

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: Do the 2011-2016 strategic priorities remain robust and relevant for the period 2016-2021?

Yes

Question 2: Do these 'enabling principles' set the right context or should additional principles be adopted?

Yes. Both exchanging knowledge and inspiring innovation seem to implicitly encompass translational research but this could be spelled out for the avoidance of doubt.

Question 3: Are the high level outcomes sufficiently clear, if not, what changes would you propose?

Crop improvement through genetics and plant breeding has the potential to be a major contributor (possibly the major contributor) to many of the outcomes that are listed under the three high level themes on p 11 of the paper and the Scottish research base is currently well equipped to deliver this. I would like to see more prominence given to this through its explicit inclusion in this list, perhaps under the sub-head of 'productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture built on...' by adding as a further bullet point 'better crop varieties for yield, agronomics, resistance and quality'.

Question 4: Are the three broad themes identified an appropriate way of structuring our work? If not, what alternatives should be considered?

See above q 3, crop improvement as a key contributor to all three themes should be more explicitly identified, possibly even to the extent of becoming a theme in its own right. Scotland should consolidate its position as an international leader in crop genetics and breeding for certain species, most notably for barley, capitalising on the existing international lead, the science base, the existing strong collaborations with industry and the national economic importance of the crop.

Question 5: How can the SG maximise the benefits of on-going investment in the MRPs to build and benefit from connectivity with the wider science base?

It is essential that the SG continues to support its MRPs and retains the critical mass of expertise and infrastructure in strategically important areas, not allowing the erosion that we have seen of institute programmes and expertise south of the border, in particular for critical areas such as crop genetics. The SG could confirm and develop Scotland's position as the leading global research centre for barley genetics and pre-breeding as it has all of the components in place and BSPB would like to encourage the

SG to invest in the long term future security and potentially expansion of this activity. An internationally highly regarded activity seen to be supported and promoted by the SG will draw in new participants and co-funders from the HEI sector and the wider science base at home and overseas.

Question 6: What are your views on the performance and operation of the CoEs to date, are there any additional areas that would benefit from such support?

I am not familiar with the existing COEs but would like to promote strongly the concept of a barley (and other species?) genetics activity with the view that this could also contribute to the development and delivery of policy – eg if considering approvals for pesticides etc. being able to have information about the genetic alternatives that might be available and on what time-scale.

Question 7: Do you agree with the SG's proposal to end support for SPs and to explore alternative mechanisms to strengthen engagement between its investment in research and the business sectors it aims to support?

No comment as unfamiliar with the SPs. See above for proposal to further strengthen existing engagement in relation to crop genetics.

Question 8: Do you have any proposals for how the research portfolio can better link to the business community to deliver the desired outcome?

The SG could look at the model which is developing in England for wheat genetics and pre-breeding with a view to building on what it already has in crop genetics to promote and sustain a barley (and other crops if the demand is there) genetics and pre-breeding activity, with core public funding from which results and materials should be freely available to all and forming the base for collaborative projects for further development, on a pre-competitive and then later, competitive basis with increasing percentages of commercial input. SG financial input into TSB and BBSRC initiatives could provide a mechanism and leverage additional funding for the collaborative stage activities.

Question 9: Is the purpose and value of underpinning capacity sufficiently clear, if not how can it be improved?

Probably to those who are users who value them highly but it may need to be more fully explained and the benefits promoted to those who might otherwise question it or see it as a soft target.

Question 10: Do you have any views regarding the performance and use of the Contract Research Fund including how it could be improved?

No views on this.

Question 11: Could the overall delivery model be further simplified in a way which still enables SG to meet its strategic priorities for the portfolio, if so how?

No comment other than that long term security of ongoing funding for strategically important areas is essential, as is a balanced portfolio from basic to applied and translational research without perturbation caused by policy changes that create swings from one end of the R & D spectrum to the other.

Question 12: Do you have specific suggestions as to how the RESAS research strategy can contribute to the delivery of the objectives of the CAMERAS partnership?

Not familiar with CAMERAS

Question 13: Do you have any suggestions for developing the partnership with other research funders?

As above, I suggest this can be done by capitalising on Scotland's R & D strengths; the one that I am familiar with being crop genetics. A well supported and secure international centre of excellence marketed well will attract inward investment and new partnerships.

Question 14: Do you have any particular suggestions as to how greater engagement with the HEI sector might be achieved?

Nothing to add to comments made already ref crop genetics.

Question 15: Are the research outputs from the RESAS portfolio of research readily accessible or can this be further improved, if so how?

I believe that in the crop genetics area they are readily accessible to commercial plant breeders who are, or wish to become involved in, collaborative research or otherwise use the results. The interactions and personal contacts are very effective. I cannot comment on wider dissemination and accessibility.

Question 16: Is the current performance management approach fit for purpose or can it be improved, if so how?

The SG may wish to consider whether users should be represented on the Strategic Research Programme Board given the emphasis in the strategy on deliverables and impact.