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New report calls for doubling of UK plant science funding

The British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) is backing calls for a doubling of UK plant science research funding to help deliver the step-change improvements in crop yields, climate resilience and disease resistance needed to meet future food security and sustainable development goals.

A report¹ issued today by the UK Plant Sciences Federation² (UKPSF) into the current status and future challenges for the UK plant science sector suggests that while the UK is internationally recognised for its excellence in plant science, there is unmet potential to unlock the commercial and economic impact of current research.

The report calls for a doubling of public sector investment in UK plant science, with a more stable balance between basic and applied research and greater emphasis on translating research outputs into commercial applications through more effective public-private partnerships.

The UKPSF report also highlights the need to inspire, educate and recruit a new generation of UK plant scientists, and calls on policy-makers to ensure a science-based and enabling regulatory framework for innovative plant science technologies such as GM.

Welcoming the UKPSF report, BSPB chairman Dr Richard Summers said:

“This report recognises the critical role of the commercial plant breeding and seeds sector as the route to market for much of the plant science research taking place in UK research institutes and universities.

“In particular, it highlights the strategic need to support a functioning crop improvement pipeline, balancing long-term investment in basic and applied plant science to ensure that new knowledge and discoveries are translated into market-ready traits, germplasm and breeding tools.”

“In recent years, BSPB has highlighted similar concerns over the widening gap between public sector research and its relevance or accessibility to commercial plant breeders.

“As the UK Government’s Agri-Tech Strategy targets opportunities for economic growth in the UK agri-science sector, the UKPSF report provides a policy blueprint to unlock the potential of the UK plant science sector by accelerating the transfer of research into practical application and building stronger links between the science base and industry,” concluded Dr Summers.

ENDS

Notes

1. The UKPSF report '*UK Plant Science: Current status and future challenges*' is available on-line at: <https://www.societyofbiology.org/policy/ukpsf/uk-plant-science-status-report>
2. The UK Plant Sciences Federation (UKPSF) is a special interest group of the Society of Biology. For further information visit: <http://www.plantsci.org.uk/>

About BSPB

The British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) is the representative body for the UK plant breeding industry. Acting on members' behalf, BSPB licenses, collects and distributes certified seed royalties and farm-saved seed payments on agricultural and horticultural crops. The Society represents members' interests on technical, regulatory and intellectual property matters, and works to promote continued innovation and investment in UK plant breeding. For further information visit: www.bspb.co.uk

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