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## HSBC LAUNCHES SOUTH WEST CENTRE OF AGRICULTURE EXCELLENCE IN EXETER

HSBC's Agriculture division has established a new Centre of Agriculture Excellence in the South West to serve its farming customers across Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. The centre, which is based at Exeter, consists of five specialist agriculture managers and their support staff. These include:

- Debbie Bunclark, Senior Agriculture Manager
- Angela Trotter, Agriculture Manager
- Matt Clapp, Agriculture Manager
- Karl Carter, Agriculture Manager
- Alasdair Philip, Agriculture Manager

The new Centre of Excellence was recently launched at three meetings at Truro, Taunton and Cullompton, attended by over 150 people, where HSBC's Head of Agriculture, Allan Wilkinson was guest speaker.

Agriculture is a key sector for HSBC and its lending to the industry rose by more than 20% in 2013. Increased lending reflects new investment in a wide range of propositions including purchase of farmland, new farm infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

The bank has also made a clear commitment to South West business in general with the launch of a new £600 million SME fund to support companies across the region, and farming businesses are being encouraged to access these funds to support their growth.

Commenting on the launch of the new Centre of Excellence, Euryn Jones, Regional Agriculture Manager in the South West and Wales, said:

"Agriculture is an extremely important sector for HSBC in the South West and it is vital that we have a strong dedicated team of specialist agriculture managers to provide the best possible service to the farming community. Our new local team in the South West has a strong combination of long-established colleagues and some new appointments. Debbie, Angela and Alasdair have worked for HSBC for many years, whilst Matt and Karl are experienced agriculture managers who have recently joined us from a competitor.

“Our aim is to offer an unrivalled service both to long-standing and prospective farming customers, ensuring that we provide deep and knowledgeable understanding of the sector to enable us to work in partnership with farmers and their families to grow and develop their businesses.”

Phil Sargeant, HSBC Area Commercial Director for Devon and Somerset, added: “We are very confident about the future prospects of agriculture in the South West and are keen to play our part in its future success by providing additional lending for further investment. There are many excellent farming businesses in the region. We are delighted that many of them are already customers, but we are also keen to expand our business by growing the number of farming customers that we serve in the region.”

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