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The new strategy

Secretary Alan Plom outlines the Trust's new Strategy for 2023-26, and beyond

The new strategy was announced at the Trust's Jubilee Anniversary event held in September last year. Developed to guide the Trust into the next few years, this new approach has now been agreed by the Board. The next step is 'What do we do with it?'.

It describes how the the Trust will be more proactive, rather than our traditional passive approach to requests for funding research. It was instigated because Trustees could see gaps and opportunities for collaboration and funding. This new approach will also enable more cost-effective use of our limited funds.

The aim remains "To advance knowledge, understanding, practice, and competence in the application of engineering and technology to achieve sustainable agricultural, food and biological systems for the benefit of the environment and mankind", but this is now supplemented by clearer 'Vision' and 'Mission' statements. These emerged from a project commissioned at Cranfield University, to review our objectives and core values.

- **Vision:** "To make a positive difference to enhance global food security and climate change by encouraging innovation in agricultural engineering".

- **Mission:** "To provide resources to help advance the application of engineering and technology to achieve sustainable agricultural, food, and biological systems, for the benefit of the environment and mankind and with a link to the UK."

Key Themes

The Strategy is based on four key 'themes':

- **People** - Enhancing skills, supporting education and continuous professional development
- **Technology** - Contributing to science and innovation
- **Collaboration** - Working with others, co-sponsorship
- **Communication** - Sharing information on priorities and outcomes of sponsored research.

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Investment in these themes will give more 'value for agricultural engineering' by:

- Investing in the right people – to stimulate and maintain interest in the profession and develop individuals' skills, knowledge and experience in agricultural engineering.
- Identifying and encouraging suitable projects that will provide a training environment and advance innovation and scientific understanding.
- Encouraging and stimulating collaboration between researchers and other funders/ sponsors within the agricultural engineering sector.

The Trust's Priorities

In future, up to 50% of the charity's funds available for research (around £80k/year) will be allocated to 'priority' areas, initially guided by horizon-scanning research carried out as a Group MSc Project, also at Cranfield.

Proposed Priority Research Topics (for 2023-26)

- Developing technologies, control systems and strategies that directly improve the performance of sustainable agricultural production systems.
- Improving use of energy sources in agricultural situations, particularly in relation to climate change objectives (Net Zero)
- Developing innovative food production methods in controlled environments.

Next steps – 'Summit' workshop

The trustees have their own views but are keen to engage all parts of the industry to identify specific topics for research within these areas and to explore opportunities for enhancing collaboration, including between the different centres for research, academia and training; potential sponsors (Government, private and charity); manufacturers and farmers.

To facilitate this wider involvement of policy-formers and decision-makers in the discussion on how to deliver the 4 elements of our strategy, and in the context of climate change and the various national policies emerging from recent Government-led reviews, a 'Summit' (for an invited audience) is being arranged in collaboration with Agri-EPI. Although in some circles the agri-robotics is touted as the saviour of all the challenges faced by farmers, but the big question remaining is "What do farmers do until the technology is adequately developed, priced and taken up by farmers".

This essential and timely event, entitled **"Delivering sustainable farming practices through agricultural engineering"**, is proposed at Agri-EPI's Midlands Agri-Tech Centre, located at Harper Adams University, in Newport, Shropshire, in early November.

These challenges include:

- What products and services do farmers need NOW - as well as in the future - to implement sustainable practices?
- The role of data in future farming, and how can we harness it?
- How can we enhance the available solutions and future developments in technology?
- How can we encourage and enable education and training for future agricultural engineers – from academia (for essential learning and development) through to dealer technicians (to support technology) and farmers (to use it!) – ie to provide the skills needed to educate, train and maintain the 'tech'.
- What does the industry (including associated organisations and Government) need to do differently?

For further information, see the Trusts website:

www.dbt.org.uk

Or contact the Secretary Alan Plom via:

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