



Plant Science Newsletter – a monthly round-up of policy headlines and stories

July 2021

This newsletter provides links to published news articles from a range of sources. Views or opinions presented are those of the original author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Royal Society of Biology.

News and debate

Top story

[National Food Strategy: key points of the independent review](#)

The Guardian highlights recommendations from the independent review, which include investing in green and modern farming, extending free school meals and updating food education.

Plant health and biosecurity

[Invasive species have cost UK at least £5bn since 1970s, study reveals](#)

The Guardian reports on warnings that the financial burden of invasive animals and plants is rising.

[Forestry Commission acts on bark beetle tree pest](#)

The Government has stated that two new breeding populations of the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*) have been discovered in Kent and East Sussex.

[Disease killing 'Europe's oldest' elm tree](#)

What is believed to be Europe's oldest elm tree has succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease and is dying, BBC News reports.

Plant breeding

[UK consumers give their views on genome edited food](#)

The Food Standards Agency has published its 'Consumer perceptions of genome edited food' report, as part of its wider efforts to increase the evidence base in the field of genetic technologies.

[Take action to harness the unique contribution of plant genetic innovation, Government urged](#)

Responding to the National Food Strategy, leading UK plant scientists and crop research organisations urge the Government to act on regulation and R&D, to support plant genetics research in securing a more sustainable food future.

Among other [RSB consultation responses](#), you can read the RSB responses to Defra's consultation on the [regulation of genetic technologies](#) in 2021, and call for evidence on a [National Food Strategy in 2019](#).

Agriculture

[Government publishes update to Agricultural Transition Plan](#)

The Government outlines how farmers will be able to earn up to £70 per hectare for actions to improve soil health.

[What CAP reform means for EU farmers](#)

AHDB's Horizon Blog reviews the reforms of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy agreed this month.

[Future Farming Resilience Fund to open in August](#)

The Government announces provision of tailored business support for farmers during the agricultural transition period.

Food security

[Almost one in three globally go hungry during pandemic – UN](#)

A report by five UN agencies warns of a big leap in malnutrition during Covid, with a fifth of children now believed to be stunted.

[Global Food Security report feeds into the UN Food System Summit](#)

UK Research and Innovation's Global Food Security (GFS) programme has published its new multi-stakeholder dialogue report.

Biodiversity and conservation

[G20 Environment Ministers commit to action at the G20 in Naples](#)

Commitments to tackle climate change and halt biodiversity loss by 2030 were reaffirmed by the UK Government at the G20 Environment Ministerial held in Italy.

[Biodiversity 3.0 metric launched in new sustainable development toolkit](#)

Natural England launches three new tools to help developers measure biodiversity net gain and ensure new developments are "nature positive".

[Rare flower found at electricity substation site in Suffolk](#)

BBC News reports that a "nationally scarce" flower has been found growing in the grounds of an electricity substation.

[Went to mow ... but stopped: how UK cities embraced the meadows revolution](#)

From Peckham to Plymouth, wildflowers are thriving in urban areas as councils let the grass grow to create 'managed messiness' for wildlife to thrive, The Guardian reports.

Forestry

[Amazon regions emit more carbon than they absorb](#)

Deforestation and climate change are altering the Amazon rainforest's ability to soak up carbon, according to a new study described by BBC News.

[Planting extra trees will boost rainfall across Europe](#)

A new study has found that converting agricultural land to forest could boost summer rains across Europe by an average of 7.6%, reports BBC News.

[Woodland Trust pledges to end use of plastic tree guards](#)

A conservation charity has pledged to phase out the use of plastic tree guards and replace them with more sustainable materials.

[New Community Forest created in the North East to support a greener future](#)

Defra, England Community Forests and local councils across the North East area announce the creation of a new Community Forest to bring people closer to nature in the North East.

Other news

[Roses out, olives in: the new English garden in a time of climate crisis](#)

Oxford Botanic Garden is 400 years old, but the climate emergency is forcing a review of what seeds it sows for the future, The Guardian explains.

[Cambridge University Botanic Garden marks 175th birthday](#)

A university research garden that offered a "safe green space" for visitors during the pandemic is marking its 175th anniversary, BBC News reports

Opinion

[What is the National Food Strategy and how could it change the way England eats?](#)

Food policy researchers Kelly Parsons and David Barling of the University of Hertfordshire review the recent Government-commissioned National Food Strategy, in *The Conversation*.

Opportunities

[Editor-in-Chief for Emerging Topics in Life Sciences vacancy](#)

The Royal Society of Biology and the Biochemical Society are looking for an Editor-in-Chief for their [Emerging Topics in Life Sciences](#) journal, published by Portland Press. If you would like any additional information about the journal or would like to discuss this opportunity informally, please contact [Emma Pettengale](#), Managing Editor.

Closes: 4 August 2021

[Horticultural Quality and Food Loss Network: Funding available](#)

The Network is providing a range of funding opportunities to its members, including pump-priming funds for feasibility studies and preliminary data collection to facilitate new collaborations (with emphasis on industry involvement and multidisciplinary) with ring-fenced funds for Early Career Researchers (ECRs), Business Interaction Vouchers (BIV) and Networking Visit Funding (NVF).

Closes: 6 August 2021

[Outreach and Engagement Award 2021](#)

Are you a bioscience researcher involved in science communication? If you work in any sector of UK biosciences, apply for the Royal Society of Biology Outreach and Engagement Award 2021 and win up to £1500.

Closes: 6 August 2021

[Speak Up for Food Security](#)

Twelve successful UKRI-funded early career researchers (ECRs) will be invited to attend a two-day virtual storytelling masterclass (Monday 27th Sep and Friday 1st October), where they will receive training in communicating their research. PhD students and early career post-docs currently funded by any UKRI council are invited to apply, as long as they can link their research (directly or indirectly) to the climate crisis and the food security challenge.

Applications close: 5 September 2021

[RSB Policy Internships – applications opening soon](#)

An early notice that the application window will open soon for two UKRI policy internship positions with RSB. The scheme will be open to current PhD students who are funded by [AHRC](#), [BBSRC](#), [EPSRC](#), [ESRC](#), [MRC](#), and [NERC](#). Successful applicants will spend three months working at the RSB in 2022. Start and end dates can be negotiated as appropriate. For further information and the latest updates visit the [UKRI Policy Internships Scheme webpage](#).

Consultations

[International Development Strategy: call for evidence](#)

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has opened a call for evidence as part of wider engagement with stakeholders on the International Development Strategy

Closes: 6 September 2021

[Nature-based solutions for climate change](#)

The Science and Technology Committee (Lords) is investigating the role of nature-based solutions in mitigating climate change. The inquiry will consider how protecting, managing, and restoring natural ecosystems can reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing co-benefits to people and nature.

Closes: 10 September 2021

[Reproducibility and research integrity: call for evidence](#)

The Science and Technology Committee (Commons) is seeking responses as part of its inquiry into reproducibility and research integrity

Closes: 30 September 2021

[Reforming the framework for better regulation](#)

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is conducting a consultation to review the way the Better Regulation Framework operates to ensure it remains fit for purpose and delivers Government's regulatory strategy objectives.

Closes: 1 October 2021

[RSB Policy Resource Library online](#)

The RSB has created a searchable, digital library of more than 800 statements, responses, briefings and other policy resources produced by the RSB and our Member Organisations across the biosciences. This collection is freely and openly accessible to everyone, including members and non-members, through the [mySociety portal](#) (no registration necessary).

Events

[HVB Annual Meeting](#)

The annual meeting of the High Value Biorenewables network is free for network members, including accommodation, on a first come, first served basis. The event will include a networking dinner and a day of topical talks, flash presentations, updates and opportunities for ECRs to present their work.

22-23 September, Harrogate (if COVID-19 restrictions allow)

[Trees for the Future - Diversity and complexity for resilience and carbon storage](#)

A hybrid virtual/live conference to explore evidence that higher tree species diversity enables higher productivity and stability, with a lower susceptibility to biotic and abiotic stress, together with a portfolio of ecosystem services, as well as economic and management benefits. Invited speakers will address these broad issues from the perspective of science/industry/economics/politics interfaces. A key aim is to produce a policy document that will inform UK Government strategy.

3-4 November 2021

BSPP Plant Health Club 2021

A new monthly meeting series aims to facilitate open discussions and networking opportunities. Meetings are primarily targeted at PhD students and early career researchers, but all are welcome. Dates and times of meetings will vary to enable as many people as possible to attend, and each meeting will take a theme.

#UKPlantSciPresents webinar series

The series returns for its spring season. View the full range of presentations and register for free [here](#). Recordings of all past webinars are available to view, and further webinar titles will be announced as the year progresses. Thanks to support for this series from the Monogram Small Grains Network, Bristol Centre for Agricultural Innovation, NovogeneUK and Arabidopsis Events UK.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all RSB events will continue to take place online and updated information will be made available on the [RSB events pages](#). We recommend also checking other external event webpages for updates and continuing to monitor and follow official advice.

And finally...

Top of the tree: Italian farmers grow world's biggest ever cherry

Despite losing a lot of fruit to bad weather, Italy has beaten the record twice this year, according to The Guardian.

Growing the future report

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](#).

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