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

September 2017

News

Plant health and biosecurity

[Europe must step up action against spread of fatal plant disease, says Gove](#)

Environment secretary says EU must combat spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* by stopping high-risk species from crossing borders unchecked.

Agriculture

[Assumed safety of pesticide use is false, says top government scientist](#)

Damning assessment by one of the UK's chief scientific advisers says global regulations have ignored the impacts of 'dosing whole landscapes' and must change.

[Report examines the efficacy and unintended consequences of alternatives to conventional pesticides](#)

The Global Food Security (GFS) programme has published a new workshop report that highlights the risks and challenges of using alternatives to conventional pesticides in the food system.

[Organic phosphorus key to future food security and sustainability](#)

Research into organic phosphorus is key to ensure future food security and environmental sustainability, according to an international group of scientists led by researchers at the James Hutton Institute, Lancaster University's Environment Centre and Rothamsted Research in the UK.

[The Regulator's perspective: Why some gene-edited plants are not GM-regulated in Sweden](#)

At July's New Breeding Technologies workshop held in Gothenburg, Sweden, Dr. Staffan Eklöf, Swedish Board of Agriculture, gave us an insight into their analysis of European Union (EU) regulations, which led to their interpretation that some gene-edited plants are not regulated as genetically modified organisms.

Food security

[Why UK researchers are needed to achieve diets that nourish, rather than just feed people](#)

Professor Alastair Ager, Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department for International Development (DFID) explains why there is a need for cross-cutting research and the challenges he hopes this will address.

[Why India's farmers want to conserve indigenous heirloom rice](#)

India was once home to 100,000 rice varieties, but high-yield, less hardy hybrids have taken over encouraging farmers to safeguard more resistant strains.

[Chips, chocolate and coffee – our food crops face mass extinction too](#)

It's not just animals, many seed crops are also endangered. So why is agrobiodiversity so overlooked? This valuable source of affordable, nutritious food could disappear if we don't act.

['Alarm bells we cannot ignore': world hunger rising for first time this century](#)

UN agencies warn conflict and climate change are undermining food security, causing chronic undernourishment and threatening to reverse years of progress.

Biodiversity and Conservation

[Diverse landscapes are more productive and adapt better to climate change](#)

Studies have shown that species-poor plant assemblages function less well and produce less biomass than species rich systems.

[Botanic gardens 'best hope' for saving endangered plants](#)

Sustainability

[Demand for biofuels is increasing global food prices, says study](#)

Using crops for fuel is putting pressure on food prices says a new analysis, which calls for an end to food-based biofuels.

[DfT announces biofuels reforms](#)

Following years of policy uncertainty and market stagnation, the Department for Transport (DfT) has announced its intention to raise the target under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), paving the way for future growth of the UK biofuels industry.

Other news

[Connecting plants and society: The Shenzhen Declaration, a new roadmap for plant sciences](#)

Environmental degradation, unsustainable resource use, and biodiversity loss are just a few points in the long list of pertinent issues that call for collaborative solutions from science and society together.

People

[New members of the Council for Science and Technology confirmed](#)

[Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee membership agreed](#)

Opportunities

[UK-India Newton-Bhabha Fund joint call on pulses and oilseeds](#)

Deadline: 24 October 2017

Consultations

[Research Integrity](#)

Science and Technology Committee inquiry on fraud, misconduct and mistakes in research.

Closes 5 October 2017

[BBSRC: Invitation to comment - strategy for UK biotechnology and biological sciences](#)

BBSRC is inviting comment on the future strategy from UK biotechnology and biological sciences.

Closes 11 October 2017

[Algorithms in decision-making inquiry](#)

Science and Technology Committee inquiry into the increasing use of algorithms in public and business decision making.

Closes 20 October 2017

[Call for evidence and briefing note: EEA-workers in the UK labour market](#)

In response to this consultation, RSB are looking to collate evidence from our members, in the form of career experience case studies. For further information please contact policy@rsb.org.uk.

Closes 27 October

Events

[Genome editing: Where do we draw the line?](#)

A lively Biology Week debate at the Royal Institution on the science and ethics of genome editing by a panel of leading geneticists.

9 October 2017, London.

[Turning Data into Decisions in AgriFood](#)

Harnessing the power of Big Data to generate new insights, practices and products is one of the key priorities of today's AgriFood supply chain. The production, processing, and distribution of agri-food products has become much more data reliant in recent years. However, there remain a number of challenges in using data in the agri-food sector, and turning this data into effective decisions. SCI's Agrisciences Group and the Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) are organising an event on 22nd November in London to focus on key needs of the agri-food sector in using data, discuss the existing barriers, and present a number of potential solutions and joint initiatives.

22 November 2017, London.

[Priorities for the UK food and farming industry: policy, competitiveness and new markets](#)

This timely seminar is bringing together key policymakers and stakeholders to discuss policy priorities for the food and farming sectors as the Government negotiates the UK's future relationship with the EU.

1 February 2018, London.

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

And finally...

[Long-lost Congo notebooks may shed light on how trees react to climate change](#)

Decaying notebooks discovered in an abandoned research station contain a treasure trove of tree growth data dating from 1930s.

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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.