

# Status of agricultural knowledge

## Development and advice



**An increase in the efficiency and productivity of UK agriculture is vital as the nation addresses the challenges of trading in world markets post-Brexit and improving the country's self-sufficiency.**

Effectively applying knowledge, from university and state sectors, to practical UK agriculture is the key to:

- Efficient use of resources
- Increased productivity
- Enhanced environmental benefit
- Sustainable land use.

**As UK agriculture prepares to play its part in a post-Brexit world, it is necessary to unlock the industry's full potential.**

Established networks of professional advisers exist to deliver knowledge capable of:

- Raising productivity on-farm
- Making efficient use of inputs
- Delivering policy objectives to protect and enhance the environment.

However, a more joined-up approach is needed in how knowledge is generated and disseminated from basic through applied research to developmental work and practical advice.

A holistic strategy is essential to optimise land use, food production and environmental enhancement.

# 2013 – the trusted nature of advisers in farm management

In 2013 AIC published its Value of Advice project which developed the concept of a Ring of Confidence.

A key finding was that 'Farmers value trusted, credible, relationships with professional advisers.' In effect a Ring of Confidence exists (see Fig 1) where a range of advisers and consultants form part of the management team on-farm.

Understanding this model is critical to effective delivery of both policy objectives for UK agriculture and the environment, but also for the commercial need for a viable and sustainable farming industry.

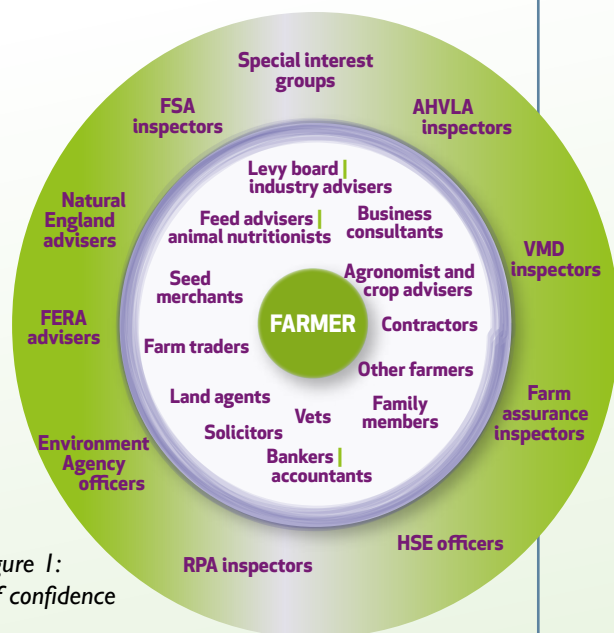


Figure 1:  
The farmer's ring of confidence

# 2017 – a fresh look at the status of agri-knowledge

In 2017, an exercise – using qualitative and quantitative research – was undertaken with AIC Members. The aim was to update the Value of Advice Report and identify current investment in research and development. In addition, it reviewed how R&D was directed, both for in-house projects and those undertaken in broader collaboration. The investment of time and money in staff training was also explored as well as the most critical issue of how the knowledge, once generated, is transferred onto farms and put into practice.

The key findings are shown opposite.

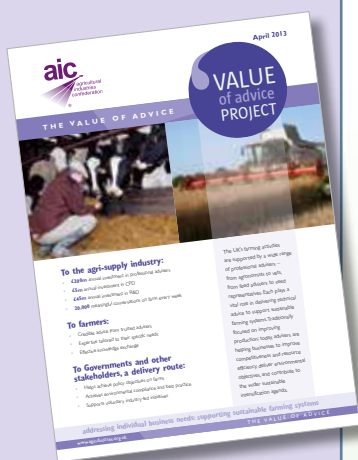
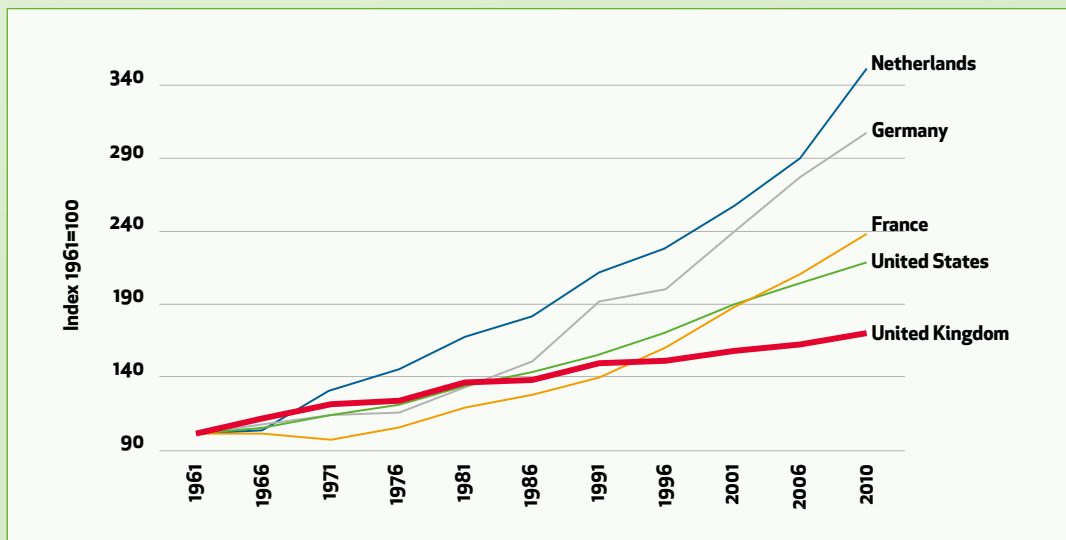
## The need for an improved knowledge chain

What also emerged is the need for a much more joined up approach to how knowledge is developed and then transferred to farm and put to use.

The 'continuum of agri-knowledge' (right) models how knowledge should develop from fundamental beginnings to application of tailored advice on farm. In truth, too often there is lack of strategic focus in direction and weak links in the knowledge chain.

## The need for improved efficiency

Over the past decade the rate of improvement in agricultural productivity has seen the UK fall behind other nations. This makes a fresh approach to the generation and application of agri-knowledge vital.



# Continuum of agri-knowledge

## **BASIC** Research

**Fundamental research**  
- Research Councils and Universities

**Basic research**  
- BBSRC/ global companies, etc

## **APPLIED** Research

**Applied research  
and development**  
- AHDB funded, etc

## **DEVELOPMENT**

**Development trials**  
- AIC Members and others

## **DEMONSTRATIONS**

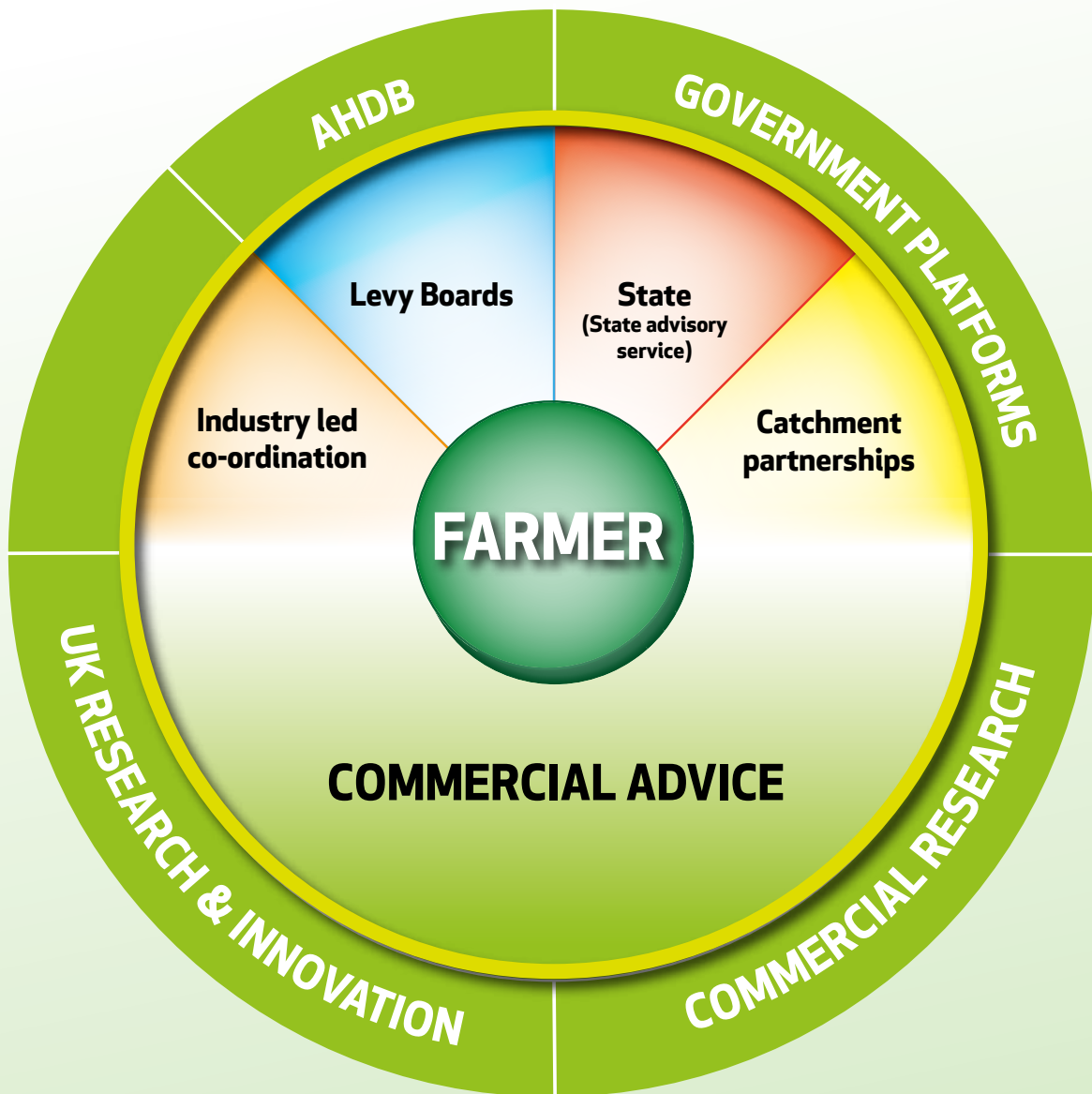
**Broad knowledge dispersal**  
- demonstrations/media articles

## **KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**

**Detailed knowledge application**  
- agronomists, feed advisers, etc

**FULLY CONNECTING AT EVERY STAGE WILL  
UNLOCK UK FARMING POTENTIAL**

# The whole is greater than the sum of its parts



## Looking ahead

AIC research has shown how the agri-supply industry invests heavily in near market research (the development aspect of R&D) and maintaining large numbers of highly-proficient advisers through extensive continuing professional development.

However, it has also highlighted some lack of connection between the basic/ applied end of the continuum of knowledge and its subsequent development and practical application.

Only by becoming increasingly 'joined up' can the scientific and advisory communities deliver the best know-how to UK agriculture.

**Unlocking the full potential of the UK's scientific excellence is the key to creating a modern, commercial, sustainable agricultural industry to provide food security and an enhanced environment.**

# Putting agricultural knowledge to work for a sustainable food and farming industry

Each year, the agricultural industry invests heavily in generating knowledge, transferring skills and delivering practical advice tailored to the needs of individual farm businesses.



**£40  
MILLION**

spent across the industry turning research findings into added value technical solutions

**44,000**  
conversations on UK farms  
EVERY week

**aic**  
agricultural  
industries  
confederation

**£50  
MILLION**

invested in research and development  
by AIC Members

**£9  
MILLION**

maintaining professional qualifications to  
keep all the industry's advisers up-to-date

**5,000+**

Advisers on professional registers who engage  
day-in, day-out with UK farmers

**89% of Britain's**

farmed area, is managed with support of third party advice

**A WEALTH OF SUPPORT FOR MODERN, SUSTAINABLE, COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE**

# Over 5,000 professional advisers delivering production expertise...



**A professional register of qualified advisers in crop protection – BASIS – was established in 1990. Recognition of plant nutrition advice by FACTS Qualified Advisers, now part of the BASIS Professional Register, followed. Today, in total there are some 3,900 experts working commercially in agronomy.**

In 2013, a register was launched by AIC for those advising on livestock nutrition. By 2017, there are some 1,100 full members of the Feed Adviser Register – FAR.

With constantly updated expertise, this cohort of accredited advisers cover a wide range of crop and livestock input advice to help farmers achieve tailored solutions to optimising inputs and output.

### ... and more besides

Increasingly, accredited advisers deliver expertise to farms that relates to more holistic and policy-driven objectives. For instance, a significant focus within the FAR training modules is the reduction of ammonia and greenhouse gas emissions from livestock.

BASIS and FACTS advisers continue to develop their competence in environment protection and biodiversity.

Today, the schemes are collaborating to deliver holistic solutions on matters such as whole farm nutrition planning – especially important to livestock and mixed farms.



### For copies of the full report

#### ***Developing agricultural knowledge and advice***

can be downloaded from the AIC website.

Hard copies are available on request to [enquiries@agindustries.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@agindustries.org.uk)



### **Agricultural Industries Confederation Ltd**

Confederation House, East of England Showground, Peterborough PE2 6XE  
T: 01733 385230 F: 01733 385270 W: [www.agindustries.org.uk](http://www.agindustries.org.uk)