

Minutes

Meeting: UKRI-BBSRC Bioscience for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Strategy Advisory Panel

Date and Time: 19th & 20th November 2024

Venue: Sheffield Crowne Plaza Royal Victoria, S4 7YE and virtually.

Attendance

Panel Members	
Carol Wagstaff (University of Reading) – Chair	
Emma Garfield (Ceres Agri-Tech) - Day 2	
Bob Doherty (University of York)	
Jess Davies (Lancaster University)	
Herve Migaud (MOWI)	
Lynn Frewer (Newcastle University)	
Alison Mather (Quadram Institute)	
BBSRC Office	
Harriet Trewin	Amanda Collis
Andrew Enow – Item 9	Riaz Bhunnoo
Jamie Stone – Item 10 & 12	Ruth Nottingham (BIU) – Day 1
Hayley Spearman – Secretariat	Tom Pearson (TT) – Day 2
Linda Millyard (Infrastructure) - Day 2 – Item 11	Sarah Perkins (SPEE) – Day 2: online
Stephanie Blackwell (SPEE)– Item 5: online	
Mary Jenkinson-Finch (BIU) – Item 4: online	
Other Attendees	
Helen Ferrier (NFU) – invited expert – both days	
Ian Noble (Mondelez) – invited expert – both days	
Lynn Dicks (University of Cambridge) - invited expert - Day 2	
Dan Stevenson (LEAF) - invited expert - Day 2	
Dave Hughes (Syngenta) – invited expert – Item 4: online	
Mark Banfield (JIC) – invited expert – Item 4: online	
Tim Davies (Corteva) – invited expert – Item 4: online	
Apologies	
Alison Bentley (Australian National University)	
Jasmeet Kaler (University of Nottingham)	

Agenda Day 1

Item	Description	Lead	Item ID	Time	Mins
Lunch				12:00 - 13:00	60
1	Chair's introduction & review of actions from previous meeting	Carol Wagstaff	Oral	13:00 – 13:20	20
2	Roundtable update from the panel	Carol Wagstaff	Oral	13:20 - 13:50	30
3	BBSRC update	Amanda Collis	Oral	13:50 – 14:20	30
4	Development of biological controls to address crop pests and diseases using biotechnology and engineering biology	Mary Jenkinson-Finch	[SAF-10-24]	14:20 – 15:00	40
Tea Break				15:00 – 15:20	20
5	Review and Refresh of BBSRC's Forward Look for UK Bioscience	Stephanie Blackwell	[SAF-11-24]	15:20 – 16:20	60
6	Framing Day 2 – SAF Strategy development day	Harriet Trewin	Oral	16:20 – 16:40	20
Private Dinner				18:30	

Agenda Day 2

Item	Description	Lead	Item ID	Time	Mins
7	Introduction to the day	Harriet Trewin	Oral	09:00 - 09:15	15
8	SAF Strategic Priorities - are they fit for purpose for a 2050 agri-food system?	Harriet Trewin	[SAF-12-24]	09:15 - 09:45	30
9	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into Net Zero for agri-food	Andrew Enow	[SAF-13-24]	09:45 - 11:00	75
Tea Break				11:00 – 11:15	15
10	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into regenerative agriculture for agri-food	Jamie Stone	[SAF-14-24]	11:15 – 12:30	75
Lunch				12:30 - 13:30	60

11	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into infrastructure needs for agri-food	Linda Millyard	[SAF-15-24]	13:30 – 14:45	75
Tea Break				14:45 – 15:00	15
12	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into emerging technologies for agri-food	Jamie Stone & Hayley Spearman	[SAF-16-24]	15:00 – 16:15	75
13	AOB	Carol Wagstaff	Oral	16:15 – 16:35	20
	Close	16:35 No later than 16:45			
-	Items to Note: Biodiversity Working Group Recommendations [SAF -17-24]				

Summary and Actions

Item	Description	Summary and Actions
1	Chair's Introduction	The Chair invited Panel members and BBSRC office to take part in a brief round of introductions.
2	Roundtable Update from the Panel	The Chair invited the Panel to share updates from their communities of particular interest to other Panel members and BBSRC.
3	BBSRC update	BBSRC shared updates from across BBSRC and UKRI. This included news about future funding, the spending review, the new governments policy missions, the new executive chair of BBSRC, The Funding Service, Responsive Mode, Doctoral Training awards, and the launch of the Land Use for Net Zero programme.
4	Development of biological controls to address crop pests and diseases using biotechnology and engineering biology	The panel highlighted the need for good testing and regulation in the UK. The barriers to uptake were discussed and recommended field trials with demonstrable efficacy to raise confidence and use. It was recommended to focus on the precompetitive space, consider the role of the agronomist and consider a future that has integrated as a default strategy.

5	Review and Refresh of BBSRC's Forward Look for UK Bioscience	The panel was supportive of themes and highlighted areas for more investment, overlap with other research councils and the need to bring industry into the research to drive innovation. They recommended having a food system perspective and bringing together sectors to speed up innovation. Climate change was highlighted as being key across consultations and thematic areas.
8	SAF Strategic Priorities - are they fit for purpose for a 2050 agri-food system?	The panel discussed what the food system would look like with and without adaptation to climate change. Priorities recommended included nature positive farming, resilience, providing evidence to inform regulation, interdisciplinary food system approaches, tracking trends in food safety, and making data accessible for informed decision making.
9	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into Net Zero for agri-food	The panel discussed that there was too much focus on mitigation with not enough on adaptation; the need to define "impact" and be able to track it; to consider the whole agri-food system including manufacturing. Research to be co-designed with real-world testing of interventions to support the transition to net-zero.
10	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into regenerative agriculture for agri-food	The panel advised on the use of the term regenerative agriculture (RA), and the use of formalised standards was discussed. There is opportunity to measure the impacts of RA practices to provide evidence for farmers, industry and policy makers. Areas that BBSRC could support included: the sharing of long-term field data sets; providing evidence for the benefits of RA; opportunities to research adaptive varieties and cropping strategies.
11	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into infrastructure needs for agri-food	The panel discussed facilities and networks needed to support agri-food. This included a hybrid knowledge exchange/ infrastructure for communication between industry and academia; active farm platform infrastructure and connectivity; specialised infrastructure for conservation of genomic markers and new food processes/products.
12	Forward strategy development with a deep dive into emerging technologies for agri-food	The panel suggested areas that needed more research, including animal welfare, precision fermentation, green fertilisers, early detection systems and gene editing. They also highlighted challenges that included the skills gap, ethics and AI, societal acceptance, regulatory frameworks, access to evidence of new technologies.
13	AOB	There were thanks to all, especially to Bob Doherty and Alison Bentley, for whom this is their final SAF SAP meeting. The next meeting will take place Spring 2025.