Media Release

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GHGAP report shows world leaders how English agriculture can reduce emissions

The Greenhouse Gas Action Plan's progress report published today demonstrates the contribution that can be made by agriculture in England towards meeting the UK's and the world's challenging climate goals.

This report comes just weeks before the high-level United Nations signing ceremony for the historic Paris Climate Agreement reached in December, and highlights the actions taken by the agricultural industry which have had a positive effect on production efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions.

Increased professionalism across the industry, the launch of the Feed Adviser Register, the addition of new GHG mitigation training into the Fertiliser Advisers Certification and Training Scheme (FACTS), farmers signing up to DairyPro and the Pig Industry Professional register are all paying dividends and have been delivered despite the challenging economic climate and the impacts of significant weather events in recent years.

Richard Laverick, Chief Technical Officer from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) said: "The work of AHDB focuses on supporting farmers and the supply chains across all sectors, to improve productivity and deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We aim to make our industry more competitive and sustainable through factual, evidence-based information and activity".

More soil sampling from grasslands and the adoption of renewables also show the large range of activities undertaken by farmers to help deliver climate change mitigation whilst being good for the farm business.

Guy Smith, Vice President of the NFU said: "Farmers are committed to improving their businesses whether it's fine tuning nutrient management on arable farms, so reducing nitrous oxide emissions, or tackling infections on livestock units, so decreasing methane emissions."

Mr Smith added "But if farming is to fulfil its future potential, the food chain must support profitable farming, backed by the government providing the right regulatory framework and fiscal incentives. The irony is that with exciting current developments in technology such as robotics, GPS guidance, remote sensing and camera recognition, farmers increasingly have the ability to farm more precisely and thus reduce their GHG footprint, but without a profit margin the necessary investment cannot be made."

The GHGAP is also looking towards the future. It has identified some significant next steps to keep it on track to meeting its 2020 target and beyond. This will require the application of new science and incentives to drive the uptake of key practices and technologies and a continuation of the collaborative approach already established.

Head of Environment Policy at the Agriculture Industries Confederation (AIC), Jane Salter said: "The support and openness of the GHG Research Platform has been exemplary and we look forward to incorporating its research into the next phase of our work. We have also benefited from the expertise within Defra statistics, and the wealth of survey data has been the bedrock on which we've built our report. It is critically important that this collaborative approach continues."

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Notes to editor:

. The Greenhouse Gas Action Plan was launched by a coalition of industry partners in 2011 as the principal mechanism for delivering the farming industry's commitment to a reduction in annual emissions from agriculture in England of three million tonnes CO2-equivalent (Mt CO_2e) by 2020 without compromising domestic production. The organisations involved in the GHGAP are ADAS, AEA, AHDB, AIC, CLA, LEAF, NFU, NIAB-TAG, ORC.

. The six priority areas on which the GHGAP has focused are: management skills and advice; crop nutrient management (including crop health); soil and land management; livestock nutrition; livestock health, fertility and genetics; and energy efficiency and renewables.

. A copy of the 2016 progress report is available at http://www.cfeonline.org.uk/home/about-us/greenhouse-gas-action-plan/

. World leaders have been invited to a signing ceremony at UN Headquarters in New York on 22 April for the historic climate agreement that was reached in Paris in December last year