Building on a solid foundation: Improving knowledge exchange in arable farming

A workshop hosted by AIC, AICC, HGCA and Landbridge

Date: Tuesday 23 September 2014
Venue: Peterborough Marriott Hotel, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE2 6GB

The uptake of innovation on farms across the UK is vital in meeting the scale of the challenge of sustainable intensification. Farmers have an inner ring of professional advisers who provide them with up-to-date advice underpinned by research. This model is effective in translating knowledge from research communities to farmers and has the potential to provide a feed-back loop from farmers to research. However, there is a varying understanding of this process and a recognition that improvements need to be made.

Recent insights from a Landbridge workshop suggest that the knowledge exchange space is complex; research community interests have moved upstream and farming pressures have become short-term. Public research agenda setting can seem closed and there can be a tendency to commission research to deliver policy priorities, as opposed to meeting practical needs that deliver real benefits on the ground.

In this complex system, there is a need for clarity from the perspective of the researcher to recognise the role of professional advisers and from the perspective of the professional adviser to find ways to positively engage with research communities. This workshop will bring together researchers, professional advisers from across the industry, levy boards, and policy-makers with a view to developing solutions together to build on the solid foundation and improve knowledge exchange in arable farming.

Workshop aim and key issues to address:
Identify how existing models of knowledge exchange (KE) in the arable sector can be built upon and improved by:

- Reviewing the processes behind KE in the arable sector by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current system
- Understanding how priorities for research are determined within the public and private sector
- Considering the role of industry in KE by exploring the sensitivities and the collaborative relationships that exist between commercial partners and public research institutes
- Identifying how existing KE models in this sector can be built upon and improved

Programme

10:00-10:30	Registration and refreshments
Welcome and Introduction	
10:30-10:40	Welcome and Introduction – Chair (Clare Bend, Head of Technology and Services, Agrii)
Session 1: Mapping the KE landscape in the arable sector	
10:40-11:15	Table discussions (with facilitators) • Mapping exercise • Critique to identify strengths and weaknesses
11:15-11.45	Table feedback to all delegates
Session 2: The foundations of KE in the arable sector	
11:45-12:30	Presentations from: • **Dr. Amy Proctor, Research Associate (Landbridge, Newcastle University)** • **Dr. Susannah Bolton, Head of Research & KT (HGCA)** • **Corrina Gibbs, Policy Co-ordinator (AIC)**
12:30-12:45	Opportunity for Q&A – 15 mins
LUNCH (12:45)	
Session 3: The different pieces of the KE jigsaw	
13:45-14:15	Short presentations by panellists: • **Jeremy Phillipson, Director of Research & Reader (Newcastle University)** • **Ian Meikle, Head of Agriculture & Food (Innovate UK)** • **Dr. Andrew Spencer, Head of Knowledge Exchange & Commercialisation (Rothamsted Research)** • **Jeremy Macklin, Director of Technology & Innovation (HL Hutchinsons)** • **Mark Hall, Head of Strategy & Planning (Syngenta)** • **Patrick Stephenson, Chairman (AICC)**
14:15-14:30	Panel/floor discussion
Session 4: Improving KE in the arable sector	
14:30-15:15	Table discussions, taking on board the strengths & weaknesses (identified at the beginning of the day) to highlight good practice & recommend improvements that can be made to KE in the arable sector.
15:15-15:50	Table feedback to all delegates
15:50-16:00	Concluding remarks – Chair
16:00	Close