UK Cross-Government Strategy for Food Research and Innovation

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A new science strategy to help improve the security and sustainability of the food system has been launched by the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser Professor John Beddington.

The UK Cross-Government Strategy for Food Research and Innovation aims to provide the evidence to support effective, joined-up policies, and ensure the development and dissemination of new knowledge, technologies and skills.

Key initiatives highlighted in the Strategy include:

- a new multi-partner food security research programme, co-ordinated by BBSRC and delivered jointly with relevant Research Councils and government departments, and including close engagement with industry and the third sector. Key aims include strengthening research coordination and partnerships, building a more integrated community of researchers, funders and users that extends across disciplines, organisations and sectors, to provide multi-disciplinary research to ensure a sustainable and secure food system;
- a new Technology Strategy Board led Sustainable Agriculture and Food Innovation Platform, co-funded by Defra and BBSRC with up to £90M over five years, to fund innovative technological research and development in areas such as crop productivity, sustainable livestock production, waste reduction and management, and greenhouse gas reduction;
- a doubling of research investment in agriculture by DFID to £80m/yr by 2013 to provide farmers in developing countries with access to technologies and to help national governments develop more effective agricultural policies, based on a robust evidence base. Important progress is also being made towards strengthening the institutional arrangements at international level that will help maximise the value of these investments;
- impetus to exploit opportunities in the European Research Area through co-ordination mechanisms such as ERA-NETs and Joint Programmes, and collaboration through the RTD Framework Programme more generally;
- a major Foresight study looking over the long term at the ability of global food systems to feed a future world population of 9 billion healthily and sustainably, set to launch its findings in October 2010;
- a new BBSRC Advanced Training Partnership scheme to provide a range of specialist high level training (masters, professional doctorate and continuous professional development) to meet industry needs in partnership with the higher and further education sectors; and
- the development of new indicators to monitor research collaboration, innovation and skills within the suite of indicators being introduced by Defra for a sustainable and secure food system.

The UK has a world leading science base which can contribute significantly to the new Government food strategy, *Food 2030*, which sets out a clear vision for achieving a sustainable and secure food system. The topic of food is inherently complex and multi-faceted, and the research and innovation landscape reflects this complexity. Delivering safe, affordable and nutritious food for a growing global population, whilst ensuring sustainability and coping with climate change, will require a multi-disciplinary research approach.

Professor Beddington said: “There are real challenges ahead for policy makers and researchers alike, and for the food industry from producers to retailers, with pressures on our food system set to increase sharply in the decades ahead. […] A critical element will be strengthening partnerships across organisational boundaries and sectors to address social, environmental, health or economic factors. This more joined up approach will be central to contributing to a thriving UK agri-food business sector and delivering a sustainable and secure food system.”

The Food and Innovation Research Strategy provides, for the first time, an overarching framework across the UK Government and Devolved Administrations. It sets out current and future programmes and highlights some past successes, good practice and where joint working is already strong, both on research projects and cross-cutting issues. However, it also recognises the need to further strengthen co-ordination and networking, and sets out the mechanisms by which this will be achieved.
This Strategy was developed by a cross-government group under the chairmanship of the Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor John Beddington. The Food Research Group (FRG), including representatives from the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, aims to provide leadership in addressing the issues set out in the Strategy, and will oversee its implementation. The Group’s wider links have been strengthened through the new Food Research Partnership established to bring FRG members together with senior representatives and experts from industry, the research community and others outside government. The Partnership has provided further valuable input to the development of the Strategy to promote a more coherent and coordinated approach on food research and innovation across the UK.

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Zurück

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