

## **PlantSci Newsletter – a monthly round-up of plant science policy headlines and stories**

October 2018

### **News**

#### **Plant health and biosecurity**

##### **[Select Committee publishes report on plant and animal biosecurity post-Brexit including evidence submitted by RSB](#)**

Following an inquiry into UK biosecurity after Brexit, the latest report from the Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee includes [evidence submitted by the RSB](#) concerning the importance of non-UK nationals in the workforce.

#### **Agriculture**

##### **[Strict EU ruling on gene-edited crops squeezes science](#)**

Researchers are feeling the pinch and demanding exemptions for plant science and agriculture.

##### **[Ministers host agri-tech discussions with key global investors](#)**

International Trade Secretary today hosts agri-tech industry roundtable at 10 Downing Street.

##### **[Can we use science to better manage our land?](#)**

The recently published Agriculture Bill represents a major opportunity to ensure a sustainable, productive and environmentally conscious future for how we manage our land. Science and technology will have a key role to play in realising this promise.

##### **[‘We’ll have space bots with lasers, killing plants’: the rise of the robot farmer](#)**

Tiny automated machines could soon take care of the entire growing process. Fewer chemicals, more efficient – where’s the downside?

## Food security

### [Plague of caterpillars threatening food crisis may be halted with safe pesticides](#)

Study suggests biopesticides should be trialled to control the march of armyworm that's destroying crops across the continent.

### [World's largest rice gene bank secures permanent funding](#)

The International Rice Research Institute is home to 136,000 varieties and aims to develop crops resistant to climate change.

### [Climate change is about to make your beer more expensive](#)

Extreme weather events are expected to reduce global barley production.

## Biodiversity and conservation

### [Planting scheme supports wildlife on verges of A-roads](#)

A comprehensive planting scheme that is supporting wildlife habitats near major roads in Devon and Cornwall has been recognised in a national environmental awards scheme.

### [Michael Gove announces new funding to protect bees](#)

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has announced a £60,000 fund to develop and test pollinator habitat mapping.

### [Caledonia's lost forest to be restored to glory in £23m rewilding](#)

Ancient woodland will be pieced back together as part of Europe-wide project that will give endangered species their habitats back.

### [The role, influence and impact of women in biodiversity conservation](#)

Guest blogger Cristiana Paşca Palmer asks: "How do we empower women, as agents of change and frontrunners, to build new pathways or accelerate transition to sustainability?"

## Forestry

### [Scientists say halting deforestation 'just as urgent' as reducing emissions](#)

Protecting and restoring forests would reduce 18% of emissions by 2030 and help to avoid global temperature rise beyond 1.5C.

### ['Forgotten lands' to receive forestry boost](#)

New Forestry Investment Zone launched in Cumbria to help unlock the economic benefits of forestry.

### [Tree Champion: we must preserve our urban trees](#)

The government's Tree Champion, Sir William Worsley, has called for stronger protections for England's street trees with the launch of an 'Urban Tree Manual'.

### [Sheffield council proposes deal to cut down fewer trees](#)

Compromise follows long-running dispute over council's road maintenance scheme.

## Sustainability

### [EU emphasises 'ecological limitations' of new bioeconomy plan](#)

The European Commission unveiled a new bioeconomy strategy on Thursday (11 October), saying it could reduce the EU's dependence on fossil resources while underlining the ecological limitations of Europe's farming and forestry sector.

### [Climate change: Five cheap ways to remove CO2 from the atmosphere](#)

## Other news

### [RSB responds to parliamentary inquiry on the balance and effectiveness of research and innovation spending](#)

The RSB response to the [inquiry](#) presents its view on the funding landscape and investment in the life sciences; the importance of nurturing a skilled, diverse and inclusive workforce; the dual support system and balance between project and resource funding; measures to facilitate collaboration between academia and industry; and potential routes to achieving the future target of 2.4% of GDP invested in R&D by 2027.

### [Reversing the Decline in Plant Science Applications to the BBSRC: analysis and recommendations from GARNet](#)

A new analysis of the reasons behind the decline in funding for fundamental plant science through BBSRC responsive mode.

## Opinion

### [Super-tomato shows what plant scientists can do](#)

A better-tasting tomato highlights problems with Europe's outdated approach to gene editing.

## Opportunities

### [Call for new green innovations to tackle climate change](#)

Britain's best innovators and researchers will be invited to pitch their ideas to help tackle the effects of climate change on towns, cities and the countryside as part of modern Industrial Strategy.

### [Agri-tech Catalyst round 7: agriculture and food systems innovation](#)

UK businesses and research organisations can apply for a share of up to £3 million from DFID for projects with partners in eligible African countries.  
Closes 21 November 2018.

### [How are the sciences timetabled at KS4 in schools across England?](#)

The IOP, RSB, ASE, RS and RSC and Shift Learning are conducting a survey to better understand the variety of timetable models used by schools in England to teach the sciences at GCSE. Please share with your contacts in school sciences departments to help us capture a wide range of schools.  
Closing date: 5 November.

### [Valuing our Life Support Systems 2019](#)

21-22 May, the Crystal, London

Do you need a platform for your natural capital research, policy ideas and business solutions? We are now calling for sessions, speed talks and posters for our 10th anniversary summit under these [themes](#). Please read [more](#) and send your submissions to the [NCI Secretariat](#) by 15 November 2018.

### [Working together to improve our water quality](#)

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is inviting people to join them to identify ways to work together to improve the quality of our water and waterbodies.

## Consultations

### [Farmers, growers and processors asked for views on AHDB](#)

A 10-week exercise is seeking views on the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).  
Closes 9 November 2018.

### [Public to have say on new National Parks](#)

A call for evidence is inviting views from the public on the future of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.  
Closes 18 December 2018.

## Events

### [Outreach and Engagement Symposium](#)

Are you a bioscientist and doing or want to do outreach, public engagement or science communication? If so, this conference is for you! This symposium offers a great chance to gain skills, learn new ways to engage your audiences and get advice on reaching new audiences.  
14 November 2018, Birmingham

### [British Society of Plant Pathology 2018 Annual Meeting](#)

Two day meeting focusing on imaging of plant microbe interactions, with nine invited speakers, presidential address by Murray Grant and twelve offered talks.  
Register Now!  
10-11 December 2018, University of Warwick

### [CyVerse UK RNASeq Workshop 2018](#)

This meeting is focused on researchers who are either at the beginning of their studies or have moved onto a new subject area and will be analysing RNAseq expression data as part of their studies.

10-12 December 2018, Norwich

### [Heads of University BioSciences \(HUBS\) Annual Meeting 2019](#)

We are delighted to invite all members to attend the inaugural HUBS Annual Meeting. Early-bird registration is now open for this two-day conference, which will feature sessions on research, higher education policy, and teaching and learning in the biosciences.

30 April - 1 May 2019, Cambridge

For the full events list, please see the [UKPSF website](#).

## And finally...

### [Sunflower named the 'UK's Favourite Flower' in annual RSB poll](#)

The sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) has won the title of 'UK's Favourite Flower' in the Royal Society of Biology's annual poll.

#### **UK Plant Sciences Federation**

#### **Royal Society of Biology**

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