

VALUE of advice PROJECT

THE VALUE OF ADVICE



To the agri-supply industry:

- **£200m** annual investment in professional advisers
- **£5m** annual investment in CPD
- **£45m** annual investment in R&D
- **20,000** meaningful conversations on farm every week

To farmers:

- Credible advice from trusted advisers
- Expertise tailored to their specific needs
- Effective knowledge exchange

To Governments and other stakeholders, a delivery route:

- Helps achieve policy objectives on farms
- Achieves environmental compliance and best practice
- Supports voluntary industry-led initiatives

The UK's farming activities are supported by a wide range of professional advisers – from agronomists to vets, from feed advisers to seed representatives. Each plays a vital role in delivering technical advice to support sustainable farming systems. Traditionally focused on improving production; today, advisers are helping businesses to improve competitiveness and resource efficiency, deliver environmental objectives, and contribute to the wider sustainable intensification agenda.

addressing individual business needs: supporting sustainable farming systems

Each working day across the UK's farms there are discussions between 'experts' and farmers that essentially tailor knowledge to the specific needs of that farm.

That is the essence of advice. Whether it is soil type or the latest weather, a certain breed of cow or a winter wheat variety the wealth of agricultural science, technology and know-how can be brought to bear.

However, advice is so ingrained in the structure of farming in the UK, its extent or value goes unrecognised.

Therefore, in 2012 the Board of the Agricultural Industries Confederation commissioned the **Value of Advice Project**. The remit was to explore and evaluate the advice that takes place within the agricultural sector. This document summarises the key findings. The full report can be obtained from the AIC website – www.agindustries.org.uk

Farmers value trusted, credible relationships with professional advisers – they have a 'Ring of Confidence'

Farmers have an inner ring of advisers who are highly influential. These advisers are considered effectively as part of the management team offering trusted, credible advice. The 'trusted circle' includes vets, agronomists/crop advisers, accountants, feed advisers, representatives and animal nutritionists, seed representatives, grain traders, and land agents. Professional advisers focus on improving farm business performance and farmers recognise the value of this support by paying for this service either directly, or indirectly in goods and services purchased.

Beyond the inner ring is another group of advisers who sit outside the management team. These advisers are largely focused on policy or legislative developments

in isolation. They are generally less influential on the business decisions made by a farmer as they are perceived as providing advice that could be restrictive or add cost to a farmer's business.





£200 million annual investment in professional advisers

The UK food chain stretches from farm inputs through farming and processing to food retail and catering.

AIC represents companies delivering some £6.5 billion of farm inputs (including fertilisers, crop protection products, seeds and feed).

AIC Members' service the farmers they supply through a significant labour force of professional advisers and representatives who spend the majority of their working week engaged directly with farmers. The annual employment cost of this extensive army of advisers is estimated at £200m.



At least £45 million invested in R&D every year...

AIC Members play a key role in knowledge exchange and delivering innovation on farms across the UK.

However, they do far more than act as a conduit for information from others. They invest in their own near-market development research to explore the innovative potential from research conducted in the public sector.

The challenge for AIC members is to marry the wider R&D and regulatory drivers with the delivery of on-farm economic improvements.

It is estimated that the annual cost of this research, amongst AIC Members is at least £45million.

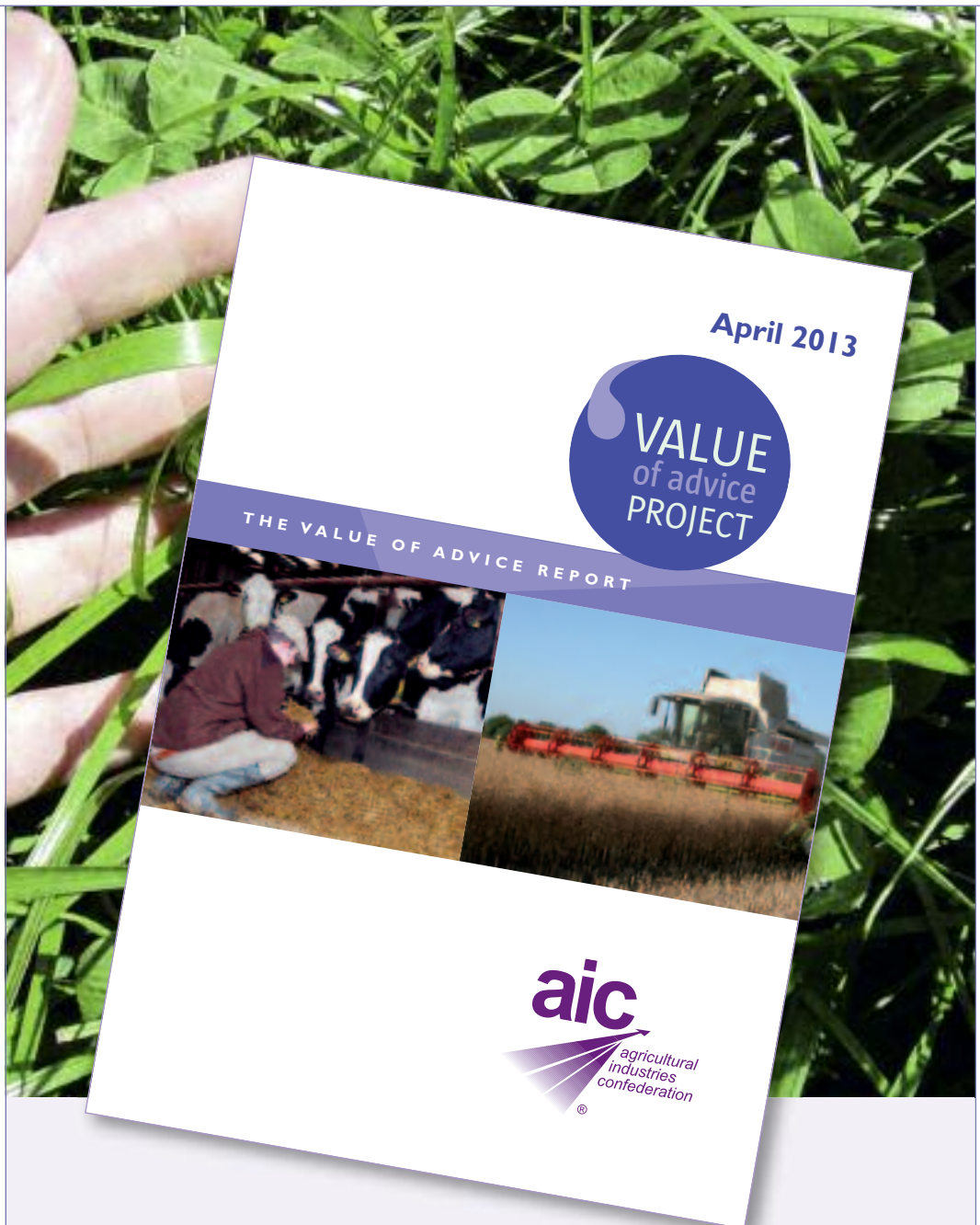
This is invested in a vast array of work including field and animal feeding trials, laboratory studies and farm pilot studies. Critically, because AIC Members operate research alongside advisory services they have a vital role in translating R&D from science – in ways that farmers understand. This encourages improved uptake of new technology and practices on farms.

Annual investment of £5m in Continuing Professional Development

AIC Members are committed to maintaining and improving the quality of advice delivered to farmers which is achieved by accredited schemes, such as BASIS, FACTS and Feed Adviser Register (available in May 2013). On-going training, through CPD schemes and in-house courses, for professional advisers equips them to effectively transfer

up-to-date knowledge and policy developments to farmers. It also demonstrates that the industry is able to balance production and environmental goals, especially when addressing challenges around soil and water quality, climate change and GHG emissions.





Acknowledgements

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Professional advisers – play a vital role in knowledge exchange and delivering innovation on farms.

For full details of the AIC Value of Advice report. www.agindustries.org.uk

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addressing individual business needs: supporting sustainable farming systems