

JOURNAL

Winter 2023 | Working in support of modern, sustainable, commercial agriculture



aic 20
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

**Autumn marks
AIC's 20th anniversary**

Supporting modern,
sustainable, commercial
agriculture is as relevant
today as it was 20 years ago



An update from AIC Chief Executive Robert Sheasby

This autumn marks 20 years of AIC. The foresight of those business leaders in 2003 to create AIC has more than stood the test of time.

The Mission to work in support of modern, sustainable, commercial agriculture is as relevant today as it was then. That coupled with our three pillars of work under Competitiveness, Environment, and Productivity to deliver a wholly sustainable agri-supply sector in the UK remains core to the focus of our work.

A recent survey of Members found that AIC now represents more than £17 billion of product at the farmgate – this updated figure underscores the value of our industry to the food and drink sector of the UK economy.

The freshly launched report by Anglia Ruskin University which identifies the need for an independent UK Food Security Committee is a landmark piece of work. It shows the leadership of AIC’s Board in commissioning this independent report to mark our 20th anniversary. For more information, and to read the report in full please visit www.agindustries.org.uk/powering-productivity-report or scan the QR code.



Our job is to make this message heard now and over the coming years at appropriate opportunities, not least of which will be a General Election in 2024.



Robert Sheasby,
Chief Executive, AIC

Latest political engagement

In September AIC held a 20th Anniversary Reception in the House of Commons which saw representatives from all major political parties, Peers, and civil servants attend. Farming Minister Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP gave a short speech to guests, which also included embassy representatives from around the world and farming and trade bodies.

Recent months have also seen a series of positive meetings with politicians and stakeholders, including the Earl of Minto, Minister in the Department for Business and Trade, to discuss regulatory burdens and red tape reviews across all parts of Whitehall.

Constructive meetings have also been held in Brussels with officials at the UK Mission to the EU, as well as European agri-supply trade associations Coceral, Fefac, Fertilizers Europe and Euroseeds.

AIC attended the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Scottish National Party Conferences throughout October which are likely to be the last before a General Election, which is expected to be held no later than the end of 2024.



Ed Barker,
Head of Policy and External Affairs



Left to right: Ed Barker, Earl of Minto
and Robert Sheasby

Climate Change Agreement (CCA) counter-proposal latest

Officials at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) have confirmed that they will recommend to the Secretary of State that AIC's CCA counter-proposal target of 2.582% is accepted.

AIC has worked closely with Members and sustainability consultants SLR Consultancy to provide evidence for the counter-proposal target for the scheme Target Period (TP) 6, which runs from 1 January – 31 December 2024.



Vicky Robinson,
Head of Sustainability

Scottish Ag Bill progress

The Scottish Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill has now been laid before the Scottish Parliament. AIC Scotland continues to hold constructive talks with MSPs, ministers, and officials to ensure that this future support legislation works for the entire supply chain in Scotland.

Meetings have been held with key rural representatives from across the political spectrum, briefing parliamentarians on a range of issues including precision breeding, the agri-supply industry's economic importance, and Members' value in providing advice, developing innovative products, and helping to reduce emissions.



Ian Muirhead with
Mairi Gougeon



Ian Muirhead,
AIC Scotland Policy Manager

Welsh ag policy developments

Constructive meetings have been held with the business consultancy Menter a Busnes, the Welsh Government's tendered administration provider to facilitate the Farming Connect programme. In a positive step, Welsh Government has requested that AIC Cymru provides a position paper on the agri-supply industry's resource.

AIC Cymru maintains its communication to Welsh Government that the agri-supply chain industry in Wales can be instrumental in providing advice, innovation, expertise, and verification of outcomes of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).

AIC Cymru development

Four meetings have been conducted this year with the aim of building momentum and the visibility of AIC Cymru.

AIC Cymru's final meeting of 2023 took place on 20 October. During the meeting, committee members bid a fond farewell to Eric Thomas who will be retiring early next year, and thanked him for his contribution and guidance not only to AIC Cymru, but also to the wider AIC and particularly the feed committee where Eric has been an active participant.

The committee were asked to consider prospective replacements for Eric, with an emphasis on youth future leaders, representation of North Wales, and from different sectors of our industry. The aim is to have a replacement in place by our next meeting on 24 January 2024.



Left to right: AIC Cymru Chair Gareth Davies,
Eric Thomas and Michael Muncey



Michael Muncey,
AIC Cymru Policy Manager

aic 20
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY
2023 DINNER &
CONFERENCE



AIC Conference: Strong industry support for AIC commissioned report demonstrates consensus on need for better food security

“We live in a time of many challenges, but also considerable opportunity.” These were the words of AIC Chair Chris Guest, as he addressed a packed AIC Conference; fittingly, the best attended ever to mark its 20th anniversary.

His words set the scene for the overarching theme of the Conference “Working with Natural Capital within the Agri-Food Supply Chain” and for discussions on AIC’s freshly published report which looks at the challenges and opportunities around food production in the UK.



Policies supporting food security should be encouraged



“The last two years have clearly shown that UK food security is more vulnerable than we think. From salad availability to labour shortages, global supply chains have been stretched to, or just beyond, breaking point at times. The responsibility of a country is to keep people safe and keep them fed. For the first time in more than a generation we feel less certain than before. This is why policies that support food security should be encouraged.”

Robert Sheasby
AIC Chief Executive



Uncertainty affecting ag investment and planning



In a poll of Conference delegates, 36% mildly disagreed that the economic outlook for agriculture over the next 12 months is positive. Adam White reflected this in his speech, commenting on ‘a huge decline in investment and planning in the summer due to uncertainty.’ He welcomed the independent report commissioned by AIC, ‘Powering Productivity for Sustainable UK Food Security’, adding that an independent UK Food Security Committee would provide certainty for farmers and the agri-food supply chain.

Adam White
Head of Agriculture at Barclays



Innovation and maintaining natural capital the way forward



Highlighting that the UK agricultural industry is one of the most innovative in the world, Sir Charles spoke of marrying that innovation with a focus on maintaining natural capital. “All land must be productive. We need to see an increase in traditional productivity on-farm, but also public productivity, such as biodiversity. We need to use all the benefits of technology to allow us to become truly sustainable but also pay close attention to the ecological insights.”

Sir Charles Godfray
Director, Oxford Martin Programme
on the Future of Food



Risk must be shared further up supply chain



NFU President Minette Batters spoke about the need to work together to achieve a sustainable food system. On natural capital and the below average returns on it for UK farmers, she said the way to tackle the issue was through change at the top. *“Retailers and brand holders must demonstrate they are supporting agriculture and farmers, and the risk must be shared further up the supply chain.”*

Minette Batters
NFU President



Gene editing can benefit farmers, the environment, and economy



In a panel discussion on The New Gene Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023, Dr Penny Hundleby spoke about how gene editing could prevent common issues, such as early pod shatter in OSR. By preventing such issues, it has the potential to benefit farmers, the environment and the economy through creating more resilient crops, increased yields, and healthier foods.

Dr Penny Hundleby FRSB
Senior Scientist, John Innes Centre



Defra committed to innovation and R&D investment



In The Rt Hon Mark Spencer’s speech, delivered by Defra Deputy Director Tim Mordan, there was an acknowledgment that the independent report commissioned by AIC focused on important themes in detail, such as improving productivity and enhancing the environment. It went on to highlight Defra’s commitment to innovation, research, and development, including a planned £30 million investment in solar installations and robotics equipment.

Tim Mordan
Representing Farming Minister
Mark Spencer



Data enabling sustainable behaviour change



The role of data in ‘measuring to manage’ was highlighted by Professor John Gilliland whose specialism is Land Management in Northern Ireland. *“If you can’t measure, you can’t manage. But now there is a generation of technology available to allow us to do that. The data allows us to go to a greater level of accuracy.”* In his speech, he spoke of a pilot study of over 1,000 farmers who adopted sustainable practices after receiving data about their farm.

Professor John Gilliland
Queens University Belfast



Focus on food security is welcome



The independent report’s focus on food security was welcomed by Mairi Gougeon, and her speech included some familiar themes from the conference; that it is everyone’s responsibility to use land productively and sustainably, the pressing need for certainty, and the need for innovation, minus legislative barriers.

Mairi Gougeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs,
Land Reform and Islands



Joined up thinking needed to achieve food security



AIC Chair Chris Guest’s focus for his closing remark was collaboration. *“Collaboration is a key point to work towards. We need an inter-government, inter-departmental approach to increase food production by 30-40%, and to deliver on the net zero environmental and climate objectives. The agri-food industry and the nation will benefit from the AIC report, so let’s all work together towards more sustainable UK food security.”*

Chris Guest
AIC Chair



Good animal welfare practices driving sustainable farming



Lesley Griffiths highlighted the need for resilience in terms of natural capital and spoke of the importance Welsh consumers place on animals welfare, which is driving sustainable farming. *“The focus on good animal welfare has led to farmers being rewarded for good welfare practices which in turn enables them to be more resilient and efficient in the face of climate change.”*

Lesley Griffiths MS
The Cabinet Secretary for Energy,
Planning and Rural Affairs, Wales



With thanks

AIC would like to extend its thanks to all the delegates that attended this year’s conference. It was fantastic to see you all there and to have the opportunity to engage with you all on the topics that really matter to our industry. I would also like to thank all sponsors for their support for our 20th anniversary conference.

John Kelley,
AIC Chief Operating Officer,
Managing Director AIC Services



Digital Passport Business Case launched

The Business Case for a Digital Grain Passport has been published by the AHDB-chaired Leadership Group, with Members invited to share their views with AIC as part of an industry-wide consultation which runs until early February.

AIC will be guided by Member feedback and will apply its qualifying principles for a decision on the development of a Digital Grain Passport to aid constructive discussion.

Members can view the Business Case, AIC's qualifying principles, and other key information at www.agindustries.org.uk/digital-grain-passport



Independent review of combinable crops assurance

The AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds Sector Council has announced plans to commission an independent review of combinable crops assurance.

Levy payers and representative bodies, including AIC, will be consulted as part of the review. The report's findings are expected to be shared with the industry in spring 2024.

Latest on RED II

AIC and other assurance schemes met with the European Commission with the aim of mitigating the potential loss of assurance recognition on 7 November.

From December, the Commission will no longer recognise assurance schemes accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS).

Following AIC discussions with the Department for Transport, a formal process through which Voluntary Schemes can be recognised in the UK is being established.



AHDB consults on levy rises

Proposals to increase the AHDB levy are in consultation with the industry. AHDB says the plans will allow the levy board to deliver more services, including marketing and exports for the livestock and dairy sectors, and more independent research for cereals and oilseeds.

Visit the AHDB website for details.



Rose Riby,
Head of Arable Marketing and Seed

Derogation for winter bean seed granted

A derogation to market winter bean seed with a lower germination level has been granted following a successful request made by AIC on behalf of Members.

To allow businesses to meet the expected market demand and contractual obligations for seed, Defra, the Welsh Government, and the Scottish Government approved the request from AIC to market 2,470 tonnes of certified winter bean seed at a reduced germination level of 70%.



Northern Ireland Plant Health Label Scheme

The trade scheme between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is now live, allowing Members to move plants for planting, seed potatoes, and used agricultural machinery.

Members can find further information, including on how to get authorisation to issue a NIPHL, on the GOV.UK website.



Rose Riby,
Head of Arable Marketing and Seed

AIC helps secure treated seed supply set to be secured for 2024

The supply of treated seed to UK farms is set to be secured after AIC raised an issue that risked major supply disruption.

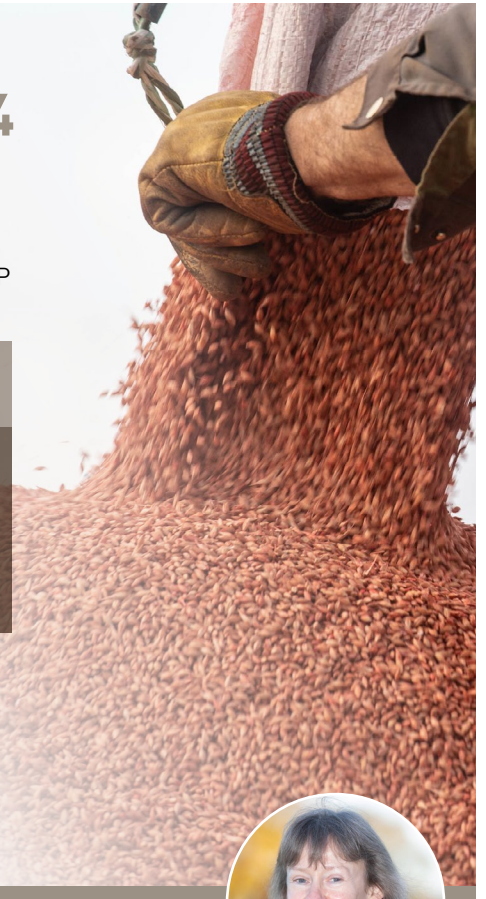
Post-EU Exit rules meant that, from 1 January 2024, only seed treated with a PPP authorised for that purpose in Great Britain could be used in Great Britain.

Working with industry stakeholders, AIC successfully lobbied Defra for a two-track approach:

- a) to grant emergency authorisations for **Korit**, **Redigo M**, and **Force** seed treatments on maize.
- b) to introduce legislation which grants the UK continued access to seeds treated with PPPs imported from the EU until 1 July 2027, provided that the PPPs remain authorised in at least one EU or EEA Member State.

The same legislation allows those who held a valid Parallel Trade Permit (PTP) for plant protection products on 31 December 2022, to apply for it be reinstated for a maximum of two years (or until the GB reference product authorisation expires) if certain conditions are met.

Applications for reinstatement of the original PTP must be made no later than **1 April 2024**.



Hazel Doonan,
Head of Crop Protection

Discussions on amending TSE Regulations

AIC convened a meeting with stakeholders to discuss the potential for amending Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) Regulations to reflect changes already made to the same rules in the EU.

Amendments relate to:

- Extending the use of insect proteins to pig and poultry diets.
- Allowing the use of former foodstuffs containing ruminant gelatin and collagen to be used in monogastric diets.
- Allowing the use of pig-processed animal proteins in poultry diets and vice versa.

Defra officials indicated their intention to consult on changes in 2024, and have asked for industry input to prepare consultation documents.



Methane-suppressing feed technology “essential” to cut emissions, Government says

Methane-suppressing feed technologies have been described as “an essential tool to support the decarbonisation of the agricultural sector” by the Government as it publishes its response to a call for evidence on the topic.

The Government’s announcement on 26 October provides fresh insight into the possible next steps for policymakers on this novel technology.

It comes after AIC held discussions with the Government following its consultation. The Government has confirmed it will continue to work closely with the industry and farmers to encourage widespread adoption of the technology in England as part of the solution to reducing agricultural emissions.



Sue Whittington,
Technical Manager



James McCulloch,
Head of Animal Feed



Fertiliser update

The long-awaited consultation on a revised fertiliser regulation encompassing mineral fertilisers, as well as digestates, composts, and other circular economy products is expected to be launched before the end of 2023.

AIC is discussing with Defra what will replace the regulatory regime as the Government moves on from EU Exit.

Defra is considering a broad-based regulation akin to the Fertiliser Products Regulations (FPR) framework to regulate the non-mineral fertilising products now widespread on the market.

It makes sense to include a revision of the mineral products at the same time, especially if the schedule-based 2003/1991 regulations could be replaced by a set of regulations based on safety criteria that meant a schedule did not need to be updated for technical progress, therefore allowing for innovation.

AIC is keen to ensure that whatever is developed is a better, simpler regulation than the current version in force within the EU.



Jo Gilbertson,
Head of Fertilisers

Dates for the diary

AIC Board

10 January 2024

AIC Cymru meeting

24 January 2024