



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture

PRESS RELEASE

29 January 2025

30:50:50 vision – towards a new Innovation Agenda for UK Agriculture

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture (APPGSTA) has today issued a call for the UK Government to adopt an ambitious new Innovation Agenda for UK Agriculture, focused on clear, long-term objectives to increase domestic food production by 30% by 2050 while reducing UK agriculture's environmental footprint by 50%. The 30:50:50 vision.

Speaking at an opening ceremony for Agri-Science Week in Parliament, hosted by the All-Party Group this week, APPGSTA chair George Freeman MP welcomed the UK Government's strong commitment to food security, and that Defra minister Daniel Zeichner has confirmed that his Government wants the country to produce more food.

But Mr Freeman said there was serious doubt over whether current farming policies would deliver on that ambition.

"We have to question seriously whether the state of affairs this Government has inherited, and the policies put in place by the previous administration, are likely to support an ambition for the nation's farmers and growers to produce more food."

"We heard recently, for example, that our dependence on wheat imports is at its highest since records began 30 years ago. This year, we are on course to produce just 15% of our vegetable oil requirements, rather than 40% a decade or so ago. UK potato production is at its lowest level for more than a decade, and Defra figures indicate that UK self-sufficiency in fresh vegetables, at 53%, is at its lowest since records began in 1988, while for fresh fruit we produce just 16% of our needs."

"This isn't about talking the industry down. With our good soils, temperate climate, professional farming sector and world-class agri-science base, Britain is well-placed to produce more food, more sustainably, and to reduce our dependence on food imports. In doing so, we will also be better placed to contribute to the global food security challenge by developing and exporting technological solutions, increasing our own food exports, and fostering international R&D collaboration."

"Britain has some of the most cutting edge, world-leading research taking place in research institutes and university departments across the country. But we need a clearer plan to unlock its potential, and to translate that fantastic science into on-farm innovation. And our farmers and growers desperately need clarity and consistency about their purpose, first and foremost, as food producers."

"That's why, today, the All-Party Group is launching its [vision for an Innovation Agenda for UK Agriculture](#), as the start of a conversation which we hope will result in a more evidence-based approach to helping the nation's farmers and growers to produce 'more from less'."

Mr Freeman explained that the urgency of UK and global food security, affordability and sustainability challenges mean that clear, long-term objectives are needed to harness the latest advances in agricultural science and innovation.

“The UK Government wants the country to produce more food. But even the Government’s own assessments warn that current farm policies will reduce and displace food production. Meanwhile our regulatory processes stifle access to agricultural innovation and, despite increases, R&D investment is not translating into farm-level productivity growth. A new vision is needed to re-frame the policy, regulatory and R&D agenda with an ambitious, high-level objective to increase domestic food self-sufficiency while reducing UK agriculture’s environmental footprint.”

Mr Freeman pointed to the United States, which has set out a high-level Agricultural Innovation Agenda, with a goal to increase production by 40% by 2050, while halving US agriculture’s environmental footprint. He said the UK must adopt a similar, long-term objective to increase food production sustainably.

“We believe a realistic ambition would be to increase domestic food self-sufficiency from its current 60% to 75% over the next 25 years. Taking forecast population growth into account, this means increasing UK agricultural production by 30% by 2050,” he said.

The APPG 30:50:50 vision document, launched today, sets out three clear steps to deliver on that objective.

Step one

Set clear, measurable objectives for Sustainable Efficient Production, or SEP.

Mirroring the US Agriculture Innovation Agenda, the APPG believes a 30% increase in domestic food production can be delivered by 2050 while reducing farming’s environmental footprint by 50% per unit of output, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use and soil health.

The 30:50:50 agenda.

Step two

Develop a consistent, evidence-based approach to the collection and integration of farm-level data to provide a single metric for consumers, policy-makers and investors - the SEP Index.

The All-Party Group has long-advocated the need to embed data science and sustainability metrics at the heart of a more evidence-based policy agenda, with a laser focus on securing the optimum balance between food production, resource use and environmental impact.

To deliver the SEP Index in practice, the APPG recommends the establishment of a new **National Agri-Data Institute**, funded by and reporting to Defra, to create a centralised system for industry-wide sharing, collation and analysis of the vast silos of agricultural data – on-farm and in research institutes – which are not currently being properly integrated or exploited.

Step three

Ensure that the policy landscape is joined up and focused on the right priorities to deliver on the 30:50:50 agenda.

The weight of scientific evidence indicates, for example, that it will require a shift away from ‘land-sharing’ farm policies to more of a ‘land-sparing’ approach, with an emphasis on high-yield farming on a smaller land area to free up more space for intact nature and carbon sequestration. It will also mean policy reform in terms of land use, regulation of new agricultural technologies, and a re-organisation of our fragmented R&D landscape to focus on the delivery of innovation and translation into practice.

“The vision document we are launching today is intended to be the start of an ongoing conversation. We’d welcome feedback. Over the coming period, members and stakeholders of the Group will consider in greater detail what policy drivers and initiatives are needed to deliver on the 30:50:50 objective. We actively encourage input and comment from others to support this process,” concluded Mr Freeman.

ENDS

Notes

A copy of the APPG document launched today, entitled **Innovation Agenda for UK Agriculture: 30:50:50** is available to [download here](#).

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture exists to promote debate among politicians and other stakeholders on the value and role of scientific innovation in UK agriculture. The Group works to ensure that the Government’s support for agri-science is maintained and strengthened, that the regulatory environment is evidence-based and enabling, and that the contribution of modern agriculture to our society, economy and environment is valued and understood as widely as possible.

For further information contact:

Daniel Pearsall, Group Co-ordinator, APPG Science & Technology in Agriculture

E-mail: press@appg-agscience.org.uk

Tel: 07770 875455

www.appg-agscience.org.uk