



Applied Research Forum for Farming and Food

Annual Report 2003/04



Contents

Chairman's foreword	3
Who we are	4
Our objectives	5
Lead technical director's report	6
Performance against targets	7
Joint projects	8
Looking forward	9
Glossary	10
Contact details	11

Chairman's foreword

I am pleased to report that during its inaugural year the Applied Research Forum for Farming and Food has met or exceeded all its targets. It has made significant progress in improving collaboration on research and knowledge transfer across government and between the UK agricultural and horticultural levy bodies.

I am grateful to Graham Jellis of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority for his professional advice, hard work and enthusiasm as the Lead Technical Director for the Forum during the past year, and for his staff in supporting him. It needs to be recognised that this activity is in addition to their roles within HGCA requiring extra hours of work.

The Forum was formally launched in September 2003 in response to a recommendation by the Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food (2002), that levy bodies and government improve co-ordination of their applied farming and food research, to avoid duplication and maximise synergies.

It has been heartening and reassuring for the future to have seen the willingness with which information and knowledge has been shared, discussed and debated by the members of the Forum.

This joined-up approach on research priorities and on the scope and output of projects has already helped to improve the return on levy-funded R&D investment. Also, through a series of workshops, we have started to share ideas on best practice in the areas of waste management and knowledge transfer.

The Forum participated in Defra's Independent Sustainable Farming and Food Research Priorities Group (RPG) where we helped to shape advice to government on where to focus its strategic research effort.

This Forum has proved that levy body and government collaboration can work at a practical level and the following pages report in detail on our outputs during the past year. £21,000 has been received from the levy bodies to cover project work and administration.

I believe the work of the Applied Research Forum will make a real contribution towards a more competitive and sustainable farming industry.



Peter Barr, CBE

Chairman

August 2004

Who we are

One of the recommendations made by the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food was that industry levy bodies and Government should improve the co-ordination of their applied farming and food research, avoid duplication and maximise synergy. The Policy Commission envisaged the establishing of an Applied Research Forum for this purpose.

Several meetings were held by the agri-food levy bodies to develop the objectives and terms of reference of the Forum. These were agreed at a meeting of Levy Body Chairmen on 17 December 2002.

Membership of the Applied Research Forum 2003/4

Chairman	Peter Barr CBE	<i>(Chairman, MLC)</i>
Deputy Chairman	Colin Harvey	<i>(Chairman, HDC)</i>
Lead Technical Director	Prof. Graham Jellis	<i>(Research & Development Director, HGCA)</i>
Deputy Lead Technical Director	Mike Attenborough	<i>(Technical Director, MLC)</i>

The Chairman and Lead Technical Director, and their Deputies, are appointed on an annual basis by the levy body Chairmen.

Core Members

Dr John King	<i>(Programme Manager, BBRO)</i>
Dr Mike Storey	<i>(Research & Development Director, BPC)</i>
Prof Graham Jellis	<i>(Research & Development Director, HGCA)</i>
Dr Annette Carey	<i>(Technical Manager, HDC)</i>
Brian Lindsay	<i>(Technical Manager, MDC)</i>
Mike Attenborough	<i>(Technical Director, MLC)</i>
Dr Anthony Biddle	<i>(Technical Director, PGRO)</i>

Representatives of other bodies who attended in 2003/4 (one per organisation)

BBSRC	Brian Harris
DARDNI	George McIlroy
Defra	John Sherlock, Iain Williams
FSA	Richard Burt, Alisdair Wotherspoon
NFU	Stephen Rossides, Elizabeth Hogben, Neil Kift
NFUS	Johnny Mackey
SEERAD	John Hooker, Linda Sanderson
WAG	Chris Lea

Our objectives

1. To establish at Technical Director level, across all levy bodies, a broad understanding of each organisation's strategic needs.
2. To identify gaps in knowledge in areas of levy body strategic need where a collaborative research & development approach would be warranted and to establish appropriate strategic and applied research & development programmes in such areas ensuring that overlap and duplication is avoided. The importance of environmental issues is one area of significance including water usage and quality, carbon economics and biodiversity.
3. To influence Government prioritisation and investment in agri-food research & development through dialogue with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the Scottish Executive Environment & Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and through participation in the Government's Research Priorities Group (RPG). This influence may extend into other areas of Government, for example the Department of Trade & Industry and the Environment Agency.

The establishment of the Research Priorities Group is one of the recommendations of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food. This Group will set the agenda for public research on farming and food matters. The knowledge which levy bodies possess on understanding consumer needs and supply chain issues are key components which the Applied Research Forum brings to the RPG.
4. To provide a mechanism to direct and lead the improvement of whole agri-food supply chain competitiveness and consumer value to help ensure retention of a strong production base in the UK that is sustainable in profit terms while encompassing environmental and food safety issues.
5. To provide a mechanism to maximise co-funding opportunities in undertaking of research and development in particular in collaboration within the EU and accessing EU funding.
6. To provide the mechanism for exchange, across the levy bodies, of best practices in areas of common interest. Examples include knowledge transfer to industry, research management and consumer research.
7. To provide a Forum for the Agri-Food Foresight Programmes and an integrated approach from the levy bodies for the identification and detection of infectious diseases including human, animal and plant diseases to future Government offices of science and technology. .

These objectives have been summarised in our Mission Statement:

"Our mission is to bring together research funders in agriculture and food to identify strategic needs, and to collaborate in addressing these by appropriate research and knowledge/technology transfer activities and by influencing government prioritisation and investment in these areas."

Lead Technical Director's Report



During its first year, the ARF met formally four times and has established a good rapport amongst members and the basis for working together for the benefit of the industry. In addition, the ARF held a number of internal workshops on themes of common interest. Details of the major activities during this first year are given below.

Workshops

Knowledge Transfer

Four knowledge transfer (KT) workshops have been held. KT staff have got to know and understand each others' organisations better and to share common issues and best practice. This will lead to more effective delivery of research outputs to our levy payers.

The Water Framework Directive

BPC has taken the lead in understanding the new Water Framework legislation (European, national and local). At a workshop organised by the BPC Knowledge Transfer Manager, other levy bodies were able to explore the new legislation, learn from the approach already taken by BPC, and come to a view as to where cross-sector approaches may be valuable over the coming months.

Working with the Voluntary Initiative

ARF members met representatives of the Voluntary Initiative (VI) team to discuss how levy-funded work could benefit the VI and how we could work together to inform farmers and train them, for example through levy body knowledge transfer events. Appropriate events are awarded Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points by the National Register of Spray Operators (NRoSO)

Consultation with the Department of Health on the Food and Health Action Plan

A meeting was held with Department of Health representatives in January to discuss the Action Plan.

Linking with other research funders

Working with Defra

I have attended three meetings of the Defra Research Priorities Group, as the representative of the ARF. Representatives of most of the levy bodies attended the interactive workshops organised by the RPG to help develop future research priorities.

Working with BBSRC

It has been agreed that Dr Pinder Gill of MLC will provide a formal link between the BBSRC Agri-Food Committee and the ARF.

Working with the FSA

Dr Richard Burt, Head of Division for Radiological Protection and Research Management at the FSA gave a presentation to the Forum on the work of the Agency.

Response to Consultation Documents

ARF has produced joint responses to a number of consultations :

Priorities for BBSRC Research in Sustainable Agriculture (BBSRC)

The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (ESRC, BBSRC, NERC)

Future Directions of Crop Science Research (BBSRC) Soil, the hidden resource (EA)

Public Awareness of the ARF

A Press Briefing was held to launch the Forum in September 2003.

A website is currently being developed and will be launched in the autumn of 2004.

Mr Mike Attenborough (Deputy Lead Technical Director) reported on the activities of the ARF at a meeting of the Association of Applied Biologists.

**Professor Graham Jellis
Lead Technical Director**

Performance against Targets

Target: *The achievement of a broad understanding among Technical/Research Directors of each other's organisation's strategic needs, aims and applied research synergies.*

The establishment of the ARF has resulted in much closer contact between Technical/Research Directors over a range of issues, some of which are described in the Lead Technical Director's Report. Documents describing strategic needs have been exchanged and synergies identified.

Target: *Identification of opportunities for collaboration in areas of common interest.*

Areas of common interest identified in the first year include:

Knowledge Transfer

Waste management

Water

Biodiversity

Nutrition and Health (with the Joint Levy Bodies Nutrition Group)

Target: *Undertaking of two workshops to share experiences of best practice.*

Prior to the formal establishment of the ARF, levy bodies held workshops to discuss best practice in research management and knowledge transfer. More recently, a KT sub-group of the ARF has been established to continue to identify best practice and to examine opportunities for working together. This sub-group met four times during the year. Workshops were also held to discuss levy body activity relating to the Voluntary Initiative, the Department of Health's Food and Health Action Plan, and the Water Framework Directive.

Target: *Input to the Research Priorities Group and to DEFRA, SEERAD, BBSRC and FSA.*

The Lead Technical Director has represented the ARF as an assessor at the first three meetings of the Defra Research Priorities Group.

Dr Pinder Gill (MLC) provides a formal link between ARF and the BBSRC Agri-Food Committee

The ARF has responded to consultation documents issued by BBSRC, the Environment Agency and other Research Councils.

Target: *The publication of an Annual Report of the Forum activities.*

An internal report was produced for levy body Chairmen and Chief Executives in May 2004

Target: *A debate by Chairmen of the levy bodies on progress and output of the Forum.*

The Chairmen debated the Applied Research Forum at their meeting on 26 October 2004. They were pleased with the progress made both in tackling meaningful issues and in the performance against objectives set out on Page 5 of this Annual Report.

Joint Projects

During the year, the levy bodies cooperated in a number of projects, many jointly funded by other industries –for example plant breeders and the agrochemical industry. Support from industry partners (including levy bodies) is matched 50:50 by government. Defra is a major sponsor of the programmes covered here but funding is also provided by other government departments

Sustainable Arable LINK Projects

1. Novel strategies for aphid control using entomopathogenic fungi
Levy bodies: BPC, HDC, HGCA, PGRO
End date: 31/12/2003
2. 3D Farming: making biodiversity work for the farmer
Levy bodies: BBRO, HDC, HGCA, PGRO
End date: 31/03/2004
3. Botanical and Rotational Implications of Genetically Modified Herbicide Tolerance (BRIGHT)
Levy bodies: BBRO, HGCA
End date: 31/03/2004
4. Sustainable Arable Farming For an Improved Environment (SAFFIE)
Levy bodies: HDC, HGCA
End date: 31/12/2006
5. Developing new management options for soil-borne pests of organic systems
Levy bodies: MDC, MLC
End date: 31/03/2007
6. Stewardship of neonicotinoid insecticides: the potential of natural populations of *Myzus persicae* to evolve resistance.
Levy bodies: BBRO, BPC
End date 31/03/2007
7. Lupins in sustainable agriculture (LISA)
Levy bodies: MLC, PGRO
End date: 01/01/2009

Sustainable Livestock Production LINK Projects

1. Knowledge and technology transfer in the livestock sector by understanding farmer attitudes and behaviour
Levy bodies: MDC, MLC
End date: 30/10/2003
2. High sugar ryegrasses for improved production efficiency of ruminant livestock and reduced environmental N-pollution.
Levy bodies: MDC, MLC
End date 30/04/2005
3. Sustainable systems for pig weaner management – through nutrition (NUTWEAN)
Levy bodies: HGCA, MLC
End date: 31/08/2007

Food Quality and Safety LINK Project

1. Rapid analytical systems for raw produce quality and safety attributes
Levy bodies: HDC, HGCA
End date: 31/01/2005

Foresight LINK Project

1. G.I.S. based commercial high resolution agro-meteorological data, product and services on the internet (INTER-MET)
Levy bodies: BBRO, HDC, HGCA, PGRO
End date: 30/06/2005

Looking forward

Workshops

Organic 'Wastes'

The first external ARF event, a workshop entitled 'Sustainable use of organic 'wastes' on agricultural land: opportunities, facts and fears', is planned for September 2004. The delegates will include policy makers, producers, processors and scientists. The latest research on the efficient utilisation of a variety of 'wastes', including biosolids, animal manures, composted municipal solids, abattoir and food wastes on agricultural land will be discussed and gaps in our knowledge or in transfer of information highlighted. Research programmes or knowledge transfer activity can subsequently be defined.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity in agricultural land has been recognised as a topic of common interest and ARF will be organising a workshop on soil biodiversity to identify needs in this area, and to support Defra's Soil Action Plan for England.

Best Practice

Best practice in research management and knowledge transfer will continue to be developed through working groups.

Working Together

Members of ARF will continue to identify opportunities for collaborative work, both through research funding and knowledge transfer. Levy body funding within LINK will be better coordinated, particularly for the development of new projects.

Working with Others

Prof Jellis will continue to represent the ARF on the Defra Research Priorities Group. A document is expected to be launched in early 2005.

Prof Jellis has been invited to join the BBSRC Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Panel, which meets for the first time in November 2004.

Website

The website will be completed before the end of 2004. This will provide information on ARF and our activities, and act as a portal to the websites of the levy bodies and other research funders.

Glossary

ARF	Applied Research Forum for Farming and Food
BBRO	British Beet Research Organisation
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
BPC	British Potato Council
DARDNI	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FSA	Food Standards Agency
HDC	Horticultural Development Council
HGCA	Home-Grown Cereals Authority
MDC	Milk Development Council
MLC	Meat and Livestock Commission
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
NFU	National Farmers Union
NFUS	National Farmers Union, Scotland
PGRO	Processors and Growers Research Organisation
RPG	Defra Research Priorities Group
SEERAD	Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government





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