

Meeting Summary

Meeting: UKRI-BBSRC Bioscience for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Strategy Advisory Panel

Date and Time: 1pm on 19th May – 2.30pm on 20th May 2026

Venue: Novotel Cambridge North, 2 Cambridge Square, Cambridge CB4 0AE & online

Attendance

Panel members:

Carol Wagstaff (University of Reading) – Chair
Lynn Frewer (Newcastle University)
Angelina Sanderson Bellamy (UWE)
Jess Davies (Lancaster University)
Dan Bebber (University of Exeter)
Herve Migaud (MOWI)
Julie Gray (University of Sheffield)
Ian Noble (Mondelez)

BBSRC office:

Katie Tomlinson – Head of Sector
Hayley Spearman – Secretariat
Debbie Harding
Riaz Bhunnoo - online
Amanda Collis – online
Ruth Nottingham – online
Kate Jordan – online
Clare Bhunnoo – online

Other attendees

Diane Saunders (John Innes Centre)
Neil Boonham (Fera)
John Walsh (University of Warwickshire)
Daman Maye (University of Gloucestershire)
Steve Guilbert (University of Exeter)
Lisa Collins (BIUH SAP)
Gareth Arnott (AWRN)

Apologies

Jasmeet Kaler (University of Nottingham)

Agenda, summary and actions

Chair's introduction

The chair invited panel members and BBSRC to take part in a brief round of introductions, followed by a review of actions from the previous meeting

Roundtable update from the panel

The Chair invited the Panel to share updates from their communities of particular interest to other Panel members and BBSRC.

BBSRC update

BBSRC shared updates from across BBSRC and UKRI. This included news about the spending review, council activity, funding and programme updates. The panel raised concerns that the proposed structure defines agriculture and food too narrowly, with key areas and a clear definition of “food” missing. They stressed that successful interdisciplinary, systems-based approaches across agrifood, environment, and health are not clearly reflected in the new framework. The panel also highlighted ongoing disruption in the sector, including cuts to staff, courses, and facilities in universities and research institutes.

Animal Welfare & Sustainability Update – Katie Tomlinson & Kate Jordan

The panel discussion highlighted that animal welfare and sustainability are closely interconnected but highly complex and contested domains, with no universally agreed definitions, metrics, or frameworks. The included a fragmented landscape where research communities, methodologies, and policy approaches remain insufficiently aligned, limiting progress toward integrated solutions. Next steps for progress include developing integrated frameworks, better data systems, and shared language, while enabling collaboration across disciplines and sectors

Opportunities for Impact in Plant Health – Debbie Harding

The panel highlighted priorities to strengthen crop protection, enhancing surveillance, promoting sustainable pest management, and leveraging data and global collaboration. Expected outcomes include improved crop resilience, reduced pesticide use, better diagnostics and decision tools, stronger data systems, and a more skilled workforce.

Bioscience collaboration to ensure agri-food research delivers social and economic impact – Katie Tomlinson

The panel highlighted early co-design/production, building trust with small, focused teams across sectors and collaboration skills as essential to success. To achieve this needs time, improved knowledge sharing, adaptive projects, and flexible funding models. This requires aligning research with policy, industry needs and long-term structural change.

EDI in the Agri-Food sector – Debbie Harding

The panel suggested ring-fenced EDI funding, fairer funding criteria, and better support for early-career researchers. Improving EDI in agri-food requires system-level change across funding, culture, workforce, and collaboration models. BBSRC has opportunity to shape this through targeted investment, inclusive programme design, and stronger partnerships.

AOB

The panel & guests were thanked for their attendance.