important religious rites of the ancient Greek world, which centred on themes of protection, community, and the safeguarding of what sustains life. Ancient farming communities honoured Demeter specifically because agricultural abundance was never guaranteed; it depended on vigilance, on protecting the harvest from theft, blight, and disaster, and on the cooperation of the whole community in doing so.

The name is chosen for this Initiative for three reasons that map directly onto its purpose. First, Demeter's domain, the harvest and the fertility of the land, is precisely what today's rural crime threatens: livestock, machinery, crops, and the businesses built upon them. Second, the myth's central lesson, that abundance and safety are not permanent states but must be actively protected and periodically restored, mirrors the risk management principle that crime risk is never eliminated but must be continuously assessed and treated. Third, Demeter's association with community ritual and shared protection of the harvest is an apt symbol for a paradigm that depends on genuine collaboration between police, security professionals, farmers, and insurers, rather than on any single actor acting alone.

The classical reference is not the only agricultural patron tradition available to the Initiative's name. **St. Isidore the Farmer** (c.1070–1130), a farm labourer from Madrid canonised by the Catholic Church in 1622, is venerated as the patron saint of farmers, farm labourers, livestock, and rural communities, and remains patron of the United States National Catholic Rural Life Conference[6]. His life, spent working the land in the service of a Madrid landowner while sustaining a daily practice of prayer and care for the poor, offers a parallel and complementary tradition, distinct from the classical mythology from which the Initiative takes its name, but reflecting the same underlying theme: that agricultural communities have long looked to figures, whether mythological or devotional, associated with protection, humility, and the dignity of working the land.

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[6] Saint Isidore the Farmer, Franciscan Media, available at https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-isidore-the-farmer/.

6.2. Concept and Structure

The Demeter Initiative is not proposed as a new statutory body, a new police unit, or a private policing force. It is proposed as a collaborative framework, a set of principles, relationships, and shared standards, through which existing actors, police rural crime teams, chartered security professionals and their firms, farming representative bodies, and insurers, agree to work to a common risk model and share information within clear legal and ethical limits.

At its core, the Initiative proposes three linked activities. First, a shared risk register at force or regional level, populated jointly by police intelligence and private-sector farm security reviews, so that vulnerability data collected by security professionals during commercial farm visits can inform police tasking and vice versa, subject to appropriate consent and data protection safeguards. Second, an accredited network of private security professionals, drawing on the Chartered Security Professional designation and equivalent vocational and professional qualifications, who are recognised by police forces and insurers as competent to deliver farm security reviews to a consistent standard. Holding a professional designation such as CSyP is not, by itself, treated as sufficient: accreditation under the Initiative is deliberately anchored to a demonstrated ability to deliver the specific course content, farm walk, and guidance that leads a farm to certification, assessed directly rather than inferred from professional body membership, so that self-certification by title does not substitute for a proven standard of delivery. Third, a shared communications and education programme, delivered jointly by police, the security sector, and farming bodies, to shift the cultural norms discussed in Section 11.

6.3. Governance and Partnership Principles

Consistent with BS 31100:2021's guidance on embedding risk management within an organisation's existing governance rather than creating parallel structures, **The Demeter Initiative** is designed to sit alongside, not above, existing police governance[7]. A police and crime commissioner or chief constable could formally recognise the Initiative through a memorandum of understanding with accredited private-sector partners, setting out information-sharing protocols, standards of conduct, and clear boundaries between advisory and enforcement roles. Nothing in this model requires any extension of police powers to private individuals, nor any dilution of operational police independence.

It is important to be clear about the regulatory boundary within which this collaborative model operates. The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is the United Kingdom's statutory regulator for the private security industry, established under the Private Security Industry Act 2001[8], and it has more recently been appointed as the regulator for Martyn's Law, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025[9]. The

[7] British Standards Institution, BS 31100:2021 Risk management – Code of practice and guidance for the implementation of BS ISO 31000:2018.

[8] Security Industry Authority, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/security-industry-authority.

[9] Security Industry Authority, Martyn's Law and the SIA's role as regulator, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/martyns-law-and-the-sias-role-as-regulator.

consultancy, farm security review, training, and knowledge-sharing activities proposed under **The Demeter Initiative** are not licensable conduct and fall outside the SIA's statutory remit: no SIA licence is required to assess a farm's vulnerability, design a protective security plan, deliver training, or share rural crime knowledge and best practice.

SIA regulation is engaged only where a farm, agricultural business, or landed estate goes further and itself directly engages, via a contracts, security services to guard property or patrol land, or close protection operatives to protect a person assessed as being at risk, both being licensable activities under Schedule 2 to the Private Security Industry Act 2001. Or, separately, where an agricultural show, game fair, point-to-point, polo match, equestrian event, or other gathering held on the farm or estate meets the capacity thresholds set out in Martyn's Law, in which case the responsible person must comply with the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 and engage with the SIA as its regulator.

Further detail on these specific triggers, and how they map onto the kinds of event a working farm or landed estate might host, is set out at Annex J.

Although the Initiative's own consultancy and knowledge-sharing activities sit outside the SIA's statutory remit, the SIA remains a natural stakeholder in the wider partnership: as a Home Office arm's-length body, it has a genuine interest in, and the ability to showcase, exactly the kind of public-private partnership **The Demeter Initiative** proposes when engaging with the Home Office and other government departments and national bodies.

7. The Problem: A Risk That Has Outgrown the Response

7.1. A Rising Risk Despite Sustained Policing Effort

Rural crime has not diminished. Despite the creation of dedicated rural crime teams in many forces, the launch of Operation Traverse[10]-style intelligence sharing, and years of campaigning by the National Farmers' Union, the Country Land and Business Association, and other representative bodies, the pattern of loss reported by farmers has, if anything, become more severe. The NPCC's own 2025–2028 strategy is candid that rural crime is now driven substantially by organised crime groups rather than opportunistic individuals, describing a threat that "not only devastates species and ecosystems, but also fuels organised crime, generates illicit finances, destroys livelihoods and undermines the safety of our communities."[11]

Police forces have made genuine progress within this constrained picture. Rural policing teams recovered more than £12.7 million of stolen machinery in the year to the strategy's launch, including over £800,000 recovered from overseas, leading to 155 arrests[12]. This is a genuine achievement, but it is recovery after the event, not a reduction in the likelihood of it, and it illustrates a wider truth: the offending has already outpaced the capacity of a purely reactive, enforcement-led model to contain it.

Independent academic research corroborates the NPCC's own assessment. The National Rural Crime Network's research, led by Dr Kate Tudor of Durham University, identified around twenty-two active organised crime groups involved in rural crime in the UK, deliberately crossing police force borders to exploit weaknesses in policing methods, and found that the overall cost of rural crime had risen to an estimated £49.5 million, up from £40.5 million the previous year, with the cost of agricultural vehicle theft alone rising 29 per cent to £11.7 million[13]. The research concludes starkly that current policing structures create, in effect, an open goal for organised criminals operating in rural areas, a finding entirely consistent with the capacity gap described in Section 7.3.3.

7.2. Erosion of Confidence and Under-Reporting

A significant proportion of rural crime is never reported. Farmers and land managers, having reported thefts, damage, and incursions in previous years and seen little or no police attendance, investigation, or recovery, increasingly conclude that reporting is not worth the time it takes away from running the farm. This is not a reflection of any lack of care or competence among individual officers, most of whom are themselves stretched thin across large geographic areas with limited rural crime resource, but a rational response to repeated experience of the current model's limits. The National Rural Crime Network's

[10] https://anglingtrust.net/freshwater-projects/operation-traverse-leviathan/

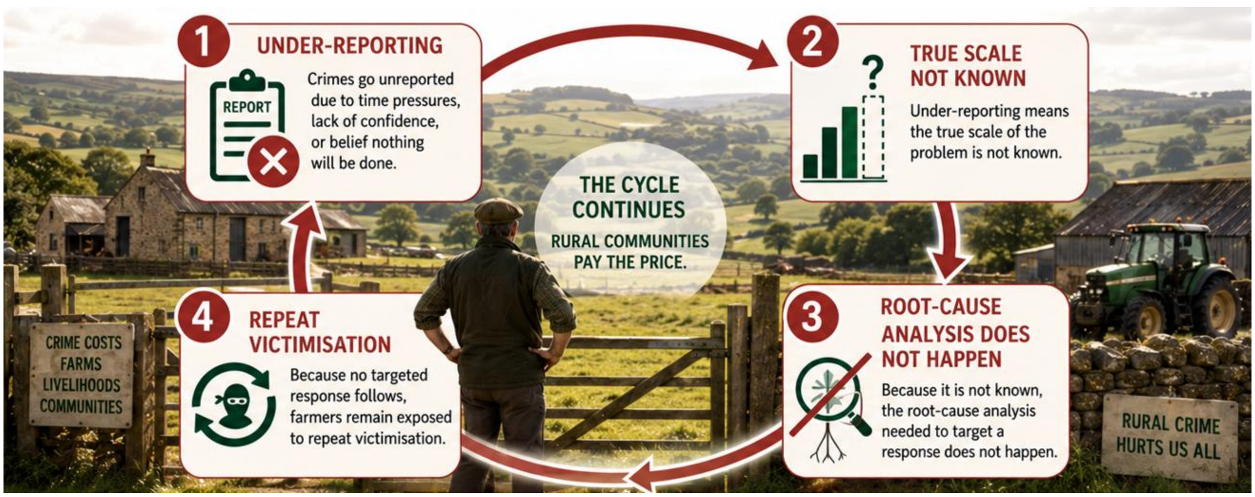
[11] National Police Chiefs' Council, Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028 (2025).

[12] Emergency Services Times, 'New national strategy targets organised crime threatening Britain's countryside', 28 November 2025.

[13] National Rural Crime Network, Rural Crime: Serious, Organised and International (Dr Kate Tudor), available at https://nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/NRCN-OCG-Report.pdf.

research describes the resulting dynamic as a collapse in police-community relationships, with rural residents feeling that policing in their communities is not a priority[14]. Dr Kreseda Smith's research at Harper Adams University, examining low levels of rural community confidence in the police through direct engagement with farming communities, reaches a similar conclusion from an independent evidence base[15].

This under-reporting is corrosive in two distinct ways. It denies police forces the intelligence picture they need to allocate resources and build prosecutions against organised crime groups, and it denies insurers and representative bodies the data they need to demonstrate the true scale of the problem to government. A crime risk that is invisible in the statistics is, in practical terms, a crime risk that competes poorly for funding and policy attention against crime types that are more fully reported.



This dynamic is worth naming directly as a Rural Crime Paradox, because setting it out as a closed loop makes the case for intervention more forcefully than describing its parts separately. Under-reporting means the true scale of the problem is not known; because it is not known, the root-cause analysis needed to target a response does not happen; because no targeted response follows, farmers remain exposed to repeat victimisation; and that sustained exposure is what ultimately drives the most severe downstream harms this paper addresses, from the mental health impact described in Section 13.4 to farms being sold out of the sector altogether, with clear implications for the United Kingdom's food security. Breaking this loop depends as much on the speed of intelligence sharing as on its existence: a shared risk register that surfaces a pattern months later in a report few will read does little to change an outcome. The ambition, consistent with fast-alerting models such as the Cross-sector Safety and Security Communications (CSSC)

[14] National Rural Crime Network, Rural Crime: Serious, Organised and International (Dr Kate Tudor).

[15] Dr Kreseda Smith, Understanding low levels of rural community confidence in the police: A Participatory Exploration, Harper Adams University, project profile available at https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/general/staff/profile/201125/Kreseda-Smith/.

network, should be intelligence sharing that reaches those who can act on it close to real time, not retrospectively.

7.3. The Changing Character of the Threat

7.3.1. Organisation and mobility

The offenders responsible for the most serious rural crime today bear little resemblance to the opportunistic thief of a generation ago. Police leaders now describe a threat with “a level of sophistication and menace”[16] that demands a coordinated national response. Improved road networks and logistics mean that organised groups can travel hundreds of miles overnight to strike a target and be gone long before local officers, patrolling a policing area that may cover several thousand square miles with a handful of dedicated rural officers, are even aware an offence has occurred.

7.3.2. Technology-enabled offending

These groups increasingly use technology both to select targets and to defeat conventional defences: number-plate recognition avoidance, jamming or spoofing of tracking devices fitted to high-value machinery, and reconnaissance conducted via social media, satellite imagery, and open online marketplaces where stolen livestock, machinery, and parts can be advertised and moved on quickly. The government's own response, requiring new all-terrain vehicles and GPS units to be marked and registered on a secure database under the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, is a direct acknowledgement that technology is now as central to the offence as it is to the response[17].

7.3.3. Capacity gaps in a 43-force model

Rural SafeGuard's own analysis of why a dedicated private-sector programme was needed is instructive: the programme was created specifically to address criminals who exploit “limited cooperation among the 43 territorial forces”[18] and the structural difficulty of coordinating a fast-moving, cross-border threat against a policing model built around geographically bounded forces. Offenders do not respect force boundaries; a single organised crime group may routinely operate across four or five force areas in a single night. This is precisely the seam into which the private security sector, unconstrained by force boundaries and free to work continuously across a client's supply chain, cooperative, or region, can add genuine value.

7.3.4. Robotics, Autonomy, and Operational Technology

A further dimension of this threat is only beginning to emerge. Robotic, autonomous, and AI-enabled vehicles and machinery, including autonomous tractors, robotic weeders and sprayers, and unmanned harvesters, are increasingly capable of operating independently in the field, often for extended periods

[16] Emergency Services Times, 'New national strategy targets organised crime threatening Britain's countryside', 28 November 2025.

[17] Farmers Guide, 'New crime strategy set to protect rural communities', 28 November 2025.

[18] Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.

and without a human operator present. The safety mechanisms built into these systems, designed to bring the machine to a stop the moment it loses connectivity, detects an obstruction, or is interfered with, are a necessary and welcome safeguard against harm to people, livestock, and property. However, the same mechanism that stops a machine safely also announces its presence and immobilises it in one movement, and a machine guaranteed to stop and remain stationary once tampered with is, from an offender's perspective, a target that does not need to be chased. This creates a new form of vulnerability: the unauthorised removal, or cannibalisation, of high-value sensors, control units, and navigation technology from an immobilised chassis while it sits alone in a field, potentially with a significant delay before the farmer becomes aware that the machine has stopped at all. This technology, much like the GPS-enabled automatic steering and navigation systems already targeted by organised crime groups and addressed under the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, has an inherent dual-use value: it is both essential to legitimate farming and readily resold on the same illicit markets that already absorb stolen machinery parts, a vulnerability increasingly recognised in academic analysis of the cybersecurity risks associated with agricultural robotics and artificial intelligence[19] and consistent with the acquisitive crime business model described throughout this paper.

Farm businesses are also becoming increasingly reliant on operational technology to automate core daily processes: robotic parlour milking systems, automated grain drying and storage, poultry climate control systems, anaerobic digesters, solar farms, wind turbines, and, increasingly, on-farm data centres and battery storage supporting these installations. Much of this technology depends on buried or overhead cabling, remote sensors, and continuous connectivity, and the same copper cable theft that has driven a

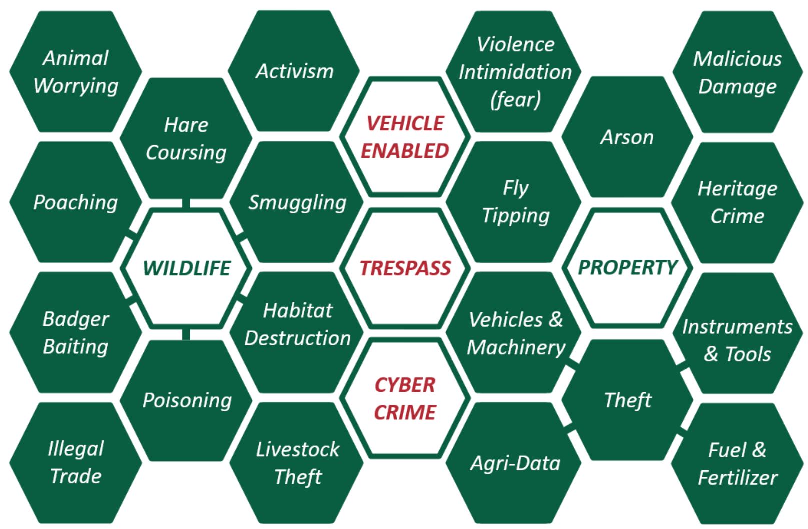
[19] Research by Dr Asaf Tzachor and colleagues, University of Cambridge Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, on cybersecurity risks in agricultural artificial intelligence and robotics, published in Nature Machine Intelligence and reported in Infosecurity Magazine, available at https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/modern-smart-farm-machinery-cyber/.

well-documented and rapidly escalating wave of attacks against solar farms elsewhere in the country[20] is equally capable of disabling an anaerobic digester, a grain dryer, or a milking robot on a working farm. Digital interference and data corruption present a related but distinct risk: the National Cyber Security Centre and National Farmers' Union have jointly warned that farms' growing dependence on data and technology means a cyber attack can disrupt operations and cause financial loss just as readily as a physical theft[21], and because these installations sit on isolated sites with few staff on hand to notice a fault or intervene manually, and with long response times if something does go wrong, the impact of cable theft, digital interference, or data corruption on a rural business can be disproportionate to an equivalent incident on a similarly connected urban or industrial site. Diversification into technology-enabled enterprise, solar and wind generation, anaerobic digestion, or data centre hosting on farmland, brings a further, secondary risk: it draws visitors, contractors, and criminal reconnaissance onto a working farm that may also present an opportunity to steal the vehicles, fuel, and fertiliser that happen to be present, converting a single site visit into more than one crime type.

7.4. The Crime Types to be Mitigated

7.4.1. Vehicle Enabled, Trespass, and Online Crime

This is not opportunistic; this is serious and organised and delivered with forensic precision. The offenders choose the time, place and how the offence is committed; the victim is required to prepare, respond, and recover appropriately to minimise the risk to as low as reasonably practicable – within the available budget. It is important therefore, that those who defend understand the types of attacks that might come their way. The Rural SafeGuard programme argue the following crime types are most prevalent:



[20] DeterTech crime intelligence analysis, reported in 'UK entering peak period of solar PV theft by fully industrialised criminal network', Solar Power Portal, 11 July 2025, available at https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/solar-projects/uk-entering-peak-period-of-solar-pv-theft-by-fully-industrialised-criminal-network.

[21] National Cyber Security Centre and National Farmers' Union, Cyber Security for Farmers: Practical Tips on How to Stay Safe, available at https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/files/NCSC_Cyber%20Security%20Guide%20for%20Farmers-%20digital.pdf.

8. Rethinking the Paradigm: Beyond a Policing-Only Model

8.1. The Limits of an Enforcement-Led Response

None of the foregoing is an argument against policing, or a suggestion that police forces are failing in their duty. It is an argument that policing, however well resourced, is structurally one part of a wider risk management system, not the whole of it. Police forces are, by design and by law, principally an enforcement and investigative capability. They are resourced, trained, and held accountable for responding to crime, gathering evidence, and pursuing offenders through the courts. They are not, and were never intended to be, a vulnerability-assessment or target-hardening service for every farm, estate, and rural business in the country.

This is not merely a resourcing limit; independent academic analysis suggests it is structural. Dr Kate Tudor's research into UK policing architecture finds that the Regional Organised Crime Units and National Crime Agency prioritise threats using thresholds that rural organised crime, though genuinely serious and often cross-border, rarely meets, while local rural crime teams lack the jurisdictional reach to pursue it alone, an unintended 'open goal' between local and national policing tiers rather than a simple funding shortfall[22]. This matters for the case made throughout this paper: if the gap is structural, it will not close simply because more evidence of harm accumulates, but only through a deliberate, coordinated intervention of the kind **The Demeter Initiative** proposes. Section 9 sets out this evidence more fully, alongside its wider implications for UK food security and national resilience.

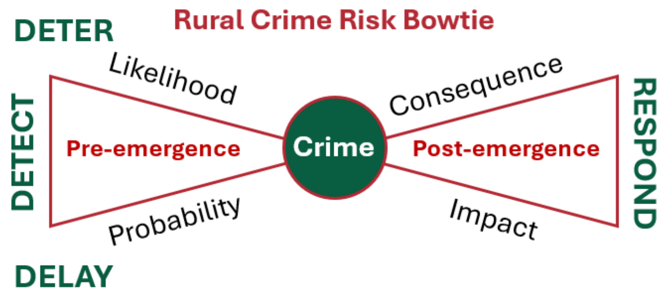
> *"Hope is not a strategy."*
>
> A modern adage of disputed authorship, long used in military and business planning circles; most closely associated with US Army General Gordon R. Sullivan's 1996 book Hope Is Not a Method.

The paradigm shift proposed by **The Demeter Initiative** is simple to state and challenging to embed: crime risk reduction is a shared responsibility, in which the police contribute what only the state can lawfully provide, enforcement, deterrence through the credible prospect of detection, and the administration of justice, while others, including the private security sector, contribute the likelihood-reducing, advisory, and resilience-building work that reduces the likelihood and impact of crime before police involvement is ever required.

[22] K. Tudor, 'UK Policing Structures Create an Open Goal for Organised Criminals in Rural Areas', in M. Hart, J.B. Lamb, A. Lynes, J. Treadwell and C. Kelly (eds), 50 Facts Everyone Should Know About the Police (Bristol University Press, 2024), pp. 193-196. Available at https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/display/book/9781447370499/9781447370499.xml.

8.2. The Risk Bowtie: Moving Left of the Event

The bow-tie technique, one of the risk assessment techniques described in BS EN IEC 31010:2019, is a useful way of illustrating this division of labour[23]. A bow-tie diagram places the unwanted event, in this case a rural crime incident such as livestock theft or machinery theft, at the centre.



On the left-hand side of the diagram sit the threats that could cause the event and the likelihood-reducing controls that reduce the likelihood of it occurring: fencing, lighting, video surveillance systems (VSS), marked and immobilised equipment, community vigilance, and behavioural change among farmers and staff. On the right-hand side sit the consequences of the event and the mitigating controls that reduce its impact once it has occurred: rapid reporting, insurance claims handling, recovery operations, and criminal investigation.

Mapped against this diagram, policing today sits almost exclusively on the right-hand side. Response, investigation, and prosecution are all right-of-event activities. This is entirely appropriate to the police's statutory role, but it means that, under the current model, the left-hand side of the bow-tie, the side on which the likelihood of an incident is actually reduced, is comparatively under-resourced and under-owned. Nobody is systematically walking every farm, identifying vulnerabilities, and helping the farmer close them, at scale, before an offence occurs.

> *"A stitch in time saves nine."*
>
> Thomas Fuller's Gnomologia (1732) as "a stitch in time may save nine"; recorded in its familiar, unhedged form by the astronomer Francis Baily in his journal of 1797.

The private security sector's natural home, by training, culture, and commercial model, is precisely this left-hand side: risk assessment, vulnerability review, deterrence design, and the blending of physical, technical, and behavioural measures into an integrated security plan. **The Demeter Initiative** proposes

[23] British Standards Institution, BS EN IEC 31010:2019 Risk management – Risk assessment techniques (IEC 31010:2019).

that this capability be formally recognised, resourced, and connected to policing intelligence and to insurers, rather than left to develop in isolated, uncoordinated pockets.

8.3. Adversarial Risk Management as a Discipline

Rural crime is, in the language of BS ISO 31000, a risk with an intelligent and adaptive adversary: unlike weather or machinery failure, offenders actively probe for weaknesses and adjust their methods in response to defensive measures[24]. This is the defining characteristic of adversarial risk management, a discipline long practised in sectors such as critical national infrastructure protection, aviation security, and high-net-worth protection, where risk owners must assume a thinking opponent rather than a static hazard. The private security professionals who make up the Rural SafeGuard team and the wider commercial security sector have typically spent entire careers practising exactly this discipline in other high-consequence environments, and it transfers to the farmyard with only modest adaptation.

[24]British Standards Institution, BS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management – Guidelines.

9. Rural Crime Reduction as a National Resilience and Food Security Priority

The case made so far in this paper for a coordinated, risk-based response to rural crime rests principally on the direct harm suffered by farmers, rural businesses, and rural communities. A growing body of government and academic evidence suggests the stakes reach further still: rural and agricultural crime sits within the same policy space as UK food security and national resilience, both of which government now treats as live and interconnected priorities. This section sets out that evidence and the case it supports for **The Demeter Initiative**'s multiagency, risk-based approach, while being honest about where the evidence base is still developing. A fuller, sourced account of the material summarised here is set out at **Annex B**.

9.1. Food as Critical National Infrastructure Under Strain

Food is one of fourteen sectors formally recognised as Critical National Infrastructure, yet Defra's own statutory reporting records that the sector receives comparatively little policy attention next to sectors such as energy, and that shocks including Russia's invasion of Ukraine exposed single points of failure and an over-reliance on 'just-in-time' stock models, contributing to the highest food inflation in 45 years[25]. The National Preparedness Commission's independent assessment, drawing on interviews with over seventy stakeholders across government, industry, and academia, reaches a similar conclusion and calls for a Food Security and Resilience Act, a National Food Security Council, and a shift from 'just-in-time' to 'just-in-case' resilience planning[26]. Rural and agricultural crime, the theft of machinery, livestock, GPS equipment, and fuel, and fly-tipping, directly degrades farm business viability and productive capacity: the same domestic production base these reports identify as under-protected Critical National Infrastructure. A reduction in the criminal drain on farm businesses is not a peripheral benefit of **The Demeter Initiative**; it supports the resilience objectives these government and independent reports set out.

9.2. Rural Crime as a Recognised National Resilience Risk

The National Risk Register 2026, the public-facing version of the classified National Security Risk Assessment, is the definitive current government reference point for what counts as a national resilience risk. Its 2026 edition, published for the first time alongside a companion guide situating national risks within local resilience planning, explicitly names agricultural and rural exposures, including livestock health protection, agricultural disease management, and rural community resilience, as local priorities for

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[25] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), United Kingdom Food Security Report 2024 — Theme 3: Food Supply Chain Resilience, Official Statistics under the Agriculture Act 2020. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-theme-3-food-supply-chain-resilience.

[26] National Preparedness Commission (T. Lang, N. Neumann and A. So), Just in Case: 7 Steps to Narrow the UK Civil Food Resilience Gap, February 2025. Available at https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/just-in-case-7-steps-to-narrow-the-uk-civil-food-resilience-gap/.

named Local Resilience Forum areas[27]. This strengthens the case that agricultural-sector harms, including crime that damages livestock, farm infrastructure, and rural community confidence, sit within the UK's official resilience planning framework, not only as a food-contamination risk but as a recognised feature of rural local resilience. Two further, live channels reinforce this: the National Audit Office has opened a value-for-money study examining whether Defra is taking effective action to make the UK food supply chain resilient to shocks including extreme weather, cyber-attack, and global conflict[28], and the newly formed House of Lords National Resilience Committee, examining how the UK anticipates, prevents, mitigates, and recovers from disruptive events, has already received evidence from the National Preparedness Commission on the deteriorating UK risk environment and the fragmentation of ministerial responsibility for resilience[29]. Both provide an active, official route through which evidence on rural and agricultural crime's resilience impact could be submitted.

9.3. The Structural Case for Coordination

A further, independent strand of academic research explains why coordination, specifically, rather than simply more local funding, is the correct remedy. Dr Kate Tudor's analysis of the UK's Regional Organised Crime Units and National Crime Agency finds that both prioritise threats using an Organised Crime Group Mapping process built around threat, harm, and risk thresholds that rural acquisitive crime, though genuinely serious, planned, and often cross-border, rarely meets, while local rural crime teams lack the jurisdictional reach and international liaison capability to pursue it alone, creating what she calls a structural 'open goal' rather than a simple resourcing failure[30]. Peer-reviewed officer interviews and force surveys provide independent, practitioner-level confirmation of the same gap: under-reporting and under-recording, confusion over agency responsibility, and resource constraints that a majority of

[27] Cabinet Office/HM Government, National Risk Register 2026, published 14 July 2026. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-2026.

[28] National Audit Office, Resilience of the UK Food Supply Chain to Disruptions (value-for-money study in progress, announced November 2025). Available at https://www.nao.org.uk/work-in-progress/resilience-of-the-uk-food-supply-chain-to-disruptions/.

[29] National Preparedness Commission, evidence to the House of Lords National Resilience Committee (Lord Toby Harris, Chair), 16 March 2026. Available at https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/npc-evidence-to-the-house-of-lords-national-resilience-committee/.

[30] K. Tudor, 'UK Policing Structures Create an Open Goal for Organised Criminals in Rural Areas', in M. Hart, J.B. Lamb, A. Lynes, J. Treadwell and C. Kelly (eds), 50 Facts Everyone Should Know About the Police (Bristol University Press, 2024), pp. 193-196. Available at https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/display/book/9781447370499/9781447370499.xml.

surveyed officers say affect their work negatively[31][32], with both studies finding that officers themselves want a more joined-up, multi-agency approach. A separate doctoral analysis of twenty-four years of UK organised-crime policy supplies the underlying theory for why this gap can persist: national prioritisation is shaped as much by politics, media attention, and organisational path-dependency as by objective harm, meaning rural crime could remain structurally overlooked indefinitely absent a deliberate, coordinated intervention to reprioritise it[33]. Taken together, this evidence shifts the argument from 'a coordinated effort would help' to 'a coordinated effort is structurally necessary', because the current system is not designed to catch this category of harm on its own, a finding entirely consistent with the capacity gap described in Section 7.3.3 and with the case for a multiagency, risk-based model that runs throughout this paper.

9.4. An Emerging, Not Yet Complete, Evidence Base

This evidence base should be presented honestly, not overstated. Academic rural criminology has begun theorising the food-security link directly: Dr Kreseda Smith's peer-reviewed chapter on organised criminal groups in the rural space, framed against the UN Sustainable Development Goals, argues that rural crime targeting farming equipment, machinery, and infrastructure disrupts livelihoods and that organised criminal involvement compromises food chain security[34], and Harper Adams University's Rural Resilience Research Group is already working at this exact intersection. What remains largely absent from the published record, however, is a single document that quantifies rural crime's impact specifically in food-production or national-resilience terms; this is a genuine evidence gap, not a settled body of research, and it is precisely the gap **The Demeter Initiative**'s stakeholders, particularly the rural crime academic community asked at Annex A to

[31] K. Bullock and J. Garland, 'Policing Rural Crimes and Rural Communities in England', International Journal of Rural Criminology, 8(1) (2023), pp. 41-58. Available at https://doi.org/10.18061/ijrc.v8i1.9561.

[32] A. Nunns, A. Wills and V.T. Montrose, 'Shutting the Gate: A Preliminary Study of Farm Crime Prevention Methods Used by the Police in Rural England and Wales', International Journal of Rural Criminology, 6(2) (2022), pp. 223-236. Available at https://doi.org/10.18061/ijrc.v6i2.8919.

[33] M. Pournara, Strategic Police Decision-Making in Tackling Organised Crime: Constructing and Prioritising Organised Crime Problems in the UK (PhD thesis, Cardiff University, 2020). Available at https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/130197/1/Maria%20Pournara_thesis2020_corrected_final.pdf.

[34] K. Smith, 'The Intersection of Rural Criminology and Food Security: The Impact of Organised Criminal Groups in the Rural Space', in G. Mesko, S. Kutnjak Ivkovic and R. Hacin (eds), The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Provision of Security, Responses to Crime and Security Threats, and Fair Criminal Justice Systems (University of Maribor Press, 2024). Available at https://press.um.si/index.php/ump/en/catalog/book/894/chapter/34.

continue researching this risk, are well placed to help fill, including through submissions to the House of Lords National Resilience Committee and the National Audit Office's food supply chain study named above. On the evidence as it stands, reducing rural crime risk plausibly contributes to the food-system and rural-community resilience objectives that government's own resilience architecture is actively trying to strengthen; it should be read as a reinforcing strand of the case for **The Demeter Initiative**, alongside, not in place of, the direct harm to farmers and rural communities that remains this paper's central concern.

10. The Contribution of the Private Security Sector

10.1. Second and Third Careers: Police, Military, and Commercial Security

A very substantial proportion of the United Kingdom's private security and risk management sector is made up of individuals on their second or third career: retired police officers who have moved into investigative or advisory security roles, military veterans who have transitioned into corporate and industrial protective security, and specialists who began in one discipline, such as fire safety, health and safety, or facilities management, and have progressed into risk and security leadership. These individuals typically bring a combination that is genuinely difficult to replicate inside a single-career public sector role: operational experience of policing or the armed forces, augmented by commercial acumen, academic study, vocational qualifications, professional certification such as the Chartered Security Professional (CSyP) register, and, critically, direct exposure to the cost-benefit discipline that private sector organisations apply as a matter of course when deciding how much to invest in reducing a given risk.

Many have also spent parts of their careers working directly within, or in close support of, industrial sectors adjacent to agriculture, forestry, horticulture, food processing, and logistics, and so arrive already fluent in the operational rhythms, seasonal pressures, and cost constraints of rural business, rather than needing to learn them from scratch. This combination of public-service grounding and private-sector commercial fluency is precisely the bridge that **The Demeter Initiative** seeks to build between police and farming communities.

10.2. Transferable Learning from High-Consequence Sectors

The Rural SafeGuard programme illustrates this transferable experience concretely. Its programme leadership draws on decades of protective security experience gained across the oil and gas sector, the civilian nuclear industry, government and military service, police service, the protection of high-net-worth individuals, and the safeguarding of critical national infrastructure[35]. These are sectors in which the consequences of a security failure are severe and in which risk assessment, layered defence, and

[35] Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.

continuous review are not optional extras but operating necessities. The methodology developed for a nuclear licensed site or a piece of critical national infrastructure does not transfer to a farmyard unchanged, but the underlying discipline, understanding an adversary's methods, identifying the weakest point in a layered defence, and designing proportionate controls around it, transfers directly and has already been shown to do so in practice.

This is the essential logic behind Rural SafeGuard's own methodology of deterring, detecting, delaying, and responding to rural criminals through five levels of protection, described by the programme as Secure, Inform, Influence, Assist, and Respond[36], a structure that mirrors layered protective security models used across critical infrastructure and high-risk commercial environments and adapts them for the farmyard.

None of this is starting from a blank page. Several private and police sector special interest groups already exist that bring together some of the very stakeholders this paper invites to join or endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, and their experience offers a working precedent for how a national partnership might be structured and governed. Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS) is a not-for-profit industry think tank that works with the Home Office, the police, manufacturers, insurers, and security businesses to reduce theft and share best practice across the agricultural and construction sectors[37]. The National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), delivered through the Safer Business Network with British Transport Police, brings together UK police forces and infrastructure-dependent industries, including agriculture, telecommunications, rail and transport, heritage, and power, to share intelligence

[36] Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.
[37] Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS), available at https://www.cits.uk.com/index.php.

and reduce theft from the nation's essential infrastructure[38]. Further detail on the purpose and membership of both groups is set out at Annex L.

10.3. A Commercial and Cost-Benefit Mindset

Perhaps the most underappreciated contribution of the private security sector is not technical but cultural: an instinct, honed over careers spent justifying security budgets to commercial boards, for proportionality. Security professionals moving from corporate risk management into rural crime reduction are accustomed to asking, for every proposed control, what risk reduction it buys relative to its cost, and to designing solutions that a business can actually afford and sustain, rather than a theoretical ideal that no farm could realistically implement. This is exactly the mindset needed to overcome the affordability and proportionality objections explored in Section 11, and it is a mindset that a stretched police service, focused on enforcement rather than commercial risk consultancy, is not typically resourced or trained to apply at scale.

10.4. A Ready Supply of SQEP Rural Crime Specialists

The second and third career professionals described above are not a hypothetical resource that would need to be recruited and trained from nothing. They already exist, in substantial numbers, within the membership of the United Kingdom's established security professional bodies: the Security Institute, the largest membership body for security professionals in the UK[39]; the Association of Security Consultants, which represents independent, senior security consultants operating to a defined code of professional conduct[40]; the UK Chapter of ASIS International, the world's largest membership organisation for security management professionals[41]; and the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals, the City of London livery company that holds the Royal Charter under which the Register of Chartered Security Professionals was established[42].

Between them, these bodies hold a deep, geographically distributed pool of suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) security professionals whose underlying expertise, in risk assessment, physical and technical protective security, and investigation, is directly transferable to rural crime reduction. As a livery company, the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals also has a natural kinship with the Worshipful Company of Farmers[43], itself dedicated to inspiring excellence in the management and leadership of UK agriculture: both bring the City of London's centuries-old livery tradition of setting and upholding

[38] National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), About Us, available at https://www.nicrp.org/about-us/.

[39] The Security Institute, available at https://www.security-institute.org/.

[40] Association of Security Consultants, available at https://ascuk.org/.

[41] ASIS International UK Chapter, available at https://www.asis.org.uk/.

[42] The Worshipful Company of Security Professionals, available at https://wcosp.org/.

[43] The Worshipful Company of Farmers, available at https://farmerslivery.org.uk/.

professional standards to bear on their respective fields, a shared heritage that mirrors the practical partnership between the security and farming sectors that **The Demeter Initiative** seeks to build.

What these professionals do not automatically possess is an understanding of farming itself: its seasonal rhythms, its working practices, its economics, and the particular vulnerabilities of a working farmyard. **The Demeter Initiative** therefore proposes that members of these bodies who wish to work in rural crime reduction complete an agriculture-specific familiarisation and knowledge-sharing training syllabus, so that their existing security mindset is properly adapted to the farm environment before they advise a single client. This is not a theoretical proposal; it is an existing service already provided within the Rural SafeGuard programme, and it is precisely the kind of training pathway that a national accreditation standard, of the kind described in Section 15, would formalise and scale. The explicit aim of the Initiative is to establish a national scheme with local and regional delivery[44], similar in structure to the Sports Ground Safety Authority's regional advisor model or the regional deployment of police Counter Terrorism Security Advisors, so that professional, proportionate security advice is a practical reality everywhere in the countryside, not a service available only to the largest or best-connected estates.

10.5. Root-Cause Analysis and Regaining Control After a Crime

The private security sector's contribution does not end when a likelihood-reducing measure fails and a crime occurs. A mature commercial security service, of the kind routinely provided in the sectors described above, treats every incident as a source of learning: a root-cause analysis is conducted to establish not only what was taken, but how the barrier that should have stopped it was defeated, and what that reveals about the wider vulnerability of the site. This discipline is entirely absent from the current rural crime response, where a police report, once filed, rarely generates any structured feedback to the farmer on what allowed the offence to succeed. **The Demeter Initiative** proposes that root-cause analysis be recognised as a standard part of the service a commercial security specialist provides, closing the loop between an incident and the next security management review.

Equally important, and equally absent from the current model, is help preparing for the immediate aftermath of a crime. Rural SafeGuard certified rural crime specialists can help a farmer draft a response plan for the foreseeable risks identified during a security review, covering practical questions such as who to contact, what evidence to preserve, how to continue operating with a damaged or stolen asset, and how to communicate with staff and family in the hours after an incident. This is precisely what commercial organisations do as a matter of course through business resilience and business continuity planning, and it matters for reasons that go well beyond the financial loss involved. Helping a farmer regain and retain control of their farm quickly after a crime measurably reduces the sense of helplessness and violation that so often follows an incursion, and so directly reduces its mental health impact, a theme returned to in Section 13.4.

[44] Preferably with one or more rural crime specialists within an hour's drive of every farm across the UK.

11. Treating the Rural Crime Risk

11.1.Applying the ISO 31000 Risk Treatment Options

BS ISO 31000:2018 sets out a small number of generic risk treatment options that apply regardless of the sector or the nature of the risk: avoiding the risk, accepting or increasing the risk in order to pursue an opportunity, removing the risk source, changing the likelihood, changing the consequences, sharing the risk with another party, and retaining the risk by informed decision[45]options has a concrete, practical meaning that **The Demeter Initiative** proposes to make explicit to every farm and rural business that undertakes a security review.

Changing the likelihood of an incident is achieved through the reduction-focused, left-of-event controls discussed in Section 8.2: perimeter security, control of access, lighting, cameras, marked and immobilised machinery, secure storage of keys and fuel, and, increasingly, community and cooperative-level vigilance schemes such as farm and countryside watch networks. Changing the consequences of an incident, once it has occurred, is achieved through measures such as asset marking and forensic coding, which increase the likelihood of stolen property being recovered and reduce its resale value to offenders, and through business continuity planning that allows a farm to keep operating while a claim and investigation proceed.

Sharing the risk is principally achieved through insurance, and through collective arrangements such as farm clusters and cooperatives pooling resources for shared security infrastructure, joint monitoring, or a shared private-sector security consultant, an approach explicitly named by the person commissioning this paper's own cooperative model. Acceptance, formally retaining a risk by informed decision, is entirely legitimate where the cost of further mitigation genuinely exceeds the value protected, provided the decision is made knowingly rather than by default, which is the central failure mode **The Demeter Initiative** seeks to correct: too many rural crime risks today are accepted not by informed choice but by inertia.

Farms and rural cooperatives adopting this approach do not need to develop their own methodology from scratch. The Rural SafeGuard Farm Security Standard, RSG 1001:2026, offers a ready-made, standards-based benchmark for conducting a farm security review, built on the same defence-in-depth and ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practicable) principles set out in this paper, organised around a six-stage Security Management Review process and a series of defensive layers running from the approach to the farmyard through to the asset itself[46].

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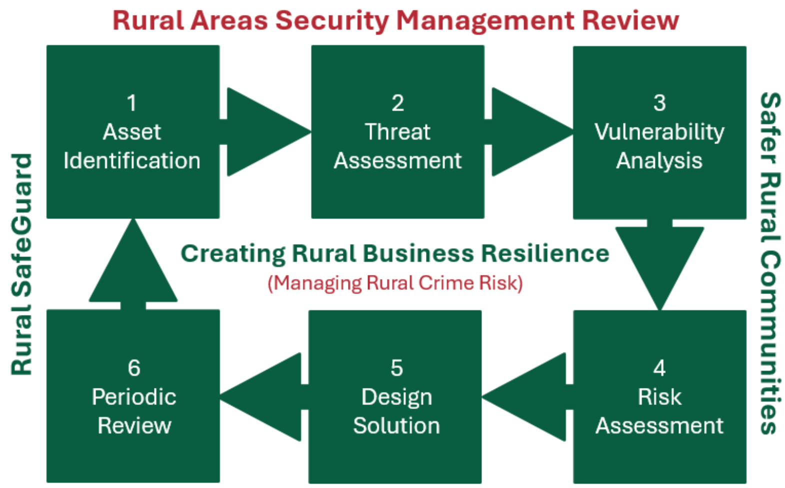
[45]British Standards Institution, BS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management – Guidelines.

[46]Rural SafeGuard (Optimal Risk Group), RSG 1001:2026 Rural Protective Security – Defending the Farmyard Against Serious and Organised Crime (Revision 1, 2026).



RSG 1001:2026 is, at the time of writing, the most complete standard of its kind available to the sector, and **The Demeter Initiative** proposes it as the standard bearer against which farm security reviews under this Initiative should be benchmarked, rather than treating it as merely one option among several. Forces and cooperatives remain free to adopt an equivalent standard built to the same rigour where one exists, but the starting position should be adoption of RSG 1001:2026 itself, so that regions are not left to reinvent the same good practice independently.

11.2.Sector Parallels: Agriculture, Construction, Transport and Logistics

None of this is a novel discipline invented for agriculture. Construction sites routinely apply the same treatment options to plant and material theft, through site fencing, immobilisation, marked equipment, and video surveillance systems (VSS) monitored remotely by private security firms, coordinated with police liaison officers in high-theft areas. Transport and logistics operators apply the same discipline to cargo theft, through route risk assessment, secure yards, tracked and geofenced vehicles, and driver behaviour training, again typically designed and delivered by private security consultancies working alongside, rather than instead of, police forces.

Agriculture is, in this sense, simply the sector in which this collaborative, standards-based approach has been slowest to establish itself at scale, not because the underlying risk discipline does not apply, but because farming has historically operated with less capital available for security investment, more geographically dispersed and isolated sites, and a stronger tradition of trust-based, low-security working practices that served rural communities well when the offending they faced was low-level and local. Section 11 addresses why that tradition, entirely reasonable in its historical context, now needs to change.

11.3.Designing Out Crime: The Role of Manufacturers

Removing the risk source altogether, one of the treatment options set out in BS ISO 31000, points to a further actor whose contribution has, to date, been underused: the manufacturers of agricultural machinery itself. The Agricultural Engineers Association, the trade body representing manufacturers and importers of agricultural and outdoor power equipment, already administers the CESAR security marking scheme jointly with the construction plant sector, providing a national register intended to deter theft and assist recovery[47]. **The Demeter Initiative** proposes that the AEA go further and actively lobby its manufacturer members to design crime resistance into new equipment at the point of manufacture, through measures such as tamper-resistant ignition and immobiliser systems, standardised mounting points for aftermarket trackers, and GPS units that are inherently difficult to remove without specialist tools. Rural policing leaders have already made the same point publicly, observing that some manufacturers have historically had limited commercial incentive to improve security, since a theft simply generates a replacement sale. Removing that perverse incentive through industry-wide design standards would reduce the rural crime risk before a single machine ever reaches a farmyard.

[47] AEA – The Agricultural Engineers Association, available at https://aea.uk.com/.

12. Overcoming Cultural Resistance to Change

12.1. Understanding the Farming Mindset

An honest account of rural crime reduction must acknowledge that farmers and land managers are frequently resistant to changing long-standing working practices, even where those practices demonstrably increase their exposure to theft. Keys left in unattended vehicles because the same vehicle is driven in and out of a yard dozens of times a day; gates left open because closing and re-opening them repeatedly is judged not worth the time; barns left unlocked because they always have been and nothing was ever taken until recently, these are not signs of carelessness. They are entirely rational responses to decades of low crime risk and to the overriding operational pressure of running a farm, where every minute spent on security is a minute not spent on livestock, machinery, or the harvest.

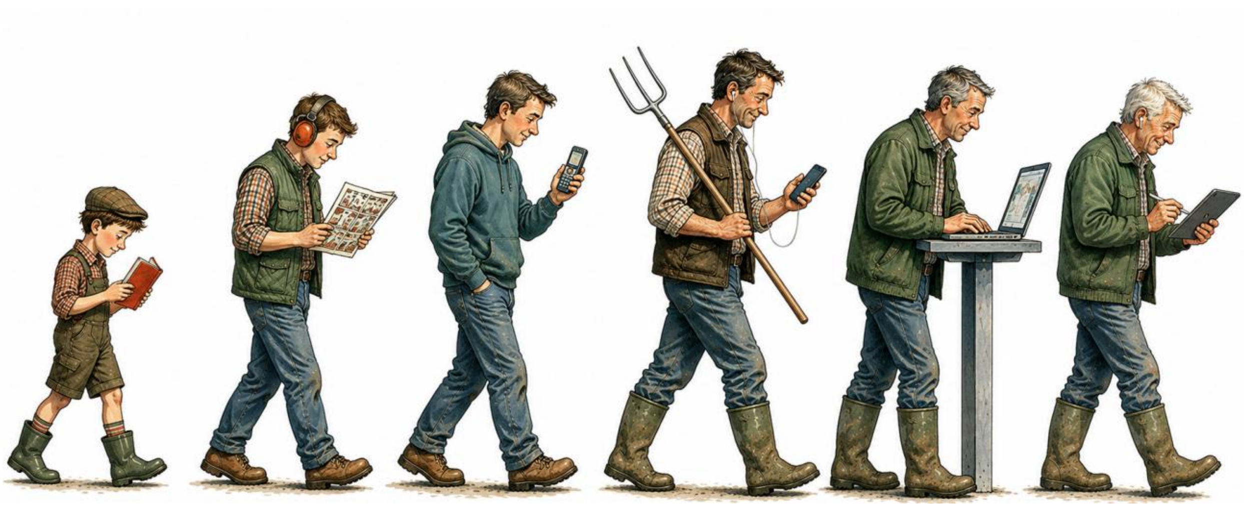
> *"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."*
>
> American writer Wendell Berry, who wrote in 1971 that a true conservationist "knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children."

The difficulty is that the risk environment has changed faster than these working practices have. A habit that carried negligible risk twenty years ago, when rural crime was mostly opportunistic and local, now carries substantial risk against organised, mobile, technology-enabled offenders who actively look for exactly these patterns of behaviour. Persuading a farmer to change a habit of forty years' standing is not achieved by a single leaflet or a single police visit; it requires sustained, respectful, and practical engagement from people the farmer trusts.

This is realistically a generational shift rather than a sudden one: it is closer to changing the climate than changing the weather. Experience suggests that many farmers of forty years' standing or more are the least likely to change working habits formed over decades, however well the case is made to them.

The Demeter Initiative's engagement with agricultural colleges and its Rural Crime work with Young Farmers' organisations is therefore pivotal, not as a secondary strand but as the primary mechanism through which the cultural change described in this section takes hold over time, as a new generation of farmers enters the industry already treating proportionate security as a normal part of good farm management.

This is not merely an operational observation; it is the subject of a dedicated body of academic research. Dr Kreseda Smith's doctoral and subsequent work at Harper Adams University, built on direct engagement with farmers in England and Wales, applies behavioural science specifically to understand how farmers make crime-reduction decisions, and finds that decisions are shaped less by a rational weighing of risk than by habit, identity, and the practical rhythms of daily farm work[48]. Her research reinforces the case made throughout this paper that engagement calibrated to that behavioural culture, rather than generic advice, is what changes practice on the ground.



12.2. Education, Engagement and Affordable Proportionate Measures

This is precisely the territory in which the private security sector, working through trusted intermediaries such as the National Farmers' Union, the Country Land and Business Association, the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, NFU Mutual, Cornish Mutual, and other specialist insurance providers[49] can achieve what a stretched police visit, however well-intentioned, often cannot: a relationship built over repeated contact, a farm walk conducted at the farmer's own pace, and a set of recommendations

[48] Dr Kreseda Smith, Behavioural Science and Farm Crime Prevention Decision Making: understanding the behavioural culture of farmers in England and Wales, PhD thesis (2018) and subsequent published work, Harper Adams University.

[49] Howden Rural, Aviva, AXA, and Zurich all offer specialist cover to those in agriculture.

calibrated to what the farm can actually afford, rather than a generic checklist. Rural SafeGuard's own farmer testimonials describe exactly this kind of engagement, farmers describing security reports that felt personalised, engaging, and actionable rather than another set of rules imposed from outside[50].

> *"Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."*
>
> Anne Isabella Thackeray Ritchie's 1885 novel Mrs Dymond, and echoes Maimonides' twelfth-century teaching that the highest form of charity is to help someone become self-reliant.

The most practical route into this culture change is to piggy-back on entities the farm already trusts and pays into, principally insurers and land managers, rather than asking farmers to build a new relationship from scratch, and to favour small, incremental changes over a single large intervention. This is also where the Initiative must be candid about a hard question it cannot avoid: who pays for this, and why a farm should prioritise it. Anchoring delivery to insurers and land managers, discussed further in Section 14, gives an honest answer, because it ties the cost of engagement to a benefit, principally a lower premium or a more resilient tenancy, that the farmer can see directly.

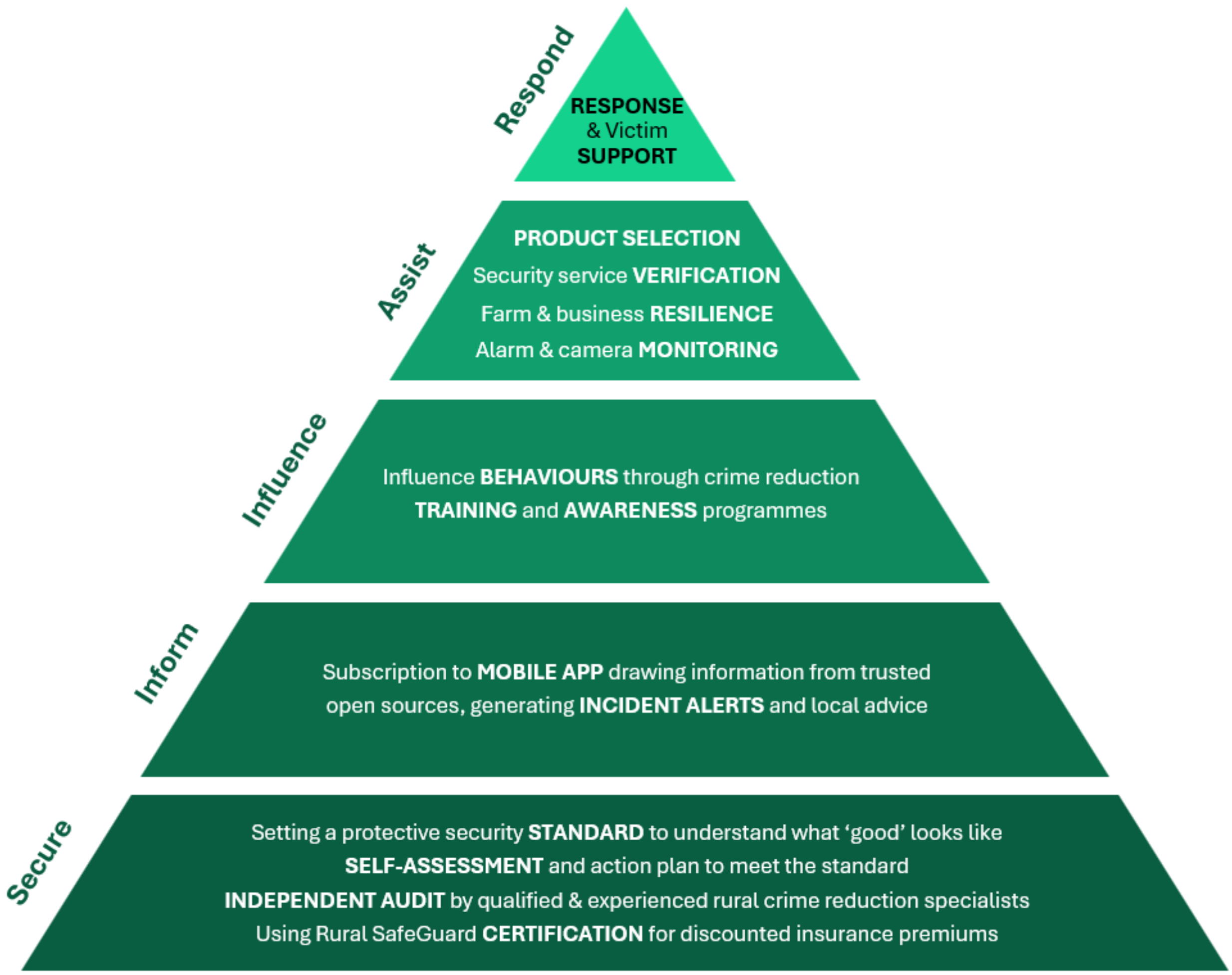
The objective, in the language the sector itself uses, is not to turn every farmyard into a fortress. It is to help farmers reach a level of protection that is As Low As Reasonably Practicable, a standard borrowed deliberately from health and safety risk management and applied by Rural SafeGuard to rural crime[51], recognising that farms are working businesses, not secure compounds, and that any security measure which meaningfully disrupts daily operations is unlikely to be sustained. Education and continual engagement, not one-off inspection, are the mechanism by which this culture change is achieved, and it is a mechanism far better suited to the sustained, relationship-based commercial model of the private security sector than to the necessarily episodic nature of police contact.

[50] Rural SafeGuard, Home, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com.

[51] Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.

13. Rural SafeGuard: An Emerging Exemplar

Rural SafeGuard is presented in this paper not as the only possible model for delivering **The Demeter Initiative**'s principles, but as evidence that the model already works in practice. Described as the United Kingdom's first commercially available national programme designed to reduce rural crime before it happens, it was created by a group of Chartered Security Professionals dedicated to the UK countryside and agricultural industry[52]. Its leadership team combines backgrounds in military policing, oil and gas, construction, civilian nuclear, and commercial security consultancy, together with senior roles across the UK security sector's professional bodies, exactly the second and third career profile described in Sec. 9.



The programme's methodology, built around five levels of protection, Secure, Inform, Influence, Assist, and Respond, and organised around the classic protective security sequence of deter, detect, delay, and respond, is explicitly designed to complement rather than duplicate policing, describing itself as working

[52]Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.

to build a trusted rural crime reduction standard that complements the UK's Wildlife and Rural Crime Policing Strategy[53]. It offers professional security audits, toolbox talks and in-field peer-to-peer learning, post-incident support and recovery guidance, targeted training and behaviour change, and is developing a certification system intended, over time, to be recognised by specialist insurers offering reduced premiums to farms that achieve it.

The Demeter Initiative proposes that programmes of this kind, whether Rural SafeGuard specifically or equivalent regional or force-level schemes built to the same standards, be formally recognised by police forces as accredited delivery partners, so that the vulnerability data they collect, subject to consent, can feed into local policing intelligence, and so that farmers engaging with an accredited programme can be confident they are working to a nationally consistent, professionally governed standard rather than an unregulated patchwork of commercial offers.

[53]Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.

14. Leveraging National Guidance and Safeguarding Wellbeing

14.1. The National Protective Security Authority

The National Protective Security Authority provides UK-wide guidance on protecting people, property, and assets from a range of threats, and its methodology, understanding an asset base, assessing threat and vulnerability, and designing proportionate, layered physical and procedural protection, maps directly onto the farm security review process proposed under **The Demeter Initiative**. Its guidance on perimeter protection, control of access, lighting design, and secure storage, developed principally for critical national infrastructure, is readily adaptable to farmyards, grain stores, and machinery sheds, and represents an existing, authoritative, government-backed resource that the private security sector can draw on rather than reinvent.

This is not solely a crime reduction matter; it has a genuine counter-terrorism dimension that reinforces the case for the standards set out in Section 13.1. Farms legitimately hold materials and equipment, including fertiliser, ammunition and firearms, and large plant machinery capable of being used in a vehicle-as-a-weapon attack, that are of established interest to serious and organised crime groups, terrorists, and lone actors, aligning this work directly with the National Protective Security Authority and with Counter Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSOs). Accredited rural crime specialists, delivered through the regional model described in Section 9, are well placed to act as a further resource for CTSOs, who already operate a similarly regional structure and who struggle, given the number of sites involved, to review every local location themselves.

14.2. The National Cyber Security Centre

Modern farm businesses are increasingly dependent on connected technology: GPS-guided machinery, telematics and tracking systems, automated livestock monitoring, and online banking and record-keeping. Each of these introduces a cyber dimension to rural crime risk that a purely physical security review will miss, from the spoofing or jamming of tracking devices noted in Section 7.3.2 to phishing and invoice fraud targeting farm businesses, which are frequently smaller enterprises without dedicated IT security resource. The National Cyber Security Centre's guidance for small and medium enterprises provides a proportionate, non-technical starting point that any integrated security plan produced under **The Demeter Initiative** should incorporate alongside physical measures, ensuring that the safeguarding of people, property, information, and business viability, the four pillars set out in the original brief for this Initiative, are treated as a single, integrated plan rather than separate workstreams.

14.3.Secured by Design

Secured by Design, the official police security initiative, offers a further, directly applicable resource: a suite of Design Guides used by architects, developers, and police Designing Out Crime Officers to embed security into buildings and developments from the earliest stage of design, and a Police Preferred Specification accreditation scheme that gives farmers and their advisors an independent basis for choosing tested and certified security products[54]. Secured by Design also publishes rural and agricultural security advice specifically, covering farmyard access, equipment marking, and fuel security, and recommends products meeting the Police Preferred Specification for exactly the kind of layered defence described in Section 8.2[55]. A Demeter-accredited farm security review should treat Secured by Design's guidance, alongside the RSG 1001:2026 standard described in Section 10.1, as a primary reference point when specifying physical and technical controls.

14.4.The Mental Health Impact of Rural Crime

No account of rural crime risk is complete without acknowledging its human cost. Dr Kreseda Smith's research, published in the Journal of Rural Studies, found direct evidence that agricultural crime causes measurable psychological distress among British farmers, describing effects extending well beyond financial loss into anxiety, a persistent sense of violation, and, in some cases, more serious mental ill health[56]. Subsequent research has examined how this distress interacts with the wider pressures of farming life[57], and

[54]Secured by Design, SBD Design Guides, available at https://www.securedbydesign.com/guidance/design-guides.

[55]Secured by Design, Rural and Agricultural Security Advice, available at https://www.securedbydesign.com/guidance/crime-prevention-advice/rural-agricultural-security-advice.

[56]Kreseda Smith, 'Desolation in the Countryside: How Agricultural Crime impacts the Mental Health of British Farmers', Journal of Rural Studies, 80 (2020).

[57]Kreseda Smith, 'Piling on the Pressure: Crime and Stress in British Farming', International Journal of Rural Criminology, 6(2) (2022).

how a traditional rural masculine identity can discourage farmers, and particularly farming men, from seeking help after victimisation, compounding the psychological harm[58]. This should be named explicitly rather than folded into a general reference to mental health: farming is widely reported to have one of the highest suicide rates of any occupational sector in the United Kingdom, and rural crime victimisation is one of the identifiable pressures that contributes to it. Making this connection explicit, rather than leaving it implicit within a broader wellbeing framing, is itself a further, powerful reason for treating rural crime as the serious risk this paper describes.

This is precisely why the response planning and root-cause analysis described in Section 9.5 matter as much as the physical defences described elsewhere in this paper: helping a farmer regain and retain control of their business quickly after an incident is itself a protective factor for mental health, not merely an operational convenience. **The Demeter Initiative** recognises the established farming charities that already provide vital support in this space, including the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI), the YANA (You Are Not Alone) project, the Farming Community Network (FCN), the Farm Safety Foundation (Yellow Wellies), and other farming charities operating regionally across the United Kingdom, and proposes that every accredited rural crime specialist be trained to signpost farmers proactively to this support as a routine part of post-incident engagement, not as an afterthought.

[58]Kreseda Smith and Rebecca Byrne, 'The Darker Side of Rural Masculinity: Second and Third Order Impacts of Low Help-Seeking Behavior Following the Trauma of Victimisation', International Journal of Rural Criminology, 8(4) (2024).

15. A National Partnership Model

15.1. Membership and Representative Bodies

The credibility and reach of **The Demeter Initiative** depend on the active participation of the organisations farmers and land managers already know and trust. The National Farmers' Union and the Country Land and Business Association have both publicly welcomed the NPCC's new strategy as recognition of the serious and organised nature of rural crime, with the NFU explicitly calling for a cross-departmental rural crime taskforce and sustained funding, and the CLA supporting the embedding of rural crime teams in every force[59]. The National Association of Agricultural Contractors represents a workforce that moves valuable machinery between sites constantly and has an obvious stake in shared security standards. These bodies are natural convening partners for the Initiative, able to communicate its principles through channels farmers already read and trust, rather than through a new and unfamiliar body.

[59]The Northern Farmer, 'New strategy to tackle organised crime gangs targeting farms', 25 November 2025.

15.2. Insurers as Risk Partners

Rural insurers, including NFU Mutual, Cornish Mutual, Howden Rural, Aviva, AXA, and Zurich hold a unique position in this partnership model: they carry the financial consequence of rural crime risk directly, and they already possess claims data that, if shared appropriately with police and accredited security partners, would materially improve the intelligence picture described in Section 7.2. Insurers are also best placed to convert **The Demeter Initiative**'s risk-treatment logic into a direct financial incentive, through premium discounts for farms that complete an accredited security review or achieve a recognised certification standard, exactly the direction Rural SafeGuard describes itself as pursuing[60]. This is, in risk management terms, the most direct possible expression of risk sharing: the party best able to price and absorb residual risk rewards the behaviours that reduce it.

This partnership needs to be entered into with eyes open. Insurers, including the major rural players, are commercial businesses, and a straightforward claims-and-replacement model is, in the short term, good for that business; it does not automatically create a strong commercial incentive to invest in reducing the underlying risk. **The Demeter Initiative** should therefore treat the premium-discount model proposed below as the mechanism by which this alignment is deliberately engineered, converting risk reduction into the more profitable option for the insurer as well as the farmer, rather than assuming insurers will arrive at that position unprompted.

The proposed Rural SafeGuard Certification Scheme illustrates concretely how this incentive could work in practice. Modelled deliberately on the IASME/NCSC Cyber Essentials scheme, which has issued over 215,000 certificates and is associated with markedly fewer insurance claims among certified organisations, the proposed scheme offers two tiers: a Foundation certificate, based on an independently verified self-assessment against the RSG 1001:2026 standard, and a Rural SafeGuard Plus certificate, adding a hands-on, on-farm audit by an independent SQEP rural crime specialist[61]. A farmer holding either certificate would, for the first time, have an independent, portable way of demonstrating to an insurer, a lender, or a customer that the crime risk on their holding has been properly assessed and treated, as part of their wider business resilience credentials, exactly as Cyber Essentials now allows a business to demonstrate its cyber resilience.

None of this delivers its full value until the certification itself carries recognised weight, and that is the single biggest ask this paper makes. The tangible benefit that makes the rest of this model work has to come primarily from the insurance sector, through premium recognition of the kind described above, and the precondition for insurers to move is a credible, national endorsement of the standard behind it. **The Demeter Initiative** therefore asks the College of Policing to formally recognise, or commit to reviewing, the Rural SafeGuard accreditation and certification scheme, including its train-the-trainer modules, so

[60] Rural SafeGuard, About Us, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com/about-us/.

[61] Rural SafeGuard Certification Scheme: A Scheme Strategy for Certifying Farm Protective Security (draft strategy, version 1.0, June 2026).

that insurers, farmers, and forces alike have a single, nationally endorsed reference point to build incentives around.

The government has already shown it is willing to fund protective security reviews directly for small businesses, not only through Cyber Essentials but through the National Protective Security Authority and National Cyber Security Centre's Secure Innovation Security Reviews scheme, which majority-funds a holistic protective and cyber security review for early-stage technology businesses, with the recipient contributing a modest share and committing to maintain a minimum level of security going forward[62]. Three of Rural SafeGuard's lead consultants already support the delivery of Secure Innovation reviews, which themselves feed into Cyber Essentials certification, giving the sector a ready-made bridge between the two schemes. **The Demeter Initiative** asks HM Government to expand Secure Innovation, or fund a directly equivalent scheme, to cover farms and agricultural businesses using telemetric, AI, robotics, or autonomous vehicles, adopting the same funding principle — a modest farmer contribution matched by a majority public contribution — to support the farm security reviews that lead to Rural SafeGuard certification. A fuller summary of both schemes is at **Annex H**.

15.3. Food Retailers as ESG Partners

UK food retailers are already, whether they frame it this way or not, in the business of rural resilience. Every fresh product on a supermarket shelf depends on a grower or a farmer having been able to plant, tend, house, and harvest it without that business being disrupted by theft, trespass, or arson. When a farm is targeted by an organised crime group, machinery is stolen, livestock is lost, or a farmer is left too frightened or too distracted to run the business as before, the consequences travel up the supply chain to every retailer who depends on that farm. Supporting the security of the supplier base is, in that sense, not a departure from a retailer's core commercial interest but a direct extension of it.

It is also, and just as importantly, a question of what kind of relationship a retailer wants to have with the people who grow and rear the food it sells. Retailers already compete on the strength of that relationship, through fair pricing commitments, supplier development programmes, and public pledges of support for British farming. Rural crime, and the toll it takes on farmers' confidence and mental wellbeing, sits squarely within that same territory. A retailer that is seen to stand behind its suppliers when they are targeted by criminals, rather than treating security as the farmer's problem alone, sends a clear and credible signal, to farmers, to shoppers, and to its own workforce, about the kind of business it is. This is the social pillar of an Environmental, Social, and Governance programme made tangible: not a policy statement, but a farmer who feels less alone after their yard has been broken into for the third time.

There is a reputational dimension too. Consumers increasingly expect the retailers they buy from to be able to demonstrate that their supply chain is treated fairly and protected, not simply sourced at the

[62] National Protective Security Authority and National Cyber Security Centre, Secure Innovation Security Reviews Scheme. Available at https://www.npsa.gov.uk/specialised-guidance/secure-innovation/secure-innovation-security-reviews-scheme

lowest price. A retailer that can point to a practical, funded commitment to protecting its growers and farmers from organised rural crime has a genuine and differentiated story to tell, one that goes beyond the sustainability and animal welfare commitments most retailers already publish, and speaks directly to the sense, widely held in farming communities, that the criminal threat they face has outpaced the support available to them.

There is already a working precedent for paying farmers directly for verified, on-farm action, rather than simply hoping it happens. Arla's FarmAhead™ Incentive rewards its farmer owners through the milk price itself for completing verified sustainability and welfare actions, funded from a pool of up to €500 million a year, and has already attracted co-investment from retail customers who want a stake in the outcome (see **Annex C**). A comparable model, rewarding verified Rural SafeGuard certification through price, sponsorship, or preferential terms rather than a one-off grant, is directly transferable to crime reduction and would give a retailer or processor a similarly concrete, measurable story to tell.

Several practical, fundable services already exist through which a food retailer, insurer, or membership body could support its supplier base directly. These are set out in detail at Annexes D, E, F, and G, and are summarised here for ease of reference (exclusive of VAT):

- **Online farm security self-assessment:** £320 per farm, or £500 for a bundle of three yards.
- **Independent Farm Security Audits:** £2,000 per farmyard (with a £200 supplement for adjacent but separated yard[63]), plus a contribution of £500[64] from the farmer, with reductions available for bundle purchases.
- **Post incident Route-Cause-Analysis**: £2,000 per incident; £1500 if an Independent Farm Security Audit report is available prior to the incident occurrence.

[63] Where a farming business includes more than one yard within a ten-mile circumference; however, if an additional yard is more than ten miles from the main yard, it is considered as a separate security review and attract the full rate.
[64] This is a fixed contribution inclusive of VAT.

- **Rural Crime Awareness Workshop:** £2,000 per session for up to thirty delegates (group bookings), or £500 for an on-farm session for up to five people.
- **Sponsor the *Close the Farm Gate* podcast:** £100 per episode, with an option for annual and/or title sponsorship and naming rights.

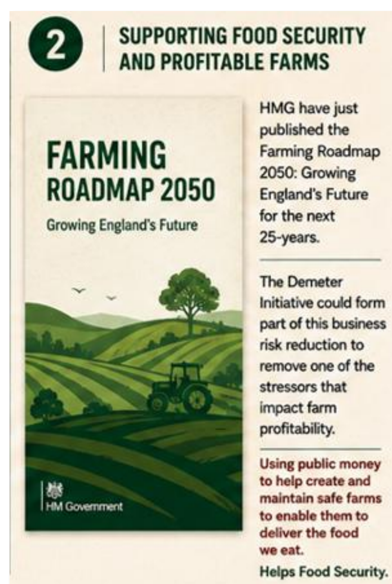
Each of these represents a modest, clearly costed way for a retailer to convert an existing commitment to its farmer and grower base into a measurable contribution to rural crime reduction, without requiring a new commercial structure or a long-term contractual commitment.

15.4.Aligning with Police Reorganisation

The pending reorganisation of the 43-force model in England and Wales is, on the evidence set out in Section 7.3.3, a direct response to exactly the cross-border coordination weakness that organised rural crime groups currently exploit. This is a genuine opportunity, not merely a risk to be managed. A national or regional structure designed from the outset with a formal role for accredited private-sector partners, shared risk registers, and insurer data sharing would avoid the current situation in which good local practice, such as the Rural SafeGuard programme or an individual force's rural crime team, exists as an isolated pocket of excellence rather than a national standard. **The Demeter Initiative** is offered as a framework that any reorganised structure could adopt without requiring new legislation, new statutory powers, or any dilution of operational policing independence.

15.5.Aligning with the Farming Roadmap 2050

Police reorganisation is not the only long-term policy vehicle into which **The Demeter Initiative** could be embedded. In June 2026, Defra published Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future, a twenty-five-year plan for the sector, developed in partnership with farmers, that explicitly recognises the agri-food sector as Critical National Infrastructure and sets out the government's approach to building a profitable, productive, and resilient farming sector[65]. Business resilience is one of the roadmap's core themes, but crime risk is not yet explicitly addressed within it. **The Demeter Initiative** represents a natural and low-cost addition: a proportionate, standards-based approach to crime risk that fits squarely within the roadmap's



[65] HM Government (Defra), Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future (accessible version), June 2026.

existing emphasis on profitability, productivity, and resilience, and that could be referenced in future iterations of the roadmap or its associated sector growth plans.

15.6. A Defra-Led National Initiative, Working with the Home Office

Given that rural crime sits at the intersection of two departmental responsibilities, farming and rural affairs on one hand, and policing and crime reduction on the other, **The Demeter Initiative** is best positioned not as a policing initiative alone, but as a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) led initiative, developed in close collaboration with the Home Office. This dual ownership mirrors the roadmap's own recognition that farming resilience is a cross-departmental responsibility and would allow the Initiative to draw simultaneously on Defra's relationship with the farming sector and the Home Office's responsibility for policing and serious organised crime. Arguably, the Security Minister or the Policing Minister are proposed as the responsible ministerial offices, providing a single, accountable ministerial sponsorship for the Initiative across both departments, consistent with the National Farmers' Union's own call for a cross-departmental rural crime taskforce[66].

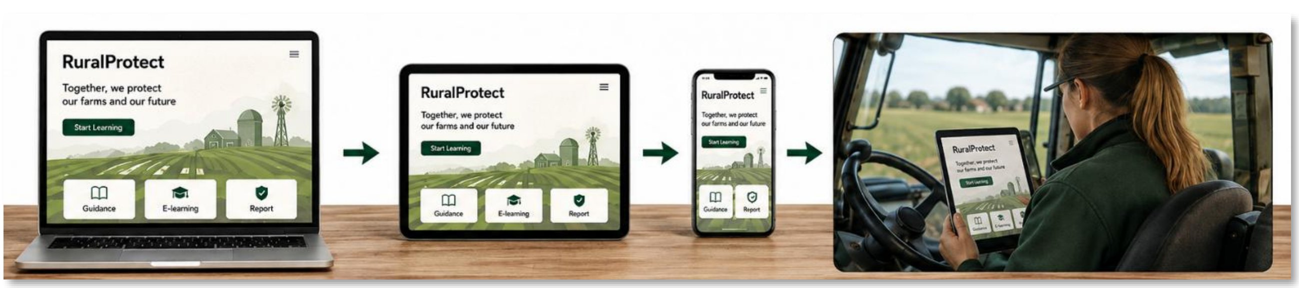
[66] The Northern Farmer, 'New strategy to tackle organised crime gangs targeting farms', 25 November 2025.

16. A Rural Crime Knowledge Sharing Platform: An Aspirational Opportunity

Beyond the practical measures set out above, **The Demeter Initiative** sees a longer-term, aspirational opportunity: a dedicated rural crime knowledge sharing platform and companion phone app, through which the Initiative operators (i.e., Rural SafeGuard) could collect, analyse, and share meaningful crime and near-miss data, in a format chosen by the farmers, land managers, and rural residents (user), rather than scattered across social media groups, WhatsApp chains, and individual force reporting systems that do not talk to one another.

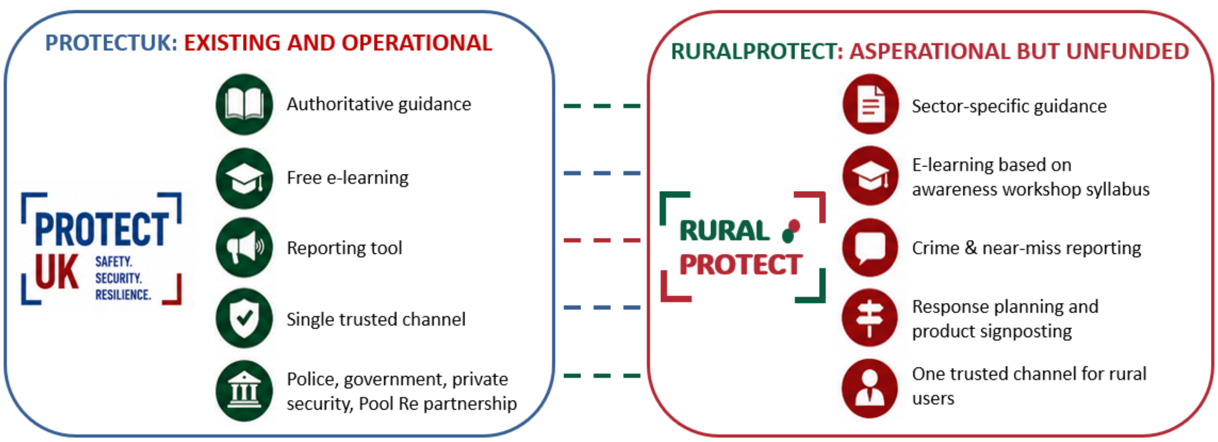
The natural model for this already exists and is government and police funded and managed. ProtectUK, operated by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office in partnership with the Home Office and Pool Reinsurance as the Counter Terrorism Alliance, provides free advice, guidance, e-learning, and reporting tools to help businesses and the public understand and respond to the risk of terrorism. It is the clearest working example in the UK of a public-private partnership delivering education, training, and a single trusted channel through which a dispersed audience can access authoritative guidance and report concerns, and it is the model **The Demeter Initiative** proposes as the template for an equivalent rural crime platform. A detailed breakdown of what ProtectUK offers today, and how each element could be replicated for a rural audience, is set out at **Annex I**.

The parallel with counter terrorism extends beyond the platform itself. The Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) training now used across the UK's high streets and crowded places was originally developed and funded through a sponsorship partnership between Counter Terrorism Policing and Marks and Spencer, in an effort to make the high street a safer place and to help coordinate the response to a terror attack in a public place. A retailer stepped in, alongside policing, to fund and shape a national training product because it recognised that the resilience of its own business depended on the resilience of the places and people around it. That same mindset, a commercial partner co-funding a nationally consistent awareness and response product designed by specialists and delivered at scale, could be applied to rural crime in the same way, with food retailers, insurers, and membership bodies in the role Marks and Spencer played for the high street.



A rural crime platform built on this model would offer education and training in the way ProtectUK and ACT already do, but would extend further into response planning and signposting: helping a farmer or land manager know not only how to reduce their risk, but who to contact when an incident occurs, whether that is the local authority for fly-tipping, the Environment Agency for waste crime, the police for theft or aggravated trespass, or a farming charity for support with the wellbeing impact of being a victim of crime. At present, that knowledge is fragmented and depends heavily on an individual farmer already knowing who to call; a single, trusted platform would remove that burden at the point it is most needed.

This is framed as an aspiration, not a delivery-ready proposal. **The Demeter Initiative** notes that Rural SafeGuard has already developed the concept for a Rural Community Crime App, enabling farmers, residents, and businesses to report suspicious activity and crime events to their local community quickly. Rural SafeGuard is now seeking a technical partner and sponsor to take the project forward. The business concept and delivery plan are ready and are included here to show that the idea has already passed external, competitive scrutiny. They also present a practical opportunity for a better-resourced partner — whether government, a membership body, a food retailer, or an insurer — to adopt and complete what a small specialist company could advance to funded approval but not deliver alone.



Implementation Roadmap

> *“Rome wasn't built in a day.”*
>
> English rendering of a medieval French proverb (“*Rome ne fut pas faite toute en un jour*”, c.1190), first recorded in English by Richard Taverner in 1545 and popularised the following year in John Heywood's collection of English proverbs.

16.1.Phase One: Pilot and Proof of Concept

A small number of volunteer forces, ideally including at least one force already engaged with an accredited private-sector programme such as Rural SafeGuard, formally recognise a defined group of accredited security professionals as delivery partners under a memorandum of understanding, and agree a limited, consent-based data-sharing protocol covering farm vulnerability data collected during commercial security reviews.

16.2.Phase Two: Standardisation and Accreditation

Working with the Security Institute, the register of Chartered Security Professionals, and relevant vocational bodies, a national accreditation standard for rural crime security reviews is agreed, assessed against a consultant's demonstrated ability to deliver a farm security review and certification pathway rather than professional body membership alone, so that a farmer engaging a Demeter-accredited consultant, whether through Rural SafeGuard or an equivalent regional provider, receives a consistent, professionally governed service, and so that insurers have a single recognised standard against which to calibrate premium incentives.

16.3.Phase Three: National Roll-Out Aligned to Force Reorganisation

As the 43-force model is reorganised, **The Demeter Initiative**'s governance principles, a shared risk register, accredited private-sector partners, and insurer-linked incentives, are built into the design of the new structures from the outset, rather than retrofitted afterwards, with the National Police Chiefs' Council's Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028 providing the policing framework against which the Initiative's contribution is measured and reported.

17. Conclusion and Call to Action

The evidence set out in this paper points to a single, uncomfortable conclusion: continuing to expect the police alone to solve rural crime, using the same enforcement-led model that has been applied for a generation, is unlikely to produce a materially different outcome, however dedicated and skilled the officers involved. The threat has become more organised, more mobile, and more technologically sophisticated than a purely reactive model, structured around 43 geographically bounded forces, can realistically contain alone.

The Demeter Initiative does not ask the police to do less. It asks every other stakeholder with a genuine interest in rural crime reduction, the private security sector, farming representative bodies, insurers, food retailers and farmers and land managers themselves, to do more, and to do it using the disciplined, standards-based risk management approach that other high-consequence sectors have applied for decades. It asks the pending reorganisation of policing structures to be treated as the opportunity it is, a rare chance to design collaboration into the system from the start, rather than a threat to be managed.

Like the harvest for which this Initiative is named, rural safety is not a state that, once achieved, looks after itself. It must be tended, season after season, by a community working together. This paper is an invitation to that community, HMG, police leaders, security professionals, farming bodies, insurers, food retailer, academics, and farmers, to begin that work together.

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Frank is a rural crime specialist that collaborates with farmers, growers, and land managers to help create safer places for rural communities to live, work, rest, and play.

Version: 1. **Dated**: 1 August 2026

Annex A: Detailed Stakeholder Asks

This annex sets out, in full, what **The Demeter Initiative** asks of each principal stakeholder group. It expands the summary given in Section 2, **What We're Asking of You**.

HM Government (Defra and the Home Office)

1. Read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, and partially fund it, using public money for public good to remove one of the stressors bearing on those who grow and supply our food, steward our countryside, and look after our forests, rivers, and natural landscapes.
2. Recognise that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task, and should be approached like any other business risk, by acting to reduce both the likelihood and the consequence of rural crime.
3. Establish a joint Defra/Home Office sponsorship of the Initiative, with a ministerial sponsor, a lead civil servant, and a single point of contact to take it forward.
4. Consider **The Demeter Initiative** for inclusion in the Future Farming Road Map and the Police Reform White Paper, so that the rural crime risk is not overlooked as government support to rural communities is restructured.
5. Include financial support for farmyard defences — automatic sliding gates, physical barriers, cameras, intruder detection, lighting, forensic DNA marking solutions, and associated public signage — in future Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) application rounds.
6. Expand the Secure Innovation Security Reviews initiative to cover farms and agricultural businesses that use telemetric, AI, automation, robotics, or autonomous vehicles as part of their growing and farm management operations.
7. Emulate the Cyber Essentials scheme by formally endorsing Rural SafeGuard as the government's model for the baseline protective security measures expected of UK farmyards.
8. Change national planning regulations to allow a farmer to reroute a public right of way, green lane, or footpath that dissects their farmyard, or that runs within an unacceptable distance of the farmhouse front door or livestock pens forming part of the farmyard (this would not extend to open fields or other land away from the farmyard's natural boundaries), free of disproportionate application fees, assessed against a published criterion, and with a high likelihood of success.
9. Note that the Security Industry Authority (SIA), the Home Office’s arm’s-length regulator for the private security industry and for Martyn’s Law, has no licensing role in the consultancy and knowledge-sharing activities proposed under **The Demeter Initiative**, but remains a natural stakeholder in the wider partnership, given its ability to showcase a working public-private model of this kind when engaging with the Home Office and other government departments and national bodies.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (DCC Nigel Harrison and the College of Policing)

10. Read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, recognising that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task and should be approached like any other business risk, acting on both likelihood and consequence.
11. Appoint a police lead and single point of contact to take the Initiative forward.
12. Recognise the part the UK private security sector has to play in reducing rural crime, and that bodies such as The Security Institute, the Association of Security Consultants, the UK Chapter of ASIS International, and the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals are reputable membership bodies from which suitably qualified and experienced professionals may be drawn, including those on the Register of Chartered Security Professionals (CSyP), which the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals holds under Royal Charter, and the Institution of Civil Engineers' Register of Security Engineering Specialists (RSES).
13. Recognise that public-private partnership has already delivered dividends in counter-terrorism policing, in tackling retail crime, and through the ongoing work of the S12 Security Guarding Leadership Group, as evidence that working together reduces crime.
14. Pledge that the National Rural Crime Team will collaborate with and contribute to **The Demeter Initiative**, sharing tactical guidance to inform crime-reduction education and awareness programmes for farmers, growers, foresters, and land managers.
15. Support the creation of information-sharing pathways that operate within legal constraints and the data-sharing principles set by the Information Commissioner's Office.
16. Expand the ProtectUK, or support the creation and management of a rural crime specific, platform and companion app.
17. Ask the College of Policing[67] to formally recognise, or commit to reviewing, the Rural SafeGuard accreditation and certification scheme, including its train-the-trainer modules, so that insurers, farmers, and forces have a single, nationally endorsed reference point to build incentives around.

The Agricultural Sector Membership Bodies (NFU, CLA, NAAC, and Others)

18. Read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, recognising that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task and should be approached like any other business risk, acting on both likelihood and consequence.
19. Appoint an executive lead and single point of contact to take the Initiative forward.

[67] College of Policing. Available at https://www.college.police.uk/.

20. Partially fund farm security assurance reviews, rural crime awareness workshops, and post-incident root-cause analysis, to create and share meaningful data with farmers, police, academics, and insurers.
21. Recognise that the UK private security sector has a part to play in reducing rural crime, and that crime-reduction consultancy should form part of members' knowledge transfer partnerships.
22. Embed farm security and rural crime reduction within the agricultural and horticultural lifelong learning journey, so that academic and vocational courses include personal safety and property security as a core part of the syllabus, covering the safeguarding of people, property, and data essential to delivering the rural business plan.
23. Consider co-sponsoring the knowledge sharing platform and app development, or the Close the Farm Gate podcast, alongside insurers and food retailers, as a further way of channelling member subscriptions into practical crime-reduction outcomes.
24. Encourage members — farmers, growers, and land managers — to act and shape their land to defend against foreseeable crime risks, taking ownership of the challenge and installing proportionate and affordable defences around their farmyards; make clear that a farmyard can be defended even though the entire landholding cannot; and encourage members to weigh the adversarial and crime risk when diversifying, adopting technology, and protecting their agri-data, so that the opportunity for crime is designed out.
25. Employ, or partner with, a specialist rural crime risk specialist, such as Rural SafeGuard, to develop and share meaningful awareness programmes with members; this role would act as the interlocutor with all crime-risk organisations, deliver impactful guidance, advice, and timely articles, guides, and check-sheets to members, and lead **The Demeter Initiative** on the sector's behalf.
26. Encourage members to demand that agricultural vehicle, machine, and equipment manufacturers consider crime reduction when designing and marketing their products, in the way vehicle manufacturers (cars and vans) have already designed out crime in recent models.

Specialist Rural and Agricultural Insurers (NFU Mutual, Cornish Mutual, Howden Rural, Aviva, AXA, and Zurich, and Others)

27. Read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, recognising that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task and should be approached like any other business risk, acting on both likelihood and consequence.
28. Appoint an executive lead and single point of contact to take the Initiative forward.
29. Offer discretionary premium rates for clients who obtain Rural SafeGuard (or an equivalent model created within **The Demeter Initiative**) or Rural SafeGuard Plus certification, going beyond the

discounts already offered for vehicles fitted with trackers or uniquely marked under schemes such as CESAR.

30. Partially fund farm security assurance reviews, rural crime awareness workshops, and post-incident root-cause analysis, to create and share meaningful data with farmers, police, and insurers.
31. Recognise that the UK private security sector has a part to play in reducing rural crime, and that crime-reduction consultancy should form part of clients' knowledge transfer partnerships.
32. Support the inclusion of farm security and rural crime reduction within the agricultural and horticultural lifelong learning journey, so that academic and vocational courses include personal safety and property security as a core part of the syllabus, covering the safeguarding of people, property, and data essential to delivering the rural business plan.
33. Share anonymised claims and incident data with police and accredited security partners, subject to appropriate data-protection safeguards, to improve the rural crime intelligence picture described in Section 7.2.
34. Consider sponsoring the knowledge sharing platform and app development, or becoming a sponsor of the Close the Farm Gate podcast, as a further, low-cost way of demonstrating commitment to the farmers and growers whose risk they underwrite.

Food Retail Organisations (Tesco, Sainsburys, Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl, Arla, and others)

35. Read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, recognising that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task and should be approached like any other business risk, acting on both likelihood and consequence.
36. Appoint an executive lead and single point of contact to take the Initiative forward.
37. Offer discretionary pricing and corporate support to food suppliers who obtain Rural SafeGuard (or an equivalent model created within **The Demeter Initiative**) or Rural SafeGuard Plus certification, which could include financial support to procure, install, and operate farmyard defences such as automatic sliding gates, physical barriers, cameras, intruder detection, lighting, forensic DNA marking solutions, and associated public signage.
38. Partially fund farm security reviews, rural crime awareness workshops, and post-incident root-cause analysis, to create and share meaningful data with farmers, police, and insurers.
39. Consider sponsoring the knowledge sharing platform and app development or becoming the title sponsor of the Close the Farm Gate podcast.
40. Recognise that the UK private security sector has a part to play in reducing rural crime, and that crime-reduction consultancy should form part of suppliers' knowledge transfer partnerships.

41. Include farm security and rural crime reduction awareness and education programmes within suppliers' benefits, funded as part of ESG-linked lifelong learning, covering the safeguarding of people, property, and data essential to delivering the food sold on the shelves.

42. Several major UK retailers already run substantial farmer-support and agricultural investment programmes; see **Annex C** for a summary of these, as a starting point for engagement on **The Demeter Initiative.**

Agricultural Engineers Association

43. Read, respond to, comment on, and endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, recognising that reducing rural crime is more than a policing task and should be approached like any other business risk, acting on both likelihood and consequence.

44. Appoint an executive lead and single point of contact to take the Initiative forward.

45. Lobby equipment suppliers to design out crime and increase the theft-reduction methods incorporated into vehicles, equipment, and technology destined for the UK market.

46. Continue and expand the CESAR scheme, encouraging members to fit marking at the factory, and increase awareness and factory marking of Micro CESAR on ancillary agricultural equipment that does not carry a vehicle identification number.

The Rural Crime Academic Community

47. Continue researching the rural crime risk, including agricultural crime, and help build an understanding of the mens rea (state of mind) of the offender, identifying motivation, capability, and attack methods to develop a shared intelligence picture that benefits the whole sector.

48. Building on the work already underway at the Harper Adams University Rural Resilience Research Group[68] and the Royal Agricultural University's agri-management provision[69], consider, together with other agricultural colleges and universities, developing modules that educate students on reducing their rural crime risk and building resilient businesses, linking this where appropriate to farm safety.

49. Deliver this either as a formal module or as an enrichment session, such as the Rural SafeGuard 4-hour rural crime awareness workshop, or work with rural crime reduction specialists to create a bespoke module; Rural SafeGuard has indicated it would be very willing to collaborate on this basis.

50. A list of other UK agricultural colleges and training establishments identified through open-source research, and invited to consider the same opportunity, is set out at **Annex K**.

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[68] Harper Adams University, Rural Resilience Research Group. Available at https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/research/940/research-centre/rural-resilience-research-group/.

[69] Royal Agricultural University, BSc (Hons) Agri-Management (Top-up). Available at https://www.rau.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/bsc-hons-agri-management-top-up.

The National Rural Crime Network, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the National Association of Local Councils

51. Work with their respective stakeholders, including Police and Crime Commissioners and Mayors, to advocate the merits of **The Demeter Initiative** and to lobby government for the recognition and funding needed to support the risk reduction effort.

52. Use the network of Police and Fire Commissioners[70] and local councils[71] to encourage police forces to adopt the public-private partnership and to work with rural crime specialists, such as Rural SafeGuard, to collect and share intelligence, create meaningful knowledge-sharing workshops, and introduce the pre-event education set out within **The Demeter Initiative**, including farm audits, root-cause analysis, signposting to verified security service providers and technology, and the Close the Farm Gate podcast.

53. Continue to lobby for legislative changes that mitigate emerging rural crime risks.

54. Lobby for protective security technical equipment to form part of future rounds of the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund[72] and other government support schemes that help create a safe and secure environment for farmers, their livestock, and their equipment.

The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs

55. Advocate **The Demeter Initiative**[73] and encourage members and club leaders to include rural crime risk as part of their knowledge-sharing opportunities and lifelong learning journey.

56. Promote workshop-based learning at club events, alongside the Close the Farm Gate podcast.

57. Consider joining the Initiative and allocating a lead role to help shape the future public-private partnership, recognising the merits of the Initiative.

The Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime

58. Advocate **The Demeter Initiative**[74] and encourage members and stakeholders to include rural crime risk, not solely police enforcement, as part of their knowledge-sharing opportunities and lifelong learning journey.

59. Promote workshop-based learning at events, alongside the Close the Farm Gate podcast.

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[70] Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. Available at https://www.apccs.police.uk/.

[71] National Association of Local Councils. Available at https://www.nalc.gov.uk/.

[72] HM Government (Defra), Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) 2026. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2026-closed.

[73] National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs. Available at https://nfyfc.org.uk/.

[74] Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime. Available at https://scottishparc.co.uk/.

60. Consider joining the Initiative and allocating a lead interlocutor to help shape the future public-private partnership, recognising the merits of the Initiative.

61. Advocate Scotland's distinct challenges while recognising that the same offenders cross the border into England and use ferry routes into Northern Ireland.

Annex B: National Resilience and Food Security — The Evidence Base

This annex expands on Section 9, setting out in more detail the government publications, live parliamentary and audit channels, and academic research that link reduction of the rural crime risk to UK food security and national resilience. It is presented as a sourced evidence base rather than a settled or exhaustive literature, consistent with the honest assessment at Section 9.4 that this is a genuinely emerging, not yet complete, case.

Government and Official Sources

National Risk Register 2026 (Cabinet Office/HM Government, published 14 July 2026). The public-facing version of the classified National Security Risk Assessment, covering 87 standalone risks plus 8 linked scenarios. Its 2026 local-priorities mapping across England's Local Resilience Forums explicitly names livestock health protection and agricultural disease management as priorities for West Mercia, Cumbria, Avon and Somerset, and the Humber, and names 'rural community resilience' directly as a priority for Dorset, the first edition to tie these exposures to named local resilience priorities.

United Kingdom Food Security Report 2024 — Theme 3: Food Supply Chain Resilience (Defra, Official Statistics under the Agriculture Act 2020). A statutory report to Parliament confirming that food supply chain resilience is formally monitored and linked to the National Risk Register, and documenting how shocks such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine exposed single points of failure in 'just-in-time' business models and contributed to the highest food inflation in 45 years.

Resilience of the UK Food Supply Chain to Disruptions (National Audit Office, value-for-money study announced November 2025, reporting ongoing). An independent parliamentary oversight study assessing whether Defra is taking effective action to ensure food supply chain resilience to extreme weather, cyber-attack, global conflict, and pandemics; a potential channel for evidence on how criminal loss at farm level factors into overall supply chain resilience.

National Preparedness and Resilience Sector Sources

Just in Case: 7 Steps to Narrow the UK Civil Food Resilience Gap (National Preparedness Commission, February 2025; authors T. Lang, N. Neumann and A. So). Argues UK food policy is inadequately prepared for shocks such as climate change, geopolitical instability, and supply chain disruption, and that food, despite being recognised Critical National Infrastructure, receives comparatively little policy attention; calls for a Food Security and Resilience Act, a National Food Security Council, and a shift to 'just-in-case' planning.

NPC Evidence to the House of Lords National Resilience Committee (National Preparedness Commission; oral evidence from Lord Toby Harris, Chair, 16 March 2026). Describes a deteriorating UK risk environment and fragmented ministerial responsibility for resilience, and confirms a live parliamentary inquiry into national resilience, including local resilience structures, is underway with a final report due November 2026.

Academic Research

'The Intersection of Rural Criminology and Food Security: The Impact of Organised Criminal Groups in the Rural Space' (Dr Kreseda Smith, Harper Adams University, 2024). A peer-reviewed book chapter, framed against the UN Sustainable Development Goals, arguing that rural crime targeting farming equipment and infrastructure disrupts livelihoods and that organised criminal involvement compromises food chain security; the clearest existing academic source theorising the rural crime and food security link directly.

'UK Policing Structures Create an Open Goal for Organised Criminals in Rural Areas' (Dr Kate Tudor, Durham University, 2024). Argues that Regional Organised Crime Units and the National Crime Agency prioritise threats using thresholds that rural acquisitive crime rarely meets, creating a structural 'open goal' between local and national policing tiers; the key structural, mechanism-level source underpinning Section 9.3.

'Policing Rural Crimes and Rural Communities in England' (Professor Karen Bullock and Professor Jon Garland, University of Surrey, International Journal of Rural Criminology, 8(1), 2023, pp. 41-58). Peer-reviewed interviews with 24 rural crime officers across six English forces, finding chronic under-reporting, jurisdictional confusion, and resourcing constraints, alongside growing investment by some Police and Crime Commissioners in rural policing.

'Shutting the Gate: A Preliminary Study of Farm Crime Prevention Methods Used by the Police in Rural England and Wales' (A. Nunns, Professor A. Wills and Dr V.T. Montrose, International Journal of Rural Criminology, 6(2), 2022, pp. 223-236). A survey of 33 rural police forces finding only 57.6% of respondents believed current farm crime prevention methods effective and 81.8% reporting resource constraints; most respondents favoured shared responsibility between farmers, police, and representative bodies, direct practitioner support for a coordinated approach.

Strategic Police Decision-Making in Tackling Organised Crime (Dr Maria Pournara, Cardiff University, PhD thesis, 2020). Analyses 24 years of UK organised-crime agencies' annual reports and interviews with former strategic decision-makers, finding that national crime-priority setting is shaped by politics, media coverage, and organisational path-dependency as much as by objective harm; supplies the theoretical basis for why rural crime could remain structurally overlooked absent deliberate intervention.

Organised Vehicle Theft in the UK: Trends and Challenges (E. Glantz, M. Williams and A. Greig, Royal United Services Institute, Occasional Paper, 26 June 2025). Based on a literature review and 34 expert interviews, finds vehicle theft has risen 75% since 2013, shifting to professionalised organised crime costing the UK an estimated £1.77 billion a year; corroborates, from a national-security research institute, that agricultural equipment theft sits within a recognised organised-crime research agenda.

Read together, these sources support the proposition set out at Section 9: that a coordinated national effort to reduce rural and agricultural crime would reduce a documented drain on domestic food-producing capacity, and therefore plausibly contribute to the food-system and rural-community resilience objectives that government's own resilience architecture is actively trying to strengthen.

Annex C: Retailers with Farm or Agricultural Support Programmes

Several major UK food retailers, and at least one major dairy processor, already run substantial, well-established programmes that invest directly in their farmer and grower base. None of these programmes currently extends to crime reduction specifically, but each demonstrates that retailers and processors are both willing and able to fund supplier-facing support at scale, and each represents a plausible route by which a retailer could extend its existing commitment to farming to include security, in the way asked of them at Annex A. This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive and is drawn from publicly available information current at the time of writing.

Tesco runs a series of Sustainable Farming Groups covering dairy, cheese, beef, and lamb suppliers, dating from 2007, which set fair cost-of-production pricing models and share best practice among farmers. Tesco has partnered with NatWest's Lombard business to offer preferential green finance to farmers in these groups, sponsors the Tesco Future Farmer Foundation to develop young farmers, and funds an annual Agri T-Jam innovation pitching event connecting agri-tech start-ups with its supply chain.

Sainsbury's has committed some £5 billion through multi-year supply agreements, extending long-term contracts of five years or more to over 2,500 British and Irish farms across produce, dairy, meat, fish, and poultry by 2027, alongside targeted investment such as additional payments and sustainability bonuses for its dairy farmer base through its Dairy Development Group.

Morrisons, which describes itself as British farming's single biggest direct supermarket customer, is committing over £1.6 billion to British agriculture and food production, and runs the Morrisons Next Generation Farming Programme (training and mentoring for young farmers, opened to the wider industry from autumn 2025), a shared farming agreement underwriting the growing costs of its potato suppliers, an Agriculture Directors Forum convening supplier leadership, and its long-running ‘For Farmers’ range, which has raised over £29 million for growers since 2015.

Aldi and **Lidl** have both made multi-year commitments to British suppliers, including Lidl's investment of over £70 million in longer-term contracts with British root vegetable growers as part of a wider pledge to inject billions into the British food industry; both discounters have publicly backed farmers on issues affecting the sector's viability.

Arla, the UK's largest dairy cooperative and majority-owned by around 1,900 British farmers, runs a FarmAhead™ Incentive scheme that pays its farmer owners a milk-price supplement for verified sustainability and animal welfare actions, funded from a pool of up to €500 million a year across the wider European cooperative. The scheme is underpinned by an annual Climate Check assessment of every member farm and has attracted further co-investment from retail customers, including Aldi, Asda, and Morrisons, through Arla's Customer Sustainability Programme. As a farmer-owned cooperative that already collects detailed, farm-level data and pays a direct financial incentive for verified on-farm action, Arla is a natural analogue for a similar rural-crime incentive, rewarding Rural SafeGuard certification through the milk price in the same way it currently rewards emissions reduction.

Other retailers, including Waitrose, the Co-op, Asda, and M&S, run comparable supplier assurance and farming-partnership schemes, and other dairy processors, including Müller and First Milk, operate comparable milk supply and sustainability partnerships with their farmer suppliers. Engaging these retailers and processors, alongside the six named above, on extending a proportion of existing supplier-support funding to crime-reduction measures — for example, discretionary terms for suppliers holding Rural SafeGuard certification — is a practical, low-cost entry point for retailer participation in **The Demeter Initiative**, building on relationships and funding mechanisms that already exist rather than requiring a new commercial structure.

Annex D: The Rural SafeGuard Programme — Executive Summary

Rural SafeGuard is the United Kingdom's first commercially available national programme designed to reduce rural crime before it happens, for farmers, estates, insurers, and retailers alike. It was created by a group of Chartered Security Professionals (CSyP) dedicated to the UK countryside and agricultural industry, and its leadership team combines backgrounds in military policing, oil and gas, construction, civilian nuclear, and commercial security consultancy, together with senior roles across the UK security sector's professional bodies.

The programme's mission is to help farmers and landowners reduce their crime risk to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP), through a logical, repeatable, and defensible process grounded in the disciplines of deter, detect, delay, and respond. It is designed to work alongside farming membership bodies, agricultural insurers, local authorities, and the commercial security sector to build a trusted crime-reduction standard that complements the UK's Wildlife and Rural Crime Policing Strategy, rather than duplicating it.

Rural SafeGuard delivers this through five linked levels of activity — Secure, Inform, Influence, Assist, and Respond — covering professional, on-farm security audits; toolbox talks and peer-to-peer learning between farmers; verification of security products and services; post-incident support and recovery guidance; and, in development, a trusted certification system combining a self-assessment with an independent on-farm review, alongside ongoing engagement with specialist insurers to secure reduced premiums for certified farms.

Rural SafeGuard is presented in **The Demeter Initiative** not as the only possible delivery model, but as evidence that the model this paper proposes already works in practice, and as the live, operating exemplar referenced throughout this paper, including in **Section 12**. Further information is available at

https://ruralsafeguard.com/

Annex E: The Rural SafeGuard Farm Security Standard — Executive Summary

The Rural SafeGuard Farm Security Standard, RSG 1001:2026, Rural Protective Security — Defending the Farmyard Against Serious and Organised Crime, specifies good practice for the protective security of a farmyard against serious and organised crime. It is written for farmers, growers, and land managers whose businesses are based in isolated and vulnerable farmyards, and it sets out what defences should be created, rather than how they should be designed, procured, installed, or maintained.

The standard is grounded in the risk bowtie: the farmer is responsible for the reducing the opportunity on the left-hand side, which reduce the likelihood of a crime; the police are accountable for the right-hand side, investigating events and pursuing offenders after the fact. Because it is not possible to defend an entire landholding, given public roads and rights of way that legitimately cross open land, the standard deliberately concentrates protective effort on the farmyard itself — the buildings and curtilage where vehicles, plant, equipment, livestock, and produce are assembled.

The standard is built on defence in depth: multiple, independent barriers between the criminal and the asset, so that defeating any single barrier does not give the criminal what they came for. Because most rural crime is vehicle-enabled, the priority is to reduce the ability of a vehicle to entry or exit from the farmyard; the second is denying a person access to a building or an unattended vehicle. All defences are required to be affordable and proportionate to the assessed risk, reduced to a level that is As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP), through a systematic security management review method set out in the standard.

RSG 1001:2026 is, at the time of writing, the most complete standard of its kind available to the sector, and **The Demeter Initiative** proposes it, in **Sections 10 and 13**, as the standard bearer against which farm security reviews under the Initiative should be benchmarked.

Annex F: The Rural SafeGuard Certification Scheme — Executive Summary

The Rural SafeGuard Certification Scheme is a proposed two-tier, annually renewable certification, deliberately modelled to do for farm physical security what the Cyber Essentials scheme has done for cyber security. Both tiers certify a farm against the good-practice requirements of the RSG 1001:2026 standard (see **Annex E**).

The lower tier, **Rural SafeGuard (Foundation)**, is the equivalent of Cyber Essentials itself: an independently verified self-assessment, marked by a suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) rural crime specialist through a tabletop review, verifying the farmer's declared arrangements against the standard. The upper tier, **Rural SafeGuard Plus**, is the equivalent of Cyber Essentials Plus: it adds a hands-on, on-farm audit by an independent SQEP specialist, verifying the physical, technical, and management controls actually in place, and requires a current Foundation certificate as a prerequisite.

The commercial model mirrors Cyber Essentials directly: free self-assessment tools and guidance are published openly, with charges applied only to assessment and certification, priced according to the scale and complexity of the holding rather than employee count. Revenue streams include assessment and annual renewal fees, licensing and training for the SQEP assessor network, and optional advisor and remediation services. The single biggest lever for adoption, as with Cyber Essentials, is the insurer and customer incentive: a portable, independent certificate that a farmer can use to demonstrate to an insurer, lender, or customer that the crime risk on their holding has been properly assessed and treated.

The scheme proposes governance through a certification body operating with assessor independence, a public register of certified holdings, and a recognisable certification mark. **The Demeter Initiative** asks the College of Policing, in **Section 14**, to formally recognise or commit to reviewing the scheme, so that insurers, farmers, and police forces alike have a single, nationally endorsed reference point around which to build incentives.

Annex G: The Rural Crime Awareness Workshop — Executive Summary

The Rural Crime Awareness Workshop is a knowledge exchange opportunity offered as part of a farmer's continuous professional development and wider lifelong learning journey. It is designed to raise awareness and reduce complacency around rural crime risk, and to outline the affordable and proportionate physical, technical, and behavioural barriers that can be used to reduce rural crime for isolated communities and rural business locations, including farmyards. The session is aimed at raising awareness, not at producing protective security practitioners or crime risk managers.

Format and Delivery

The workshop runs for four hours and is delivered on farm, at rural events, or in a classroom, with the facilitator travelling to the delegates' site wherever possible. It is ideal for groups of between five and thirty delegates, although it can be delivered to larger groups where the audience is willing and engaged. The minimum age for attendance is sixteen. No previous knowledge of security or crime reduction is assumed; the workshop is designed to be accessible to a curious mind.

The workshop is facilitated by suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) individuals with Rural SafeGuard endorsement. Facilitators are accomplished instructors, trainers, or on-the-job mentors with extensive experience in transferring knowledge and skills, and knowledge is shared through relaxed, structured discussion, storytelling, and imagery, rather than through formal assessment.

Where sponsorship is available, this in-person learning opportunity could be developed further into an online digital offering or a blended solution, extending its reach to audiences who cannot attend in person.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, delegates will be able to:

- **Asset Characterisation:** Understand how to view their farm or rural business, and what is critical to its success.
- **Threat:** Understand who the criminals are, what their motivations and capabilities are, and how they are likely to attack.
- **Vulnerabilities:** Understand how to identify vulnerabilities and defensive weaknesses on their own site.
- **Risk:** Understand how to score and prioritise crime risk, considering both the likelihood and consequence of becoming a victim of crime.
- **Mitigation:** Understand how to reduce risk in an affordable and proportionate way.

- **Review:** Understand when to review their business or farm security to stay ahead of an evolving threat.
- **Partner:** Understand how Rural SafeGuard can help signpost them to trusted providers of services, products, and good practice.

By the end of the workshop, the delegate will understand that a behavioural-based security culture helps reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP).

Target Audience

The workshop's learner market includes:

- Farmers, growers, and land managers.
- Arborists, foresters, and horticulturists.
- Equestrians, rural sports participants, and countryside custodians.
- Heritage, wildlife, and aquaculture managers, including gamekeepers and river bailiffs.
- Agricultural contractors and supply chain partners.
- Isolated and rural businesses more generally.
- Police and local authority rural crime specialists.
- Agricultural academic and training organisations.
- Agricultural membership bodies and specialist training providers, including the National Farmers' Union, the Country Land and Business Association, the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, Young Farmers' Clubs, and the Tenant Farmers Association.

Annex H: Secure Innovation Security Reviews and Cyber Essentials — Executive Summary

Cyber Essentials

Cyber Essentials is the UK Government's certification scheme for baseline cyber security, launched in 2014 and delivered by IASME as the National Cyber Security Centre's official delivery partner. It certifies organisations of any size against five core technical controls proven to stop the most common internet-based attacks. As of 2026 the scheme has issued over 215,000 certificates, is required for a range of UK government contracts involving sensitive or personal data, and NCSC-reported insurance data indicates that certified organisations are 92% less likely to make a cyber insurance claim than those without certification; any UK organisation under £20 million turnover that certifies its whole organisation is automatically entitled to £25,000 of cyber liability insurance included with the certificate.

Certification is based on a verified self-assessment questionnaire, reviewed by a licensed Certification Body, with pricing tiered by organisation size and starting at around £320 plus VAT for the smallest organisations. A higher tier, Cyber Essentials Plus, adds an independent technical audit. The scheme is majority publicly backed in the sense that it is government-owned and government-promoted as the recommended minimum baseline, while the certified organisation itself pays the assessment fee and commits, through the declaration signed by a senior individual, to maintain the required controls throughout the certification period, not merely at the point of assessment.

Further information is available at https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberessentials/overview

Secure Innovation Security Reviews

Secure Innovation Security Reviews is a separate but complementary UK Government scheme, developed jointly by the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA, part of MI5) and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC, part of GCHQ), and delivered through Innovate UK in partnership with the Department for Business and Trade and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. It part-funds a holistic protective and cyber security review, delivered on site by an approved Security Reviewer, covering an organisation's governance, risk and incident management, security culture, cyber security, and supply chain and partnership arrangements, resulting in a bespoke report with practical recommendations.

The scheme is majority funded from the public purse: eligible organisations contribute £500 towards the review, with the remaining £2,500 (a review worth £3,000 in total) covered by government funding, and participants who complete a review receive a further £300 voucher towards Cyber Essentials certification. In its pilot, 98% of participants reported gaining sufficient knowledge to identify the security threats facing their business, and 89% considered their £500 contribution good value for money. As with Cyber Essentials, the recipient organisation makes a direct financial contribution and, by taking part, commits to acting on the review's recommendations and maintaining a minimum level of security going forward, rather than treating the review as a one-off exercise.

Secure Innovation Security Reviews is currently targeted at early-stage technology businesses in sectors defined by the National Security and Investment Act and the UK's modern industrial strategy. **The Demeter Initiative asks HM Government to expand this scheme, or create a directly equivalent one, to cover farms and agricultural businesses that use telematics, AI, automation, robotics, or autonomous vehicles as part of their operations** (see Section 2 and Annex A).

Three of the lead consultants supporting Rural SafeGuard also support the delivery of Secure Innovation reviews, and are consequently well placed to help design an agricultural extension of the scheme that follows the same funding principle: a modest contribution from the farm business, matched by a majority contribution from the public purse, delivered by an approved reviewer, and linked, as Secure Innovation already links to Cyber Essentials, to a recognised follow-on certification — in this case, Rural SafeGuard (see **Annex F**).

Further information is available at:

https://www.npsa.gov.uk/specialised-guidance/secure-innovation/secure-innovation-security-reviews-scheme

Annex I: ProtectUK — A Model for a Rural Crime Platform

Section 15 proposes ProtectUK as the working template for an aspirational rural crime knowledge sharing platform and app. This annex sets out, in more detail than the main body allows, what ProtectUK actually offers its users today, and how each element could be adapted to serve the farmers, growers, land managers, and rural businesses who are **The Demeter Initiative**'s target audience.

What ProtectUK Offers Today

ProtectUK is operated by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), a police-hosted unit, on behalf of the Counter Terrorism Alliance, a tripartite partnership between NaCTSO, the Home Office, and Pool Reinsurance, the terrorism risk reinsurer. It is delivered as both a website and a companion mobile app, available free on iOS and Android, so that guidance is available both at a desk and in the field. Across the two, a user can access:

- **Advice and guidance:** A structured library of sector-specific guidance covering crowded places, places of worship, education, retail, hospitality, transport, and other settings, so that advice is tailored to the reader's own environment rather than generic.
- **Free e-learning and training:** The award-winning ACT Awareness e-learning course, alongside sector-specific variants such as ACT for Education and ACT Security e-Learning for frontline security operatives, together with NaCTSO guidance videos. ACT Awareness e-learning was originally developed and funded in partnership with Marks and Spencer, and has now been completed by several million learners.
- **A structured risk management model:** A pre-set risk management process, adapted from ISO 31000 and ISO/IEC 27005, that walks a first-time assessor through identifying, analysing, and treating risk in five structured stages, supported by risk identification templates covering threats, existing controls, vulnerabilities, and consequences.
- **Controls lists:** A broad, categorised list of everyday protective measures a business can adopt, alongside a Menu of Tactical Options, a separate list of enhanced, temporary controls to be introduced when the threat level rises or after an incident.
- **Reporting and response tools:** A means of reporting suspicious activity, including an online reporting form and a confidential hotline, plus dedicated guidance on what to do during and after an attack, in a printable, field-usable format.
- **Webinars and forums:** Webinars featuring government, police, and academic contributors, and forums in which users can put questions directly to industry leaders and one another, turning the platform into a community rather than a one-way information source.

- **AI-assisted guidance:** ProtectUK has recently introduced an AI-powered guidance tool, developed with Coventry University's Protective Security Lab, that lets users ask questions in natural language and receive guidance drawn from ProtectUK's authoritative content, rather than having to search a conventional website structure.

Critically, none of this was built from a blank sheet for every user. ProtectUK exists precisely because the government recognised that counter-terrorism advice for businesses was, before its launch, scattered across multiple organisations, campaigns, and websites, exactly the position rural crime guidance is in today, split across 43 individual force websites, a handful of charities, assorted membership-body newsletters, and informal farmer social media groups.

Replicating the Model for Rural Crime

A rural crime equivalent, sitting alongside or federated with ProtectUK rather than duplicating it from scratch, could offer a directly comparable structure: sector-specific guidance for farms, growers, foresters, and rural sports and leisure venues; free e-learning built from the Rural Crime Awareness Workshop described at Annex G; a risk management model adapted from the same ISO 31000 family already used by Rural SafeGuard; a controls list drawn from the RSG 1001:2026 standard described at Annex E; and a reporting and post-incident response function that finally gives a victimised farmer a single, obvious place to go, rather than having to know in advance which of several different organisations to call.

This would become the natural home for the rural crime reduction resources currently scattered across the 43 individual police force websites, each with its own format, depth, and update schedule, alongside NFU, CLA, and NAAC guidance, insurer risk advice, and the output of academic research that rarely reaches the farmers it concerns. A single, consistently maintained platform would not replace any of these contributors; it would give their combined effort one visible front door.

Who Benefits

- **Policing:** A single national reference point reduces the burden on individual forces to maintain and update their own rural crime guidance and gives the National Rural Crime Team one place to publish tactical guidance once, for every force and every farmer, rather than 43 times over.
- **Membership bodies:** Membership bodies could direct their members straight to a single, authoritative resource rather than maintaining parallel guidance themselves, and could use the platform's forums and webinars to reach members directly on the channel they are already using for practical, day-to-day advice.
- **Insurers:** A platform capable of collecting consistent, structured incident and near-miss data at scale is precisely what insurers need to refine pricing and target premium incentives accurately, addressing the intelligence gap described in Section 7.2, in a form no individual insurer could collect alone.

- **Food retailers:** As with ACT Awareness and Marks and Spencer, a food retailer or dairy processor sponsoring the platform's development, in full or as a named contributor, would have a single, visible, and genuinely national demonstration of its commitment to the farmers in its supply chain, rather than a commitment described only in a sustainability report.
- **Academia:** Researchers such as Dr Kreseda Smith, whose work is referenced in Section 13.4, or Dr Kate Tudor, the author of the NRCN Organised Crime report, currently have to piece together an understanding of rural crime's true scale and impact from fragmented sources; a single platform, collecting data in a consistent format across the country, would give academia the kind of structured, longitudinal dataset that has, in the counter-terrorism space, already supported meaningful research through ProtectUK's own academic partnerships.

None of this requires new legislation or a new statutory body. ProtectUK demonstrates that a tripartite public-private partnership, police-hosted, government-funded, and industry-sponsored, is sufficient to build and sustain a platform of this kind. The same model, scaled to the rural crime audience, is the aspiration set out in Section 15, and the Optimal Risk Group's existing, Innovate-UK-tested business case and delivery plan, described there, is offered as a ready starting point for whoever is best placed to take it forward.

Annex J: UK Legislation Used to Charge Rural Crime Offenders

This annex lists the UK legislation most commonly used to charge offenders for the crime types set out at Section 7.4.1. It is provided so that farmers, land managers, and rural crime specialists can understand the legal basis on which an offence may be charged, and is referenced elsewhere in this paper where most relevant. It does not include wildlife crime, other than poaching and hare coursing offences, which are included because of their prevalence in the crime types described at Section 7.4.1.

Used to Charge	Act	Section	Sub-sec	URL
Theft of machinery, tools, instruments, fuel, fertiliser, or livestock	Theft Act 1968	s.1	s.1(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60/section/1
Burglary of farm buildings, stores, or outbuildings		s.9	s.9(1)(a) and (b)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60/section/9
Aggravated burglary (offender carries a weapon)		s.10	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60/section/10
Taking a vehicle or machine without the owner's consent		s.12	s.12(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60/section/12
Going equipped to steal or to commit burglary		s.25	s.25(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60/section/25
Handling stolen machinery, livestock, or equipment		s.22	s.22(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60/section/22
Malicious damage to fences, gates, crops, or machinery	Criminal Damage Act 1971	s.1	s.1(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/48/section/1
Arson		s.1	s.1(3)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/48/section/1
Aggravated trespass disrupting lawful farm activity	Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994	s.68	s.68(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/68

Residing on land without consent in or with a vehicle	Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (inserted by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, s.83)	s.60C	s.60C(1)-(4)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/60C
Trespass with intent to search for or pursue hares with dogs (hare coursing)	Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022	s.63	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/32/section/63
Being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs		s.64	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/32/section/64
Recovery, disqualification, and seizure orders ancillary to hare coursing offences		ss.65–66	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/32/section/65
Taking or destroying game, including hares, by night (poaching)	Night Poaching Act 1828	s.1	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo4/9/69/section/1
Trespass in the daytime in search of game (poaching)	Game Act 1831	s.30	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Will4/1-2/32/section/30
Search of persons reasonably suspected of daytime poaching	Poaching Prevention Act 1862	s.2	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/25-26/114/section/2
Unauthorised access to farm management or agri-data systems	Computer Misuse Act 1990	s.1	s.1(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/18/section/1
Unauthorised modification of computer material, including tampering with telematics or GPS systems	Computer Misuse Act 1990	s.3	s.3(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/18/section/3

Fraud, including fuel or invoice fraud against a farm business	Fraud Act 2006	s.2	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/35/section/2
Fraudulent evasion of duty (smuggling of fuel or other goods)	Customs and Excise Management Act 1979	s.170	s.170(2)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1979/2/section/170
Livestock worrying by dogs	Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953	s.1	s.1(1)-(2)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/1-2/28/section/1
Threatening, abusive, or intimidating behaviour towards a farmer or land manager	Public Order Act 1986	s.4 / s.4A	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64/section/4
Harassment of a farmer, land manager, or member of staff	Protection from Harassment Act 1997	s.2	s.2(1)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/40/section/2
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	Offences Against the Person Act 1861	s.47	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/24-25/100/section/47
Theft of heritage items, such as metal theft from farm buildings	Theft Act 1968; Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 (cash payment ban and dealer registration)	s.1; s.1	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/10/section/1
Unauthorised use of wireless apparatus, including GPS jamming or signal-blocking devices	Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006	s.68	—	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/36/section/68

This list is not exhaustive and does not constitute legal advice; readers should consult a qualified legal professional, the Crown Prosecution Service, or the relevant legislation itself, available in full at legislation.gov.uk, for the current, definitive text of each provision.

Regulatory Compliance: Licensable Security Activities and Martyn's Law

The offences listed above concern criminal conduct against farms and rural businesses. A separate and distinct regulatory framework applies to certain security-related activities that a farm, agricultural business, or landed estate may itself commission or host, and it is set out here for completeness and cross-referenced from Section 6.3. The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is the statutory regulator of the private security industry in the United Kingdom, established under the Private Security Industry Act 2001, and is also the appointed regulator for the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, known as Martyn's Law. Consultancy, farm security review, training, and knowledge-sharing activities, of the kind proposed under **The Demeter Initiative**, are not licensable activities and fall outside the SIA's remit. The circumstances in which SIA regulation is engaged for a farm, agricultural business, or landed estate are set out below.

Applies When	Legislation	Section	Sub-sec	URL
The farm, agricultural business, or landed estate directly engages, via a contract, security officers to guard buildings, stores, machinery, or land, or to patrol the estate	Private Security Industry Act 2001	s.3	Sch.2, para.2(1)(a)-(b)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/12/schedule/2/paragraph/2
The farm, agricultural business, or landed estate contracts close protection operatives to protect a principal, family member, or guest assessed as being at risk of assault or unlawful conduct by others	Private Security Industry Act 2001	s.3	Sch.2, para.2(1)(c)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/12/schedule/2/paragraph/2
A security operative is used who does not hold the required SIA licence for the activity being carried out (offence of using an unlicensed security operative)	Private Security Industry Act 2001	s.5	---	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/12/section/5
An agricultural show, game fair, county show, point-to-point, polo match, equestrian event, or other gathering held on the farm or estate is	Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law)	Pt.2	Standard tier	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/10/contents

reasonably expected to have 200 to 799 people present at the same time (standard tier duty)				
An agricultural show, game fair, county show, point-to-point, polo match, equestrian event, golf course clubhouse, wedding barn, or other gathering or venue on the farm or estate is reasonably expected to have 800 or more people present at the same time (enhanced tier duty)	Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law)	Pt.2	Enhanced tier	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/10/contents

As with the table above, this list is not exhaustive and does not constitute legal advice; those responsible for a farm, agricultural business, or landed estate should consult a qualified legal professional, the Security Industry Authority, or the relevant legislation itself, available in full at legislation.gov.uk, to determine whether a specific activity or event falls within scope, and to obtain the current, definitive text of each provision.

Annex K: Agricultural and Land-Based Colleges and Training Establishments

The following UK agricultural and land-based colleges, universities, and training establishments were identified through open-source research as delivering agricultural, farm management, or related courses, and are invited to consider the ask set out at Annex A regarding embedding rural crime risk education within their curricula or enrichment programmes. This list is not exhaustive and inclusion does not imply endorsement of, or by, The Demeter Initiative.

- Harper Adams University — Shropshire. https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/
- Royal Agricultural University — Cirencester, Gloucestershire. https://www.rau.ac.uk/
- Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) — Multiple campuses, Scotland. https://www.sruc.ac.uk/
- Bishop Burton College — East Riding of Yorkshire. https://www.bishopburton.ac.uk/
- Riseholme College (part of Bishop Burton College) — Lincolnshire. https://www.riseholme.ac.uk/
- Askham Bryan College — North Yorkshire. https://www.askham-bryan.ac.uk/
- Reaseheath College — Cheshire. https://www.reaseheath.ac.uk/
- Hartpury University and College — Gloucestershire. https://www.hartpury.ac.uk/
- Duchy College (part of the Cornwall College Group) — Cornwall. https://www.duchy.ac.uk/
- Sparsholt College — Hampshire. https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/
- Plumpton College — East Sussex. https://www.plumpton.ac.uk/
- Kingston Maurward College — Dorset. https://www.kmc.ac.uk/
- Moulton College — Northamptonshire. https://www.moulton.ac.uk/
- Myerscough College — Lancashire. https://www.myerscough.ac.uk/
- Bridgwater and Taunton College — Somerset. https://www.btc.ac.uk/
- Berkshire College of Agriculture — Burchetts Green, Berkshire. https://www.bca.ac.uk/
- Bicton College (part of Cornwall College Group) — Devon. https://www.bicton.ac.uk/
- Writtle University College — Chelmsford, Essex. https://www.writtle.ac.uk/
- Easton College (part of TEC Partnership) — Norfolk. https://www.easton-college.ac.uk/
- Brooksby Melton College — Leicestershire. https://www.brooksbymelton.ac.uk/
- Coleg Sir Gar / Gelli Aur Agricultural Centre — Carmarthenshire, Wales. https://www.colegsirgar.ac.uk/

- College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) — Northern Ireland. https://www.cafre.ac.uk/
- Brackenhurst Campus, Nottingham Trent University — Nottinghamshire. https://www.ntu.ac.uk/
- Newcastle University, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences — Newcastle upon Tyne. https://www.ncl.ac.uk/

Annex L: Normative References

The following standards, guides, and strategy documents inform the approach taken in this paper. Reference is made to them throughout by footnote.

Risk Management Standards and Guidance

BS ISO 31000:2018, Risk management – Guidelines, provides the internationally recognised principles and generic framework for managing risk of any type, in any organisation, and underpins the risk vocabulary and process used throughout this paper[75].

BS 31100:2021, Risk management – Code of practice and guidance for the implementation of BS ISO 31000:2018, translates the generic guidelines of ISO 31000 into practical UK implementation guidance, and is used here to structure the governance and implementation roadmap for the Initiative[76].

BS EN IEC 31010:2019, Risk management – Risk assessment techniques, supplies the toolkit of assessment techniques, including bow-tie analysis, referenced in Section 8.2, that a farm security review under the proposed Initiative would draw upon[77].

PD ISO Guide 73:2009, Risk management – Vocabulary, provides the common terminology, risk, risk owner, risk treatment, risk appetite, used consistently across this paper so that police, insurers, and the security sector can discuss rural crime risk in shared and precise terms[78].

PD ISO/TS 31050:2023, Risk management – Guidelines for managing emergency risk to enhance resilience, informs the emphasis in Section 10 on resilience and recovery, not merely reduction of likelihood, recognising that some rural crime events, particularly livestock theft, arson, and machinery theft, cannot be entirely avoided and must therefore also be planned for in terms of response and recovery[79].

HM Government's The Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts (May 2023) sets out the UK public sector's own risk management doctrine and is used here to frame how police forces, as public bodies, might formally recognise and account for a shared-risk model with private partners[80].

The College of Policing's risk management guidance sets out how operational and organisational risk is expected to be managed within policing itself and provides the natural bridge through which a chief

[75]British Standards Institution, BS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management – Guidelines.

[76]British Standards Institution, BS 31100:2021 Risk management – Code of practice and guidance for the implementation of BS ISO 31000:2018.

[77]British Standards Institution, BS EN IEC 31010:2019 Risk management – Risk assessment techniques (IEC 31010:2019).

[78]British Standards Institution, PD ISO Guide 73:2009 Risk management – Vocabulary.

[79]British Standards Institution, PD ISO/TS 31050:2023 Risk management – Guidelines for managing emergency risk to enhance resilience.

[80]HM Treasury, The Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts, May 2023.

constable or police and crime commissioner could formally recognise the private security sector as a risk-treatment partner[81].

Regulatory Framework

The Security Industry Authority (SIA), the statutory regulator of the private security industry under the Private Security Industry Act 2001 and the appointed regulator for the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law)[82], is referenced in Section 6.3 and at Annex J to make clear the boundary between the consultancy and knowledge-sharing activities proposed under **The Demeter Initiative**, which fall outside the SIA's remit, and the specific licensable security activities and qualifying events for which SIA regulation does apply.

Policing and Sector Strategy

The National Police Chiefs' Council's Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028, launched in November 2025 at the NPCC Rural Affairs Summit in Harrogate, sets the current national policing direction for rural crime and is treated throughout this paper as the primary policing reference point against which **The Demeter Initiative** is designed to be complementary, not competitive[83].

The **Rural SafeGuard** programme, a commercially available national crime-reduction programme designed and delivered by Chartered Security Professionals, is used in Section 12 as a live, operating exemplar of the kind of private-sector contribution this paper proposes to scale nationally[84].

The Rural SafeGuard Farm Security Standard, RSG 1001:2026, Rural Protective Security – Defending the Farmyard Against Serious and Organised Crime, is used in Sections 10 and 13 as a potential benchmark against which a farm security review can be conducted, and the associated Rural SafeGuard Certification Scheme, modelled on the IASME/NCSC Cyber Essentials scheme, is used in Section 14 as a template for how a farmer might formally demonstrate that the crime risk has been assessed as part of their wider business resilience credentials[85].

Guidance from the **National Protective Security Authority**, the **National Cyber Security Centre**, and **Secured by Design**, the official police security initiative, is drawn upon in Section 13 to ensure that any integrated security plan produced under **The Demeter Initiative** addresses information, cyber, and

[81] College of Policing, Risk, available at https://www.college.police.uk/app/risk/risk.

[82] Security Industry Authority, Martyn's Law and the SIA's role as regulator, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/martyns-law-and-the-sias-role-as-regulator.

[83] National Police Chiefs' Council, Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028, published November 2025, available at https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/national-crime-coordination-committee/2025/npcc-wildlife-rural-crime-strategy-2025-2028.

[84] Rural SafeGuard, available at https://ruralsafeguard.com.

[85] Rural SafeGuard (Optimal Risk Group), RSG 1001:2026 Rural Protective Security – Defending the Farmyard Against Serious and Organised Crime (Revision 1, 2026); and Rural SafeGuard Certification Scheme: A Scheme Strategy for Certifying Farm Protective Security (draft strategy, version 1.0, June 2026).

design-related risk, not only physical risk, consistent with modern farm businesses' growing dependence on connected technology, telematics, and digital record-keeping[86].

Academic and Sector Research

The National Rural Crime Network's research into serious and organised rural offending, led by Dr Kate Tudor, provides the empirical evidence base for Section 7's account of how the threat has changed in scale and character[87]. The published research of Dr Kreseda Smith of **Harper Adams University**, Associate Professor in Rural Criminology and Social Science, is drawn upon throughout, particularly in Sections 7, 11, and 13, for its evidence on farmer decision-making, behavioural culture, and the psychological and mental health impact of agricultural crime[88].

The Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future, published by the **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** in June 2026, is referenced in Section 14 as a parallel, long-term policy vehicle into which crime and business resilience could be embedded[89].

The government and academic sources underpinning Section 9's national resilience and food security case, including the **National Risk Register 2026**, the **National Preparedness Commission's** research, Defra's statutory food security reporting, and the further academic sources on rural policing structure identified by Dr Kate Tudor, Professor Karen Bullock and Professor Jon Garland, and Dr Maria Pournara, are set out in full at **Annex B**.

Security Sector Professional Bodies

The Security Institute, the **Association of Security Consultants**, the **UK Chapter of ASIS** International, and the **Worshipful Company of Security Professionals** are referenced in Section 9 as the principal professional membership bodies from which suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) rural crime specialists can be drawn[90]. The Worshipful Company of Security Professionals, a City of London livery company, holds the Royal Charter under which the Register of Chartered Security Professionals was established in 2011, and is administered on the Company's behalf by the Security Institute; the Company shares with the **Worshipful Company of Farmers** a common livery heritage of setting and upholding professional standards, referenced in Section 9 in connection with the kinship between the two

[86] Secured by Design, SBD Design Guides, available at https://www.securedbydesign.com/guidance/design-guides.

[87] National Rural Crime Network, Rural Crime: Serious, Organised and International – Who Victimises Rural Communities?, Dr Kate Tudor, available at https://nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/NRCN-OCG-Report.pdf.

[88] Dr Kreseda Smith, Harper Adams University, staff profile and publications, available at https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/general/staff/profile/201125/Kreseda-Smith/.

[89] HM Government (Defra), Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future (accessible version), June 2026, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-roadmap-2050/farming-roadmap-2050-growing-englands-future-accessible-version.

[90] The Security Institute, available at https://www.security-institute.org/; Association of Security Consultants, available at https://ascuk.org/; ASIS International UK Chapter, available at https://www.asis.org.uk/.

Companies[91]. **The Agricultural Engineers Association**, the trade body for manufacturers and importers of agricultural machinery, is referenced in Section 10 in connection with designing crime resistance into equipment at the point of manufacture[92].

The Register of Security Engineering Specialists (RSES), maintained by the **Institution of Civil Engineers** (ICE) and government-backed by the **National Protective Security Authority**, provides a company competence list of firms employing registered security engineers and specialists whose competence has been independently assessed. It is referenced in this paper, alongside the **Chartered Security Professional** register, as a further source from which suitably qualified and experienced rural crime specialists may be recruited.

[91]The Worshipful Company of Farmers, available at https://farmerslivery.org.uk/.
[92]AEA – The Agricultural Engineers Association, available at https://aea.uk.com/.

Private Security Sector Special Interest Groups

Two established special interest groups already bring together several of the stakeholders this paper invites to join or endorse **The Demeter Initiative**, referenced in Section 9, and their experience is instructive for how a national rural crime partnership might itself be structured and governed.

Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS) is a not-for-profit industry think tank established to reduce crime affecting the agricultural and construction sectors. It works with the Home Office, the police, equipment manufacturers, insurers, and security businesses to share crime prevention and cyber security advice, and its focus has broadened in recent years from traditional theft and burglary to include fraud and cyber-enabled crime. Its membership is drawn from farmers, builders and tradespeople, plant and equipment manufacturers, insurers, security suppliers, and police officers with an interest in reducing theft from rural and construction sites[93].

The National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), powered by the Safer Business Network and supported by British Transport Police, brings together UK police forces, law enforcement agencies, and infrastructure-dependent industries to share intelligence and reduce crime against the country's essential infrastructure, in particular the theft of copper and other metals. Its membership spans telecommunications, rail and transport, heritage, agriculture, and power providers, together with police forces and specialist crime-intelligence partners, and it issues time-critical alerts and monthly intelligence updates to members[94].

[93]Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS), available at https://www.cits.uk.com/index.php.

[94]National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), About Us, available at https://www.nicrp.org/about-us/.

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British Standards Institution, BS EN IEC 31010:2019 Risk management – Risk assessment techniques (IEC 31010:2019). Available for purchase at https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/products-and-services/standards/

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British Standards Institution, PD ISO/TS 31050:2023 Risk management – Guidelines for managing emergency risk to enhance resilience. Available for purchase at https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/products-and-services/standards/

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