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

June 2017

News

Plant health and biosecurity

[Italy rebuked for failure to prevent olive-tree tragedy](#)

European Commission reveals widespread delays by the country's authorities to halt spread of deadly plant disease.

Agriculture

[Tories aim to block full EU ban on bee-harming pesticides](#)

Move to block EU ban comes despite environment secretary Michael Gove saying, 'I don't want to water down' EU protections.

[Farmers feeling increasingly gloomy about Brexit, says NFU](#)

Snap election and reality of EU referendum result have led to confidence levels and investment falling, farmers' union poll shows.

[Agricultural powers must return to Holyrood](#)

Food security

[Changing the way we get our food is key to global warming fight](#)

[The global avocado crisis and resilience in the UK's fresh fruit and vegetable supply system](#)

The UK's fresh fruit and vegetable supply system is vulnerable to water-related risk. Cranfield University's Chloe Sutcliffe and Tim Hess introduce a new GFS-funded project investigating this issue.

[Growing fruit and veg](#)

Plans to accelerate the growth of Scotland's fruit and veg sector will be the focus of a new industry group.

[The consequences if the world decided to go meat-free](#)

Forestry

[Scientists fear new EU rules may 'hide' forest carbon loss](#)

Conservation and biodiversity

[Seed conservation in the remote South Atlantic](#)

Tom Heller describes the important role of seed conservation in protecting vulnerable plants, while Kew Associate Phil Lambdon recounts the challenges involved in his visit to Gough Island.

[Challenges at the forefront of biodiversity research](#)

[Norway issues \\$1bn threat to Brazil over rising Amazon destruction](#)

Deforestation in the Amazon is increasing amid cuts to protection, putting Norway's financial aid in jeopardy, says minister.

[Preserving plants for the future](#)

Three of Kew's specimen preparation team explain the history and process of mounting plant specimens for its herbarium.

Other news

[Science for Defra: How can we harness data and emerging technologies for the natural environment?](#)

How can data and emerging technologies transform the ways we assess and monitor changes in the natural environment?

[Ancient oak's youthful genome surprises biologists](#)

DNA of 234-year-old tree has few mutations, giving weight to idea that plants protect their stem cells.

Opportunities

[BES Policy Fellowship](#)

With funding of up to £20,000, The BES Policy Fellowship will offer a mid-career ecologist (at least five years post-PhD) the chance to spend up to six months on a placement embedded within a government department or agency, applying their scientific expertise to a practical policy challenge. The 2017 Fellowship will be hosted by Defra's Environment Analysis Unit.

Closes 7 August

[First External Review Now Open for the IPBES Global Assessment](#)

This assessment will be the first global snapshot of the state of the world's biodiversity in more than a decade, since the release of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The global assessment will provide decision makers with the state of knowledge regarding the planet's biodiversity, ecosystems and the benefits they provide to people, as well as the options to protect and use these natural assets more sustainably. Furthermore, the global assessment will provide vital data to assess progress against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Consultations

Nagoya Protocol

At the last international meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol decisions were adopted on digital sequence information on genetic resources (these can be found online here: [Decision XIII/16](#) and [Decision 2/14](#)). In these decisions Parties to the agreements agreed to consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention, and for the objective of the Nagoya Protocol, at the next international meeting taking place in November 2018. Ahead of next year's meeting Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples, local communities, relevant organizations and stakeholders are invited to submit views and relevant information on any potential implications of the use of DSI on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention and for the objective of the Nagoya Protocol. Please contact policy@rsb.org.uk to have your say. Deadline for responses to RSB is 3 July.

Events

New Breeding Technologies in the Plant Sciences

7-8 July 2017, Gothenburg, Sweden

This event, which will be a satellite meeting of the SEB's annual main meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden (3–6 July), will be of great interest to plant and crop scientists who are invested in the future of gene editing both on a practical and regulatory level. We will provide a forum for debate around the broader policy issues whilst include opportunities for in-depth discussion regarding the techniques required to make this technology work in your own research.

Utilising genetic resources in R&D

13 July 2017, York

This half day training event is an opportunity to gain an overview of the Nagoya Protocol and associated EU Regulations which have significant implications for the way R&D using certain plant and microbial materials is conducted. This event will include a variety of interactive learning approaches developed from our recent workshop "Sharing nature's genetic resources – implementing the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing".

Fourth International Horticulture Research Conference

16-19 July 2017, East Malling, Kent

The purpose of the conference is to bring together international researchers conducting basic research on horticultural crops, to showcase the latest research findings and to network with colleagues from around the world.

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

And finally...

[Multi-million dollar upgrade planned to secure 'failsafe' Arctic seed vault](#)

Improvements aim to ensure the vault's role as an impregnable deep freeze for the world's most precious food seeds after a recent flooding by melting permafrost.

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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.