

UK farmer & grower research priorities

Full report



For further information please contact:
Centre for Effective Innovation in
Agriculture: ceia@rau.ac.uk

CEIA
CENTRE FOR EFFECTIVE
INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

INFLU
INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION
IN NATURE

INNOVATE
LAW
CENTRE

ELIZABETH
CREAK
CHARITABLE TRUST

Contents

Executive summary	5	4.0 Conclusion	25
1.0 Background and rationale	7	Appendices	27
2.0 Method	9	5 ddYbXJl ' % ' K cf_g\cd ' Ück	27
2.1 Recruitment	9	Appendix 2: Data analysis	29
2.2 Participants	10	Appendix 3: Strengths and limitations	32
2.3 Workshops	12	Appendix 4: Feedback from organisations convening workshops	33
3.0 Research priorities	14	Authors and acknowledgements	34
3.1 Farmer and grower challenges and research needs	14	References	36
3.2 Farmer and grower priorities 10 years on	15		
3.3 Comparison with the researchers' priorities	18		
3.4 Comparison research funding priorities	19		
3.5 Comparison with research effort	21		
3.6 Regenerative agriculture	23		

Figures and tables

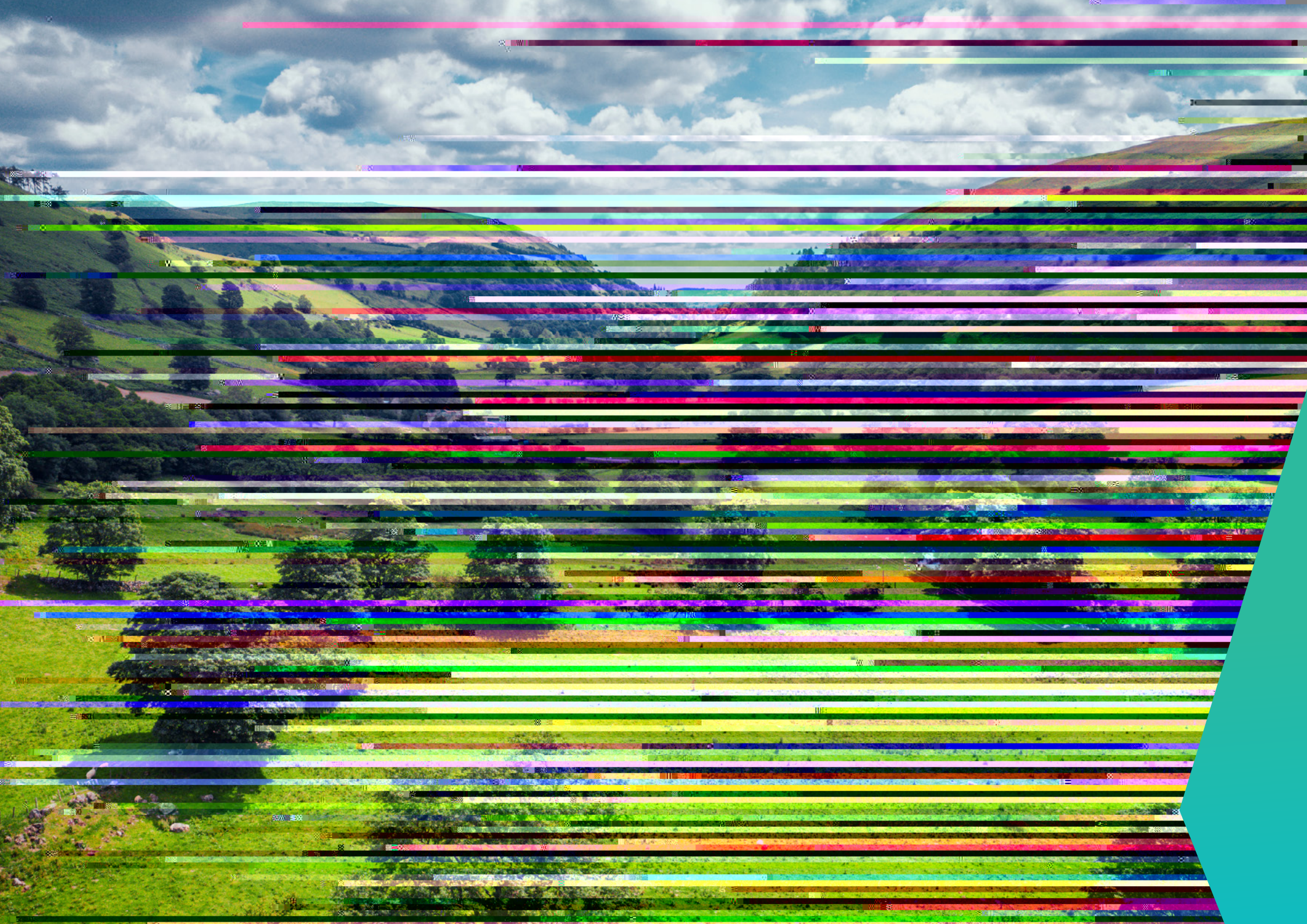
Executive summary

Farmers and growers in the UK are facing rapid changes in policy and trade on top of the emerging pressures relating to climate, nature and public health. There is a need for strategic engagement to ensure that their needs are met. The authors have collaborated to understand research and innovation priorities for farmers and growers across the UK.

Insights were gathered from 92 farmers and growers, representing all major agricultural sectors across a wide diversity of farming systems, at 12 semi-structured workshops. There are also insights from businesses upstream



- Farmers also raised challenges associated with adapting to new regulations, climate change and public perception.
- Agricultural research conducted by universities has limited overlap with the priorities highlighted by farmers and growers.



1.0 Background and rationale

The agricultural industry is grappling with changes in policy and trade, heightened volatility, and climate, nature and public health crises. Research and innovation are important to help understand these challenges and investing, they need to understand the industry's priorities on the ground. Most have established relationships with agri-tech, input, food processing and retail businesses, partnering with start-ups or larger businesses that are active in research. While many also work closely with farmers and growers, there is no routine strategic engagement to ensure their needs shape UK research priorities.

A diverse group of farming and research organisations have collaborated to address this gap. The aim was to understand research and innovation priorities for farmers and growers across the UK. Insights were gathered from across these organisations' networks, and other farmer and grower groups were invited to take part. Views have been collated and analysed from a range of agricultural sectors, across a wide diversity of farming systems.

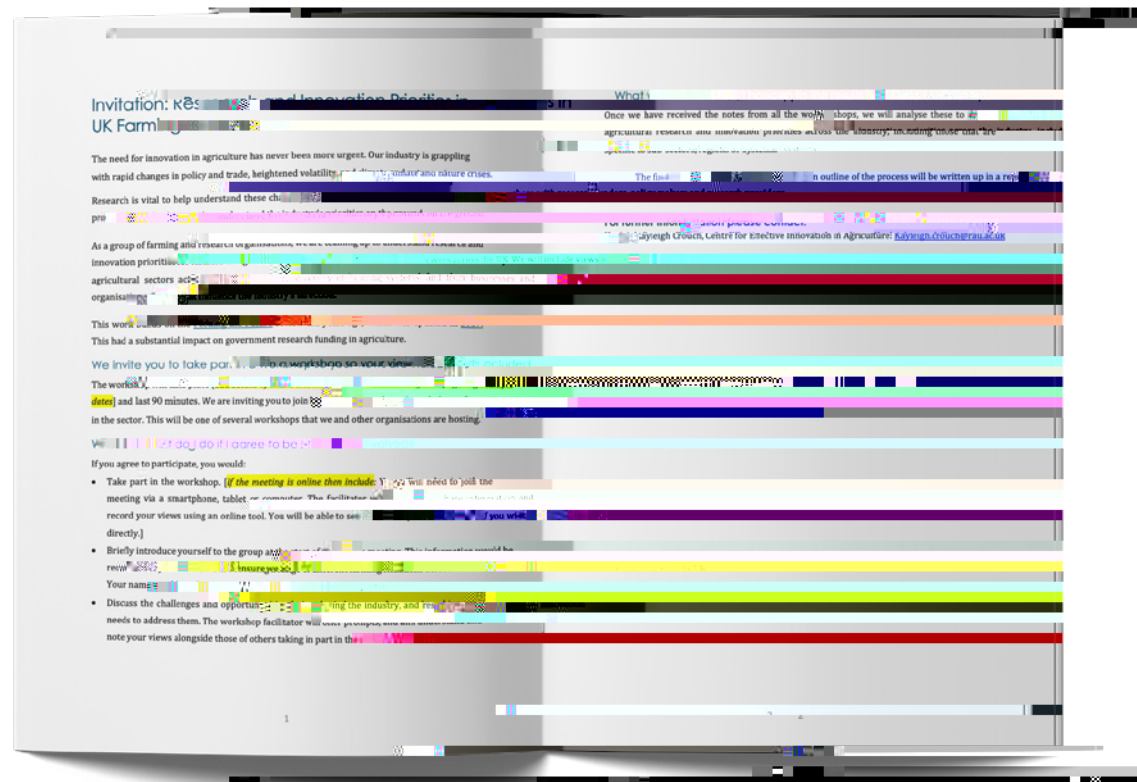
The project looked to gather input from farmers and growers as people with practical experience in their sector. That report, *Feeding the Future*,¹ was updated in 2017.² These reports had informed government research and innovation funding, principally the UK Agri-Tech Strategy

2.0 Method

2.1 Recruitment

Participating organisations were provided with invitations to circulate with their farmer and grower networks, and encouraged to

The organisations recruited participants in a range of ways. Some circulated the invitation via email to their networks and sent calendar invitations for the appropriate workshop. Others created online booking systems pre-scheduled meetings where organisations were meeting farmers and growers routinely.



2.2 Participants

12 workshops were conducted by 7 partner organisations with their own farmer and grower networks. A total of

beef, sheep and dairy	1	9	2	National Farmers' Union	Grassland, SSSI, dairy, sheep, arable, cheese production, dairy, arable, carrots, bio recycling.
Beef & Dairy	1	10	4	Innovative Farmers	Suckler herd, sheep, beef, dairy, organic beef, arable and regenerative farming, PFLA, organic dairy, agronomist, farm advisor, curriculum leader for agriculture.
Mixed Farming	5	6		Agri-Tech Centre	Arable, grass, fruit, woodland, sheep, cattle, agroforestry, market garden, mixed farming.
		9	7	Landworkers' Alliance	Market gardening, dairy, fruit & veg rare types, goat dairy and meat, organic mixed farming, growing and composting agronomy and farmers markets.
		3		Innovation for Agriculture	Wheat, AB15, AB9, beef, sheep, biogas, red deer, calf rearing, cereals, kale.
		15	2	National Farmers' Union Cymru	Livestock, grass, forage, soils.
		12	6	Agricultural Industries Council	Mixed sectors workshop.
Combinable crops & sugar	1	7	2	National Farmers' Union	Combinable crops, sugar beet, dairy, potatoes and vegetables/ combinable crops advisors.
Totals	12	92	25	7	

2.3 Workshops

A facilitation guide was circulated to host organisations. This comprised practical information on how to use the [bZcfa Uh]cbl[UH\Yf]b['d`Uhzcfa 'fA]fc 'J]g U`K cf_gdUWY 'Zc f' bbcj Uh]c bž&\$&' tZUbX `ck 'fc 'bUj][UHY 'hY 'VcUfXg' designed for these workshops. Each organisation was sent a bespoke link for their workshop. The facilitation



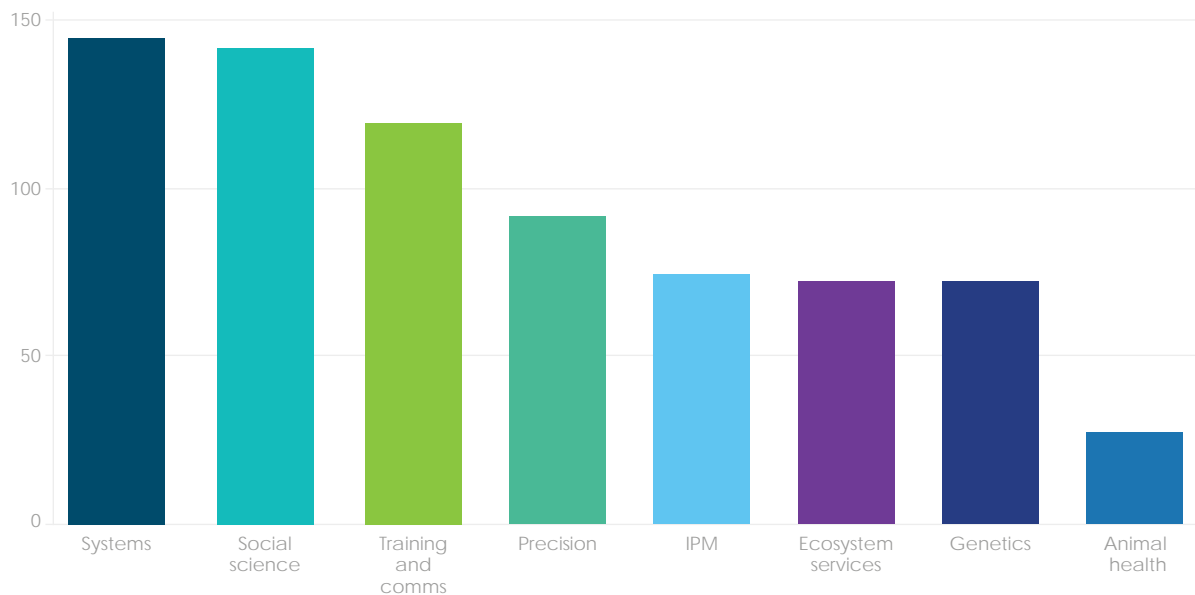
3.0



3.2 Farmer and grower priorities 10 years on

The farmer and grower research priorities were compared with the broad themes outlined in the 2013 *Feeding the Future* report, to explore if and how their priorities had evolved over the last decade. The challenges and needs relate to agricultural systems, social science, and training and communications. There was less focus on animal health

While the overarching themes remained largely consistent, the emphasis within them had evolved. Table 2 shows which issues remained in focus, which were no longer raised as priorities, and what new aspects had come to the fore 10 years on.



2013 *Feeding the Future* 32fc459 0.3 rg3,3(Animal)0ja7950 0 1.854.36 r9f-3.61rg34cching tmc2 Tm(os)TjET0.28 e12nim4clsmbhatofaini3/54 36 Tm(15)tmc2 .28 1&251 r0131



Theme	Theme description	2013	2023/24
Systems	Use systems-based approaches to better understand and manage interactions between soil, water and crop/ animal processes.	Soil health, Nutrient management and	

IPM	Develop integrated approaches to the effective management of crop weeds, pests and diseases within farming systems.	Breeding resilience and Responding to regulation	
			Disease detection, Biologicals, Plant health, and Adaptation
Ecosystem services	Develop evidence-based approaches to valuing ecosystem service delivery by land users, and incorporate these approaches into effective decision-support systems at the enterprise or grouped enterprise level.	Functional biodiversity, Digital tools, Circular economy and Optimisation strategies	
			Adaptation and Agri-business
Genetics	Apply modern genetic and breeding approaches to improve the quality, sustainability, resilience and yield-led	New breeding techniques, Breeding for climate change and Traits over breeds	
			One health
Animal health	Develop integrated approaches to the management of animal disease within farming systems.	Disease control and One health	
			Functional biodiversity, Consumers, AMR, Disease detection and Infrastructure

3.3 Comparison with the researchers' priorities

How do farmers' and growers' priorities compare with a strategic perspective from the research community?

Figure 4: Comparison of farmers' and growers' priorities with the research community's strategic perspective. The figure shows that farmers' and growers' priorities are most commonly aligned with four main AFN+ themes: Food security and trade, particularly optimising UK land use under changing climate conditions and

Farmer and grower priorities most commonly aligned with four main AFN+ themes, as shown in Figure 4, which are: Food security and trade, particularly optimising UK land use under changing climate conditions and

- Food security and trade, particularly optimising UK land use under changing climate conditions and

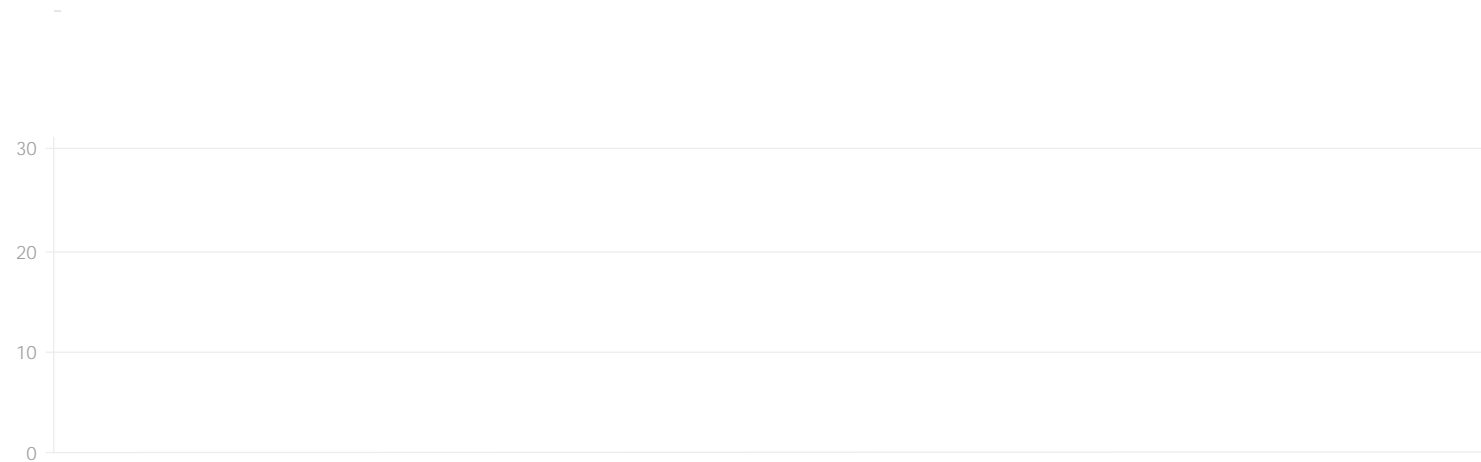


Research priorities



Similarly, farmer and grower priorities were compared with 800 current AUC PhD topics, which represents U'gUdg\c hcZ h\Y ']b h\Y g g\c ZY a Y f[]b[' fY gY U fW\ Y fg\fl] [i fY '+L" H\Y gY ' Ú h\ a c fY Wc gY ' mk]h\ 'ZUfa Y fg\U bX ' [fck Y fg\N research priorities. Farmers and growers appear to want relatively more research effort on applied soil science, agri-tech and, in particular, social science.

Figure 7: Comparison with AUC PhD research projects.





3.6 Regenerative agriculture

Given the prominent current interest in regenerative agriculture, the farmer and grower priorities were mapped and Agri-tech-E.⁹



4.0 Conclusion

This report provides an overview of farmers' and growers' evolving research and innovation needs, highlighting





Appendices

Appendix 1: Workshop flow

Opening the session (1) involved a short presentation to introduce the project, and why it is important, and introducing each participant to the group. This section also included reminding participants of their right to withdraw, anonymity, and to gain consent to participate.

Populating challenges and opportunities (2) involved discussing key challenges faced by participants as the encourage discussion and a second person was recording these directly onto the Miro board. Prompts for this stage included: *'On a day-to-day basis what are your main challenges or concerns which influence your farming/growing practices? What do you see as the big issues on the horizon? Do you think your business model or way of farming/growing will face any systematic/fundamental challenges in the foreseeable future? Are these shared challenges for your sector or specific to your business? What do you see as the biggest shared challenges?'*

Organising challenges and opportunities into an approximate timeframe and level of priority (3)

Populating research and innovation needs (4) Participants were asked to discuss challenges and opportunities: 'What research is required to help tackle these challenges? What areas of research do you see a need for more systemic changes in your business or sector? What areas of research do you see a need for more systemic changes in your business or sector? What areas of research do you see a need for more systemic changes in your business or sector?'

Organising research and innovation priorities into an approximate timeframe and level of importance (5). Participants were asked to rank their research and innovation priorities. The following prompts were provided: 'How important is this [research and innovation priority] to ensure that you can continue to farm successfully? Is this research likely going to impact your practices or sector? Does this [challenge or opportunity] need to be considered in the next 0-5, 6-10 or 11-20 years? Is this research need going to be pressing within the next 0-5 or 6-10 years or is it likely to become more of a challenge in the next 11-20 years?'

Closing the session (6) Participants were asked to provide any other contributions that were not captured in the workshop so far and these were added to the Miro board.



Appendix 2: Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify, analyse and report patterns within data. Literature has

A similar approach was therefore employed for the current workshop data sets as follows.

Context: Multiple workshops with farmers and growers from [sector] enterprises met to discuss the challenges and opportunities and research and innovation priorities for farmers and growers in UK agriculture. These workshops will contribute to research strategies and research funding priorities in future work. The following data were listed as areas which need consideration in the next [0-5, 6-10, 11-20] years.

Instruction [merged prompt]: Help me perform qualitative, inductive, thematic analysis on the provided data by each workshop, identify appropriate themes derived from within the data, in the following categories: high priority summarized themes and subthemes that are discussed across all workshops.

Please merge the data from all workshops to provide an overall summary of these themes. I would like one

Text input: Data from each workshop was clearly labelled so that GPT could identify individual workshops and bring together the cross-cutting themes from each.

Table 3: An example of the data input table

	Challenges & opportunities	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years
High Priority	Research & innovation needs	Data	Data	Data
	Challenges & opportunities	Data	Data	Data
Low Priority	Research & innovation needs	Data	Data	Data
	Challenges & opportunities	Data	Data	Data

Note: All data was input to ChatGPT in a list format with the categories shown below at the start of each section. Where the input was too long, analysis was run on a cell by cell basis, e.g. High priority challenges.

Appendix 3: Strengths and limitations

Overarching themes were developed to provide an accessible summary to research funders and providers. This therefore meant that more discrete challenges were not necessarily captured in the overall workshop output summary. Whilst this approach enabled the presentation of clear and succinct research and innovation on farm-level concerns.

Discussion and workshop outputs were often focused on immediate challenges faced on farm at the present challenges and needs are not yet perceptible to farmers, given the plethora of challenges and research needs outlined in the more immediate future. However, there was some acknowledgement within workshops that longer term research planning warrants further consideration to secure a sustainable and positive future for is warranted.

Some workshop organisers required changes to be made to the Miro Board layout to enhance usability during workshops. Those who had access to multiple screens during workshops were mostly able to navigate the board and capture the information live during the workshops. Others who were working from one screen or on a tablet required adjustments of frames to allow a full screen view of all sticky notes. This was easily adapted to meet the needs of each workshop organiser but does highlight the need to consider how best to run workshops in a more standardised way in the future.

Some organisations did not utilise the Miro board, and instead provided comprehensive summaries in a summary by other workshops, they could not be clearly linked to the time frames and priority levels, which this work aimed to provide. A more standardised approach and engagement from organisations with the Miro board/or other attributed to farmer and grower challenges and research priorities.



Appendix 4: Feedback from organisations convening workshops

Some workshop facilitators noted that despite using clear and accessible language, it was still challenging to identify relevant information from participants. Ordering participant thoughts, within the workshop discussion, always be clearly attributed to discussion points. As such, further consideration of how to capture individual lived experiences, challenges and priorities may be warranted.

Connecting what participants understood to be the rationale of this work with the immediate issues faced on



Authors and acknowledgements

Authors

Kayleigh Crouch, Tom MacMillan and Kate Pressland
Centre for Effective Innovation in Agriculture, Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, GL7 6JS

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following people and organisations for their invaluable help, without which this work would have not been possible. Their participation implies no endorsement of this report.

Members of the project commissioning group

<Y`Yb: YffjYfFB: I E`UbX`7 U`i a`A i ffUmifl`bcj UHY`I ?Zl ?F 4Z`Zcfh`Yf`f`b`h`U`ja dYH`g`UbX`cb[c]b[`g` ddc`fz`d`i`g`5b[Y`U`
?Ufd`ff`ch`Ua`g`Y`UX`FY`g`U`f`W`Lz`7` \f`g;` cc`XY`f`Ua` `f5[f]W` `hi` fy` UbX`<c`f]W` `hi` fy` 8Yj`Y`c`da` Ybh6c`UfX`Lz`8Uj`]X`
A`]M`Y` `fB: I` Gz`9X`6Uf`_Y`f`f5[f]W` `hi` fU` `X`i` g`f]Y`g`7` cbZY`XY`f`U`h`c`b`Lz`<Y`Yb`Gk`YY`b`Y`mf`l`bcj` UHY`I` ?Zl` ?F` 4Z`>Ua` YgD\`]]dg`
f66GF`7` Lz`?`UHY` `Gh` `fGc`]`5`gg`W`U`h`c`b`Lz`?`U`f]`b`U` <U`m`Y`f`f`h`Y`b` `l`bcj` UHY`I` ?Zl` ?F` 4Z`@` Wm: c`g`Y`f`f`BY`Z`U`Lz`A` U`f]`b` @`b`Y`g`f`B`U`h` fy`
: f]Y`b`X`mi: Ufa`]b[`BY`k` c`f`_Lz`A` Y[`Ub`K` \U`f`m`f`l`@95: Lz`DY`bb`m`A`]X`X`Y`h`c`b` `fB: I` Gz`F`c`V`Y`f`h`G`Y`U`g`V`m`f5[f]W` `hi` fU` `X`i` g`f]Y`g`
7` cbZY`XY`f`U`h`c`b`Lz`GU` `6i` f[Y`gg`f`BY`Z`U`Lz`GU`f`U` \`9j` Y`f`Y`X` `f`BY`Z`U`Lz`G`a` c`b`H`Y`k` Y` `f`k`U`f`d`Y`f`5`X`U`a` g`l` b`j` Y`f`g`l`m`Lz`H`Y`gg`<c`k` Y`
f`H`Y` `l`g`h`i` h`Y` `Z`c`f`5[f]W` `hi` fy` UbX`<c`f]W` `hi` fy`L`

Workshop hosts

8UZhXX'>UffYhfB: I '7 ma fi lZ8YVcfU\`7 fcggUb`fHbcj Uhjc b`Zcf5 [f]W`hi fy lZ9X`6Uf_Yff5 [f]W`hi fU`'Xxi gff]Yg`
 7 cbZYXYfUhc bLZ<Y`Yb': Yff]YffB: I lZ<c`mG\YUfa Ub`fHbcj Uhjc b`Zcf5 [f]W`hi fy lZ?UH`Gh`fGc`]'5ggc W]Uhc bLZ`
 @Ji fU`DU`Wmbg_]fHbcj Uhjc b`Zcf5 [f]W`hi fy lZA`UXYY]bY`Gk`YYhfB: I lZFYVYWWU`Gk`]bb`fHbcj Uh]`Y` : Ufa`YfgLZ`
 FYVYWWU`@Ji [\hcb`f@UbXk`cf_YfgN5`]UbWY lZFi`h`6Ugck`f5 [f]H`Y`W`7`YbhfY lZHUfU`K`][\hf@UbXk`cf_YfgN`
 5`]UbWY lZJ`]W_mFcV]bgb`f5 [f]W`hi fy`'Xxi gff]Yg`7 cbZYXYfUhc bLZ`K`YbXm<Yk`]hcb`f5 [f]H`Y`W`7`YbhfY`E"

Farmers

Last but not least, all the participating farmers for providing helpful insights and frank discussion about their farm businesses. Thank you to all the farmers and growers who gave up their time to participate in the workshops and for providing helpful discussion and comments.

Funding

H`Y`I`?`ZUfa`YfUbX`[`fck`YffYg`UfW`d`f`f]h`Yg`d`fc`Y`W`h`k`UgZ`b`X`Y`X`V`m`X`b`c`j`U`H`Y`I`?`f`l`?`F`L`U`b`X`h`Y`9`]`h`U`V`Y`h`
 Creak Charitable Trust.



References



9:7 ccdYfz>"GfcW_XU'Yz9"UbX'7 'Uf_Yz6"f&\$\$(L'7 fcd'UbX'Gc]'GWYbW'FYgyUFM'Df]cfl]Yg'UbX'?bck'YX[Y'; Udg' k]h'U'FY[YbYfU]h]Y'5[f]W'hi'fY':cW'gf]b'XfUZt

10:NUb[ž<"K i ž7 "'L]Yž>"@i žM'7 Už>"UbX'7 Uffc`ž>"A "'f&\$&' L"'FYXYÚb['ei U']rU]h]Y'UbU'm]g]b' h'Y'5=YfU.'l h]g]b[' 7\Uh' DHZc'fYZ'MYbh'hYa Uh]WU'ubU'm]g]UfL]j' d'fYd'f]bhUfL]j' .&' \$- "%\$++%

11:NUa ÚFYgW'!DYfY]fUž>"8"K Y]ž<"L]Ucž5"; i ž?"'i b[ž; "'@/YžA "'<Uf]ra' Ubbž6"UbX'M]b[žE "'f&\$&' L"'<YfX]b[' AI Cats: Lessons from Designing a Chatbot by Prompting GPT-3. In Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Designing b]h'fUW]h]Y'Gm]hYa'g'7'cbZYfYbW'fD]h]g]V'i'f[\žD5žl'G5L'fB'G'N&'L"'5gg'W]U]h]c'b'žc'f'7'ca'di'h]b['A'UW]bYfnž'BYk' M'f_ž' NY, USA, 2206–2220. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3563657.3596138>

12:DYf_]b]gžA "'UbX'FcYž>"f&\$&'L"'5WUXYa]Wdi'V]g]Yf[i]XY]bYg'cb'5=i'gU[Y.'5'7\Uh' DHg' ddc'f]YX'h'Ya Uh]W analysis. F1000Research. 12, p.1398

UK farmer & grower research priorities

Detailed report

7 fci Wž?"žA UWA J`UbžH7 "žDfY ggUbxž?"f&\$\$(E"i ? ŽJfa Yf
and grower research priorities. August 2024.