

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

August 2019

News

Top story

[Public to have their say on the food system of the future](#)

British shoppers will be able to buy environmentally friendly, healthy and affordable food under plans for a radical shake-up of the UK's food industry.

Plant health and biosecurity

[Alarm as devastating banana fungus reaches the Americas](#)

The region produces most of the world's banana exports — and the fungus affects the most popular commercial variety.

[Tree-damaging pests pose 'devastating' threat to 40% of US forests](#)

About 450 overseas pests have been introduced to US forests, a climate crisis resource, due to international trade and travel

[Beetles threaten Yorkshire's purple heather moorland](#)

Plant breeding

[Organic farmers oppose separate framework for new plant breeding techniques](#)

Any attempt to exclude the so-called new plant breeding techniques from the GMO legislation would deal a severe blow to consumers, farmers and processors, according to the EU organic farmers' movement (IFOAM).

[BBSRC collaboration with US funders NSF and NIFA to support Breakthrough Technologies to Advance Crop Breeding](#)

In this recent collaboration with US funders, BBSRC supports 10 research projects focussing on using and developing cutting edge technology to advance crop breeding with £2 million from the Fund for International Collaboration (FIC) which was announced earlier this year

Agriculture

[August rainfall brings UK wheat harvest to 'shuddering halt'](#)

National Farmers' Union says only farms in south-east England able to start harvest

[Cauliflower shortages as extreme weather kills crops](#)

[UK's first commercial crop of chickpeas harvested in Norfolk](#)

Up to 20 tonnes of the legume will be dried and packaged to go on sale in mid-September

[UK's cherry industry bounces back after almost withering](#)

Some supermarkets no longer need to import cherries in summer to meet demand

[Pesticide widely used in US particularly harmful to bees, study finds](#)

Agriculture has become 48 times more toxic to insects in last 25 years as neonics are used on over 140 different types of crops

[The future of food: Why farming is moving indoors](#)

[World's largest urban farm to open – on a Paris rooftop](#)

The 14,000m² farm is set to open in the south-west of Paris early next year

Biodiversity and conservation

[Climate crisis reducing land's ability to sustain humanity, says IPCC](#)

UN report finds ecosystems never before under such threat and restoration is urgent

[Plantwatch: life on the verge for Britain's roadside wildflowers](#)

Councils urged to protect species by allowing neatly mown grass to transform into blooming meadows

[Norfolk scheme brings ancient wildflower meadows back to life](#)

Restoration project uses seed-rich hay taken from roadside verges to regrow lost meadows

[The Amazon in Brazil is on fire - how bad is it?](#)

[Shocking rate of plant extinctions in South Africa](#)

Over the past 300 years, 79 plants have been confirmed extinct from three of the world's biodiversity hotspots located in South Africa -- the Cape Floristic Region, the Succulent Karoo, and the Maputuland-Pondoland-Albany corridor.

[Where are the bees? Tracking down which flowers they pollinate](#)

Earlham Institute (EI), with the University of East Anglia (UEA), have developed a new method to rapidly identify the sources of bee pollen to understand which flowers are important for bees.

Forestry

[11 million new trees to be planted in England by water companies](#)

'The water sector is committed to fighting climate change through becoming carbon-neutral by 2030'

[Use your waste water to save street trees, experts urge](#)

Dishwater and bathwater can be used to give vital support that councils often cannot afford to young trees

[Enzo's Homes guilty of felling ancient redwood tree in Swansea](#)

Other news

[Half of UK children can't identify stinging nettles, study finds](#)

Nearly half of children do not know what brambles, blackberries and bluebells look like

[Global heating: ancient plants set to reproduce in UK after 60m years](#)

Cycad in Isle of Wight produces outdoor male and female cones for first time on record

[Indoor plant sales boom, reflecting urbanisation and design trends](#)

Millennials' desire to nurture and care for something also contribute to rise

[Ecotherapy: why plants are the latest treatment for depression and anxiety](#)

The combination of physical activity, social contact and being surrounded by nature is thought to make gardening beneficial for our mental health

[Kenya warms to the water hyacinth as wonder source of biofuel](#)

This invasive plant was reviled for clogging rivers but now it's helping provide cleaner energy and protect health

People

[Defra chief scientist departs after seven years in post](#)

Defra CSA Professor Sir Ian Boyd marks his last day

Opinion

[Ash dieback is just the start of killer plagues threatening Britain's trees](#)

Deadly diseases are marching across Europe unchecked – all in the name of free trade

[UK standards on biosecurity are second to none](#)

The government is committed to strengthening the UK's biosecurity, writes Defra minister John Gardiner.

Opportunities

[Policy Lab on emerging food trends and their impact on the food system](#)

GFS will hold its fourth Policy Lab for early career researchers on the 6-8th November 2019. This event aims to synthesize the latest knowledge and evidence on emerging food trends and their impact across the food system in order to inform policy and practice. The winning team at the workshop will receive a £5,000 Policy Lab award to write a policy-facing report.

Closes: Friday 4th October

[Food of the Future; free online course launched to inspire the next generation of scientists](#)

We know the world's population is growing, and that we need to produce more crops to feed everybody while also protecting our environment.

[RSB Website survey](#)

The RSB website survey is now open for anyone to report back on their user experiences of the current website and what features they would like the new website to have.

Closes: 30 September 2019

Royal Society of Biology, Outreach and Engagement Volunteering Opportunities

RSB is looking for local volunteers to help run our hands-on science activities at [Abergavenny Food Festival 2019](#) at Abergavenny, Wales, on **21st – 22nd September 2019**; [Big Biology Day Cambridge](#) at Cambridge CB2 8PE, on **5th October 2019**; and at [Conwy Feast](#), at Conwy, Wales, on **26th – 27th October 2019**. If you live nearby and are interested in volunteering to help the RSB outreach team deliver our hands-on science activities please email Dr Amanda Hardy via outreach@rsb.org.uk

Athena SWAN review

Advance HE commissioned a Steering Group to undertake an independent review of the Athena SWAN charter. The Steering Group has completed the first part of its review and this has informed the current [survey](#), which participants are invited to complete.

Authors wanted for OUP-RSB biology primers

The RSB and Oxford University Press are looking for academic authors to contribute to the ongoing Oxford Biology Primers series of textbooks. Experts in fields including microbiology, stem cells, ageing, and the microbiome are encouraged to contact tom.ireland@rsb.org.uk for more details. The third book in the series, Hormones, is out now, with further titles available to pre-order [here](#).

Consultations

[Biosecurity and human health: preparing for emerging infectious diseases and bioweapons inquiry](#)

Closes: 6 September 2019

[Adding folic acid to flour](#)

Closes: 9 September 2019

[Management measures for widely spread Invasive Alien Species \(IAS\) in England and Wales](#)

Closes: 12 September 2019

[Call for evidence on the use of genome editing in farmed animals](#)

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has launched a call for evidence to inform its inquiry into the use of genome editing techniques in farmed animals. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact consultation@rsb.org.uk for more information and if you would like to contribute.

Closes: 20 September 2019

[Ageing: Science, Technology and Healthy Living](#)

Closes: 20 September 2019

[Improving higher technical education](#)

Closes: 29 September 2019

[Standards for biodegradable, compostable and bio-based plastics: call for evidence](#)

Closes: 14 October 2019

[Developing a national food strategy](#)

Closes: 25 October 2019

[The Economics of Biodiversity](#)

Closes: 6 November 2019

Events

[Everything You Wanted to Know about Genomics but Were Afraid to Ask](#)

Manchester, 4 September 2019

[EDIS Symposium 2019 - Inclusive Research and Experimental Design](#)

London, 9 September 2019

[Women in Biotech - Cambridge Edition](#)

Cambridge, 26 September 2019

[Insect declines in the headlights](#)

A free Policy Lates on insect decline. This event will explore the evidence behind the headlines. We will consider what we know about insect declines and what we don't know, to better understand the causes and consequences of insect population changes. Our expert panel will discuss how we monitor and conserve this vital and diverse group of organisms, while addressing challenges such as crop protection and control of pest species.

London, 7 October 2019

[SCI Horticulture Group David Miller Awards](#)

Hosted by RHS Wisley this year, we are delighted that Alistair Griffiths, RHS Director of Science and Collections will be giving an introductory talk for the event. Subsequent talks will be by the 2019 winners, plus follow up talks from the 2018 winners.

There will also be a guided tour as well as free time for attendees to explore the gardens at Wisley.

Woking, 14 October 2019

[Bioscience Careers Day 2019](#)

26 October 2019

Middlesex University, London

The Bioscience Careers Day (BCD) is the perfect opportunity to get your career on track - whether you are interested in working in research, science communication or even if you just want to know what options are available to you once you finish your bioscience degree. Our top programme will enhance your prospects. Find out what happened last year in our [YouTube video](#). Visit [here](#) for full details and to buy your £10 ticket. Direct queries to Harriet McAra at events@rsb.org.uk

[EI Innovate: genomics data to advance bioscience](#)

This event will showcase capabilities and expertise in genomics, bioinformatics, synthetic biology, crop phenotyping, and high-performance computing. This expertise allows us to understand complex biological systems in plants and animals and their interaction with the environment, which can help to develop solutions to industrial challenges in global food security, improving human, animal and plant health, and aid conservation.

13 November 2019, Earlham Institute, Norwich

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

And finally...

[Plants can tell time even without a brain – here's how](#)

[Growing the future – a report from the UK Plant Sciences Federation \(UKPSF\)](#)

Launched in January 2019, *Growing the future* highlights to policymakers and others the excellence of plant science in the UK, and its importance to the biosciences, the economy, and society both at home and around the world. The report is available to download [here](#).

UK Plant Sciences Federation
Royal Society of Biology
Science Policy Team
1 Naoroji Street
London
WC1X 0GB
policy@rsb.org.uk

Please note that any views or opinions presented in this email are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Royal Society of Biology.

[Click here to unsubscribe from this publication](#)

Or, manage your subscription to this and to other RSB publications by logging into [mySociety](#) and choosing 'My Subscriptions' under 'Me and the RSB'.

© Royal Society of Biology 2019. Registered Charity Number: 277981
1 Naoroji Street, London WC1X 0GB