



Harper Adams
University College

National Centre for Precision Farming

Window on Research – Feeding the
Future

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Window on Research

Feeding the Future - Innovation Requirements for Primary Food Production in the UK to 2030



A Joint Commissioning Group Report

“Feeding the Future – Innovation Requirements for Primary Food Production in the UK to 2030” was officially launched in November at the National Farm Management Conference by Prof Chris Pollock, report editor for a Joint Commissioning Group comprising the following members: **Ian Crute**, Chief Scientist of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board; **Andrea Graham**, Countryside Advisor, National Framers’ Union, **Paul Rooke**, Head of Policy, External Affairs, for the Agricultural Industries Confederation; **David Gardner**, Chief Executive, Royal Agricultural Society; **Jim Godfrey**, Arable and Pig Farmer from Lincolnshire, non-executive Director of the Rural Payments Agency, National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Chairman of the Technology Strategy Board Sustainable Agriculture and Food Innovation Platform and member of the BBSRC Council; **David Alvis**, Lead Technologist with the Technology Strategy Board with co-responsibility for the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Innovation Platform; **Calum Murray**, Lead Technologist with the Technology Strategy Board with co-responsibility for the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Innovation Platform; **Chris Pollock**, Director of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research.

The Joint Commissioning Group undertook a series of workshops and parallel consultations with key industry stakeholders to gather and consider views on meeting the future requirements for primary food production with the UK and to present those views in the form of a report and a further consultation process.

The report, downloadable from <http://feedingthefuture.info/> not only identifies a number of research priorities, but also provides a set of summary sheets for outcomes on research needs and challenges for each of five stakeholder workshops, held during the summer of 2012, covering Beef, Sheep and Grassland; Dairy, Pig; Combinable Crops; Potatoes and Field-scale Vegetable sectors. The workshops were structured to accommodate at least 50% make up of primary producers as a representative sample of the industry, with sector group representatives, supply chain representatives and advisors, such as nutritionists, agronomists, vets and others, making up the balance. With typically 15 to 20 delegates making up the workshops each were asked to identify key management challenges and knowledge gaps for which they considered research and innovation could help provide solutions. A further workshop comprising a broad range of senior stakeholders added to the consultation outcomes and the subsequent identification of research priorities and recommendations for supporting and funding research.

The research priorities, simply quoted are:

1. Utilisation of modern technologies to improve the precision and efficiency of key agricultural management practices

2. Apply modern genetic and breeding approaches to improve the quality, sustainability, resilience and profitability of crops and farm animals
3. Use systems-based approaches to understand better and manage interactions between soil, water and crop/animal processes
4. Develop integrated approaches to the effective management of crop and animal diseases within farming systems
5. Develop evidence-based approaches to value ecosystem service delivery by land users and incorporate these approaches into effective decision support systems at the enterprise or grouped enterprise level
6. Extend the training and professional development of researchers, practitioners and advisors to promote delivery of targets.
7. Improve the use of social and economic science to promote development, uptake and use of sustainable, resilient and profitable agricultural practice that can deliver affordable, safe and high-quality products.

More detail in respect to each of these priorities can be obtained from the report. So too the recommendations, which are essentially directed at funders, UK government and research providers.

The priorities, and other aspects of the report, are clearly important in tackling the issues relating to future primary food production and the opportunity is presented for further consultation, up until January 31st 2013. Stakeholders and other interested parties are therefore encouraged to read the report and participate in the consultation process – see <http://feedingthefuture.info/>