

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Comments We need science to define policy and practice, as well as support it. We also need to make building natural resilience a priority of at least equal importance to scientific resilience. For example a priority should be to learn to constantly improve soil rather than degrade it.

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

Comments Knowledge comes from end users as well as researchers, so the presumption that the flow of knowledge goes from researchers to users is incorrect – it goes both ways and this should be reflected in the “enabling principles”.

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

Comments The high level outcomes are wealth, health and a secure environment. The difficulty will be in marrying the first (wealth) with the other two, particularly given that Scotland has to compete in a global context. The strategy should address this problem.

How does this strategy fit with the Agri-Tech strategy? Clearly the outcome of the referendum might impact on this, but there does not seem to be any indication of how Scotland might interact with the rest of the UK if we do not become independent.

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

Comments The three themes are sensible and reflect the real priorities for Scotland. The systems thinking approach is likely to produce much better results than compartmentalised work.

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?

Comments

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?

Comments Additional areas that would benefit from support are soils (developing the soils framework) and genetic resources. Soils are more than a repository for carbon – they are the prerequisite for human food. Building soil fertility, health and resilience is key. Likewise, the growing conditions in Scotland are unique, by definition, and there should be a programme to conserve and develop genetic resources of crops (beyond potato, barley and soft fruit) and livestock that thrive in this area and which form key components of a healthy diet, even though they might currently be of lower economic importance.

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?

Comments Yes. Strategic partnerships can be exclusive and do not necessarily represent the public good or best use of funds to achieve the high level outcomes.

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

Comments Investment in an inclusive and effective two-way knowledge exchange programme between the business community and researchers is essential. Currently rather few businesses know such a thing exists. They do not know how they might engage with it, nor what benefits it might bring. There needs to be an easy input system for business into research environments, and the focus should not be purely on dissemination of research outwards.

There are a lot of small farmers and growers who are highly innovative, and the work of whom is relevant to this research strategy – particularly those who are extensive or organic. Due to the small market share of this group, however, they are overlooked as “stakeholders” and their contribution to high level outcomes is missed. Effective engagement with this group could be through bodies of which they are members such as the Soil Association, Scottish Organic Producers Association, Organic Grower’s Alliance and others.

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

Comments The purpose is clear and laudable. From the information provided via this consultation the actual value provided is hard to assess.

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

Comments

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?

Comments

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?

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments The outputs are not immediately accessible to the average farmer or grower, particularly those of smaller scale. Signposting and dissemination could be improved by better communication with farmer and grower organisations outside SRUC and NFUS. In addition, an easy to access online knowledge hub could be established and farmers and growers alerted to its existence and benefits once a year with the ICAS form or census.

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

Comments