



**Charities Working Together to Support UK Food and Farming**

**ANNUAL REPORT, OCTOBER 2018**

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**Membership**

The membership of the AFCP has grown in 2018 – largely due to greater awareness and understanding of its role through direct contact and the organisation of regional meetings. Current membership has grown from 22 to 27 charities and partners this year, plus en bloc membership of 39 LANDEX colleges and universities, which brings the total number of AFCP members to 66.

Changes to the website to showcase our ‘paying members’ more clearly is helping to support our membership drive. In addition, the introduction of a Newsletter in 2018 is helping to more regularly raise the profile of AFCP members and the causes requiring support. The hosts of the AFCP regional meetings have been considerable contributors in helping to inform charities and supporting bodies about our role and remit.

**AFCP/AHDB PhD research**

Three new research projects funded jointly by AFCP charities and the AHDB are now in motion. This is a great example of the industry working together to fund new research and strengthen the impact of charity investments.

- Soils (CADRE)                      5 -working together in East Anglia with the AHDB on improving soil health at the University of Cambridge (commenced Jan 2018). The PhD research includes:
- Using long-term rotation projects based near Ipswich, Saxmundham and Norwich
  - Interacting with a farmer-led initiative focussing on the impact of rotational practices impacting on soil biology.

- Rotational and soil management regimes that impact on symbiotic interaction between mycorrhizal fungi and wheat roots will be identified, and will in part be molecularly characterised

#### Dairy/Beef

4-charities working together in the South West alongside the AHDB on antibiotics at the University of Nottingham (commenced October 2018)

The research aims to design and evaluate a calf health programme to optimise health and welfare, and minimize use of antibiotics by:

- Identifying management practices that maximise calf health on UK dairy farms
- Evaluating the impact of a dairy-bred calf health programme in a controlled environment
- Investigating the role of non-antibiotic based treatment options for dairy-bred young stock
- Delivering of a comprehensive 'Healthy Calf Programme'

#### Arable Crops

Planned for 2019

### Regional Meetings

The replacement of the 2018 Annual Conference with regional meetings has been successful in raising greater awareness of the role of the AFCP, bringing charities together and building new collaborations and support for research and other projects.

- **East Anglian meeting** held at the Farmers Club Bury St Edmunds on 1<sup>st</sup> December
  - 20 attendees including representatives from 6 charities, Easton and Otley College and student research
  - discussions focussed on the types of projects being funded by charities, how those projects are selected and annual charitable spend
  - scope to 'pitch' new projects requiring charitable investment was welcomed as an additional element for the next regional meeting
- **Midlands Meeting** held at Harper Adams University on 12 July, 2018
  - 10 attendees including representatives from 5 charities, University of Harper Adams and AHDB with brief presentations from all on key objectives, funding issues and potential collaboration
  - HighGround and the British Science Museum were 'pitched' to the charities as two major nationally important initiatives requiring agrifood charitable support.

- **South-West meeting** held at the Bath and West Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018
  - 16 attendees including representatives from 5 charities.
  - The main focus was an update and discussion about the AFCP/AHDB research project on calf health and antibiotic use.
  - An AFCP/AHDB/Bicton College press release was circulated after the meeting
- **East of England** meeting planned for March 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 at NIAB  
Theme will be 'soils' and the programme will include the AFCP/AHDB CADRE research project as well as wider discussion on new research and projects that could be funded by charities.

### **AFCP market research**

A proposal to conduct research in order to better understand the spend, remit and ambitions of charity organisations underpinning the AFCP (typically donating less than £100,000 a year) was compiled with support from England Marketing. Despite various attempts, including the NFU Mutual, we were unable to attract the investment needed for England Marketing to take on this work. England Marketing are attempting to find other investment options – including sponsorship from banks and the AFCP worked with Reading University to find an alternative arrangement (see Reading University below).

This market research is important for the AFCP. It will help to shed light on where investments are being made by the agrifood charity sector and what impacts they are making. The charitable sector is not an insignificant slice of the investment pie underpinning science and skills for UK agriculture – but a deeper understanding of it would help to make their involvement more influential, authoritative and compelling to the sector.

### **New partnerships**

We have had an invitation to hold a meeting at the East of England Showground in autumn 2019. The programme has yet to be discussed.

There is also the possibility of a joint meeting with the British Grassland Society in 2019/20, working with the Stapleton Trust, following the successful regional meeting in the Midlands.

### **Newsletters**

Three newsletters have been sent out to the 130-strong AFCP mailing list. Each is also available to view on the website and feedback on these more regular updates and news about different projects requiring charitable support has been positive. Each Newsletter is planned to follow a board meeting so the fourth will go out at the end of November.

## GDPR

The fall-out from introducing the GDPR guidelines to the AFCP mailing list was very low – less than 10 opting out of future communications. These are individuals who have ‘retired’ from their charitable roles and interests.

## Charitable Causes

- **The HighGround Rural Weeks** initiative being run at Bicton College has been championed by the AFCP at several events, meetings and conferences. Military leavers offer a vast amount of untapped talent, skills and expertise that is so desperately needed by UK agriculture in order to drive greater professionalism and productivity. With Brexit seemingly around the corner, skilled labour, new science and technology is urgently needed to support UK agriculture and its competitiveness in Europe and the world.

AFCP support included:

- Agreement to use a £4k Agriskills fund to support training and development in the pig sector specifically for targeted training and development (ideally from candidates emerging from the Rural Weeks programme).
  - Pig information and flyer created for the Rural Weeks programme by the AFCP and NPA/AHDB
  - Presentations at the Ladies in Agriculture/AFCP regional meetings
  - Conversations with individuals coming from the Rural Weeks programme, who require support and contacts with key companies and individuals in order to gain work experience or greater understanding of what is on offer
  - Attendance at the Bicton College reception for HighGround in October 2017
  - Introduction to key stakeholders in agriculture such as AHDB, Farmcare and Velcourt
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- **Reading University**: The chairman and CEO spent a day at Reading University to get an insight on new developments at the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. Discussions included:
    - **A Centre for the Adoption of Precision Agriculture Technologies.** Recognizing the barriers to farmers adopting more precise approaches and technologies in both developed and developing countries, the Centre and chair plays to Reading’s multi-disciplinary strengths and international expertise in both social and natural sciences as well as our research on appropriate precise technologies for crop and livestock systems.

The Centre and chair require external funding which the AFCP has supported through its Newsletter and direct conversations with relevant charities.

In April it was announced that Reading University, alongside the universities of Cambridge, Lincoln, East Anglia and Hertfordshire as well as John Innes, Rothamsted and NIAB have been awarded £4.78m from the Ceres Agritech Knowledge Exchange Partnership.

- **The library of MERL.** This is one of the last significant, and publically accessible collections on agricultural history in existence in the UK. The library is seeking £15,000 to buy the Russell Collection books on sale from Rothamsted Research. These alongside, the sale and dispersal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England library in 2014 and the disappearance of other agricultural collections in recent years showcase the important role that MERL has in maintaining our agricultural heritage. A call for support from AFCP charities was made in our Newsletter alongside direct conversation with charities.
- **Undergraduate 6-week market research.** Following failed attempts to get a sponsor to support research on AFCP charities (see above), a discussion to attract an undergraduate to take on a Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme project was followed up. This would be for an undergraduate student in year 2 or 3 with work conducted during the summer holiday. A formal joint proposal, supported by AFCP as monitor and England Marketing as advisor, was made but unfortunately no student came forward to take it on.
- **The British Science Museum** have a £3m shortfall to create a new [Feeding Tomorrow](#) exhibition that showcases modern technologies behind food and farming. The science museum has the largest footfall of school children of any museum in the country and represents a golden opportunity to inspire and inform youngsters about UK food and farming. Discussions are now taking place between an AFCP charity and the museum as a result of conversations at the Midlands regional meeting.

### **CEO conference attendance/meetings**

Certain events provide a unique opportunity to raise awareness about the AFCP role and key projects requiring funding, including:

- LEAF/Bayer Awards presentation
  - This was a great opportunity to meet new charities linked to rural education and environment, who are not currently AFCP members. Many are keen to be more closely aligned to the 'centre' of UK food and farming and potential new AFCP members.
- The Oxford Farming Conference
  - This networking event provided a useful opportunity to raise the profile of AFCP and its remit with key industry stakeholders

- Ladies in Agriculture
  - A brief presentation about the AFCP and the High Ground Rural Weeks project was given to the assembled ladies from the agrifood sector. There were 80 individuals spanning a range of roles and businesses including Gs and Elizabeth Buchanan (DEFRA executive board) and the secretary of state.

### **Student Forum**

The biennial Student Forum which brings together students and the charities funding their research will be held on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2019, and kindly hosted by Reading University. Attendance is expected to total 50-60 people, including students, some supervisors, charity trustees and directors and universities.