

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

February 2019

News

Plant health and biosecurity

[Mystery disease killing beech trees](#)

[Scientists use oak trees for information on how infectious diseases work](#)

Scientists have been looking into what is causing acute oak decline and their research has led them to more information about how infectious diseases work in all types of species, says James Doonan

[Blight fight: the story of America's chestnuts offers hope for British trees](#)

An inspiring US campaign to restore the mighty chestnut to its eastern forests points the way to saving at-risk species in the UK

Agriculture

[A World To Win](#)

Michael Gove's speech to National Farmers Union - February 19 2019

[Rothamsted applies to run new GM field trials](#)

Permission sought from Defra to run a series of trials using genetically modified Camelina plants.

[Virtual fences, robot workers, stacked crops: farming in 2040](#)

Population growth and climate change mean we need hi-tech to boost crops, says a new report

[Earthworm research spurs farmers to act](#)

Mixed findings from first comprehensive worm survey of England's farmland

[In New Phytologist: EU's opposition to modern crop breeding could harm trade](#)

New research has found that the European Union's opposition to modern crop breeding is at odds with the majority of other countries around the world and could jeopardise international trade.

[UK chips an inch shorter after summer heatwave – report](#)

Increase in extreme weather due to climate change is damaging fruit and vegetable growing

[European farms could grow green and still be able to feed population](#)

Research shows loss in yields could be offset by reorienting diets away from grain-fed meat

[How the vegan food trend made a star of the pungent jackfruit](#)

The easy-to-grow crop has the potential to be much more than just a fashionable alternative to meat in the west

Food security

[Four steps to food security for swelling cities](#)

Combine pockets of rural land, reduce food waste, improve farming and encourage urbanites to eat less meat, urge Baojing Gu and colleagues.

Biodiversity and conservation

[UN: Growing threat to food from decline in biodiversity](#)

[Natural Capital Committee State of Natural Capital Annual Report 2019](#)

Sixth Report to the Economic Affairs Committee of the Cabinet

[National Nature Reserves offer £36 million of benefits to society](#)

Natural England research demonstrates the economic value of National Nature Reserves

[Plummeting insect numbers 'threaten collapse of nature'](#)

Insects could vanish within a century at current rate of decline, says global review

['Brexit gap' over wildlife protection is looming](#)

[Climate change: 'Future proofing' forests to protect orangutans](#)

Forestry

[Forestry Skills Plan for England and Wales](#)

The Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) is one of almost thirty forestry employers, associations and educational providers which have pledged to work together to attract the very best of young and new talent into the sector.

Sustainability

[Climate change: UK carbon capture project begins](#)

[Biofuels: Commission blacklists palm oil, throws soybeans lifeline](#)

In an eagerly-awaited decision, the European Commission last week categorised palm oil as a high-emitting biofuel crop but provided some controversial exemptions for smallholders and spared soybeans from the delegated act's provisions.

[On rooftops and in tunnels, city farms lead food revolution](#)

Salad plants are already being grown in old bomb shelters but floating dairy farms and 16-storey food towers could be next

Other news

[The new generation of women scientists working for global food security](#)

Despite progress in recent years, there still remains a concerning gender gap in science, with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics reporting that less than 30% of researchers worldwide are women.

[One third of the world's new vegetation is in India and China, data shows](#)

China and India are "leading the world" in "greening" the landscape, a study finds, with the two countries accounting for one-third of the new forests, croplands and other types of vegetation observed globally since 2000.

[BESS Resource Paper / Glossary: Clarifying general biodiversity & ecosystem services-related terminologies & those relevant to agriculture & pesticides](#)

This is a working paper coordinated by the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) Biodiversity Expert Group (BEG) with expert contributions from individuals and organisations active in the fields of biodiversity and ecosystem services (BESS)

People

[Tony Juniper announced as preferred Natural England Chair candidate](#)

The Environment Secretary has announced Tony Juniper is the preferred candidate for Chair of Natural England.

Opinion

[Brexit could be good for UK environment, says top government adviser](#)

Dieter Helm says withdrawal from common agricultural policy could safeguard natural world

[Environment Bill: a laudable but disappointing attempt to rewrite the law after Brexit](#)

Behind the scenes, away from the Commons chamber and the TV cameras, the UK's parliamentary committees continue to debate and scrutinise the mountain of legislation needed in order to secure an orderly exit from the EU.

[Food finally features in the climate debate. Now what?](#)

After years of neglect, agriculture finally found a place in the climate talks in 2017.

[Culturing better tea research](#)

International efforts to enhance the quality of tea are falling short of their potential — mainly because of the way that research is conducted in countries that dominate tea production.

[Buy organic food to help curb global insect collapse, say scientists](#)

Urging political action on pesticide use is another way to help stem 'collapse of nature'

Opportunities

[Vacancy: Science Policy Officer](#)

Royal Society of Biology (RSB)

£25,000-£28,000 (dependent on experience)

Location: Central London (WC1N)

Closing date: 3 March 2019

An exciting role: working as part of a team the Science Policy Officer will be responsible for providing specialist input and delivering a portfolio of activities with focus on policy in research funding and infrastructure across the biosciences, including policy and principles relating to research integrity, research publication and communication, and inclusivity and widening participation in research and research policy. The Science Policy Officer will also be responsible for provision of specialist input and delivery of related education policy projects and consultation responses.

[Apply online with a CV and covering letter.](#)

Please direct any queries to Dr Laura Marshall, Science Policy Manager, at laura.marshall@rsb.org.uk or 020 7685 2567

[Biology Challenge 2019](#)

The Biology Challenge 2019 (6th – 26th March) for students aged 13-15 is now open for registrations. The competition stimulates students' curiosity about the natural world and encourages them to take an interest in biology outside of school. High scoring students will receive certificates and be invited to an awards ceremony in London.

Please contact [Raghav Selvam](#) with any enquiries.

Closes: 27 February 2019

[£500 Royal Society of Biology Travel Grants - apply now!](#)

Student and early career members of the Royal Society of Biology can now apply for a £500 Travel Grant to be used towards overseas travel in connection with biological study, teaching or research. Find out more and apply on our [website](#) (you can also become a member to apply!).

Closes: 1 March 2019

[Join the Food Standards Agency's Register of Specialists to be commissioned for scientific work](#)

The FSA is seeking to appoint new members to its Register of Specialists. The Register is a list of pre-approved experts from whom the FSA can commission short pieces of ad hoc work under contract to provide scientific and technical services. Your work will contribute directly to ensuring the safety of food, benefitting UK consumers and the effective, evidence-based regulation of food.

Closes: 11 March 2019

[The BBSRC Impact Writing Competition 2019](#)

Are you aware of inspiring research, supported by BBSRC, making a real, tangible difference to people's lives? BBSRC invites PhD students and early-career researchers to submit an impact case study clearly describing the economic or societal impact of BBSRC's activities and investments.

Closes 18 March 2019

[David Miller Award Applications Now Open](#)

Calling all young horticulturists and plant scientists! The SCI Horticulture Group has now opened applications for the 2019 David Miller award. Two travel bursaries with the value of £500 each along with other benefits that are available this year.

Closes: 15 April 2019

[Signals in the Soil](#)

Proposals are invited under a new research programme - Signals in the Soil (SitS). This is a new international programme between UK Research & Innovation, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the US Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The programme will address the challenge of transforming existing capabilities in understanding dynamic near-surface soil processes through advances in sensor systems and modelling, and through this deliver sustainable, resilient and functional soils, whether managed or unmanaged.

Closes: 15 May 2019

Consultations

[Tree and woodlands: introducing measures for felling street trees](#)

Closes: 28 February 2019

[Knowledge Exchange Framework Consultation 2019](#)

Research England invites responses to its proposals for the first iteration of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), which aims to evaluate and benchmark the contribution that higher education institutions make to the exploitation of the knowledge they generate.

Closes: 25 March 2019

Events

[Molecular Biology of Plant Pathogens 2019](#)

MBPP (Molecular Biology of Plant Pathogens) is a short, friendly meeting supported by BSPP but organized locally that provides an ideal platform for young researchers (typically PhD or post-doc) to network and gain their first experiences of giving a talk away from 'home base' in front of larger audiences. A popular and vibrant meeting with a history dating back to the late eighties MBPP now moves around the country every 2 years and will be held in Norwich in March this year.
Norwich, 18 March 2019

[Botanical Microscopy 2019](#)

The 11th running of the International Botanical Meeting will in 2019 be held in the new lecture/conference facilities at Oxford Brookes University with accommodation in the famous Queen's College, Oxford. As in recent meetings there will be 7 or 8 lead speakers and the rest of the programme will be chosen from offered talks.
Oxford, 14 April 2019

[Monogram 2019](#)

The Monogram Network meeting is the annual get together for the small grain cereal and grass research community. Academics, commercial scientists, and plant breeders gather to share the latest advances in scientific research, exchange ideas, and talk about collaboration. Monogram 2019 provides an exciting opportunity for sharing ideas and networking in a relaxed environment. Everyone from graduate students to established academics, commercial scientists and plant breeders are welcome to attend.

Nottingham, 30 April

[SEB Annual Meeting 2019](#)

In July 2019, over 800 scientists from across the globe will come together in the hottest city in southern Europe - Seville. With the scent of orange trees, the blue of the sky, the joy of the city's festivities and the singing, playing and dancing of flamenco, Seville will intrigue and captivate you.
Seville, Spain, 2 July 2019

[Molecular Plant Biology Symposium](#)

This symposium is a full day program of talks showcasing cutting edge research and the facilities available at each of the N8 institutions. There is an exciting line up and lots of time for discussion and networking.
Durham University, 1 April 2019

11th Tri-National Arabidopsis Meeting (TNAM 2019)

For the last 20 years, TNAM has established itself as a premier plant science meeting in Europe that attracts many participants and also much international attention. In addition to two keynote lectures presented by Tetsuya Higashiyama and Wolf Frommer, TNAM 2019 features an exciting scientific program highlighting frontier plant research from Arabidopsis to crops, including technology development. With more than 26 invited speakers and 250 expected participants, combined with the strong plant research community in Europe and in Switzerland, TNAM 2019 again presents an exciting opportunity to engage in discussions on frontier research.
Zurich, 10-12 April 2019

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.
Cambridge, 30 April - 1 May 2019

Valuing our Life Support Systems 2019 – Book your place now!

21-22 May 2019

The Crystal, London

[The programme for this event is now online.](#) Book your place now for the Natural Capital Initiative's 10th anniversary summit at our early bird rates. The summit offers an independent platform for people in science, policy, NGOs, businesses and local communities to discuss and debate innovative natural capital solutions that enhance the environment and strengthen society.

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

And finally...

[Herbal history: Five garden plants with a hidden past](#)

[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
Charles Darwin House
12 Roger Street
London
WC1N 2JU
policy@rsb.org.uk

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Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London WC1N 2JU