Robust

BBSRC's *New techniques for Genetic Crop Improvement* Position Statement

Note from Round table discussion – Friday 7th August

**Attendees**

Dr Penny Maplestone, BSPB  
Paul Rooke, AIC  
Moya Woolley, NFU  
Martin Savage, nabim  
Abigail Wood, nabim  
Dr Karen Holt, Syngenta  
Dr Dave Hughes, Syngenta  
John Peck, BASF  
Dr Richard Summers, BSPB Board/RAGT  
Mark Buckingham, abc/Monsanto  
Dr Julian Little, abc/BayerCropScience  
Dr Thomas Jolliffe, BSPB Board/Limagrain  
Bob Fiddaman, NFU and SCIMAC chair  
Professor Andy Greenland NIAB  
Daniel Pearsall – APPG group coordinator  
Dr Huw Jones - RRes  
Professor Jackie Hunter - BBSRC  
Dr Paul Burrows - BBSRC  
James Phillips - BBSRC  
Tracey Jewitt – BBSRC

**Apologies**

Katrina Hayter, Fera

**Purpose of the meeting**

To meet openly and informally with sponsors of APPG on Science and Technology in Agriculture and members of the Supply Chain Initiative on Modified Agricultural Crops (SCIMAC) to discuss BBSRC’s position statement on new crop breeding technologies (NCBTs), its wider context and the regulatory environment in general.

**Meeting note**

Professor Jackie Hunter opened the meeting explaining that BBSRC’s position statement takes a strongly scientific perspective but is intended to be a dynamic document that will evolve through dialogue with various constituencies. BBSRC is keen to better understand the views and concerns of all involved in this complex topic.

Professor Hunter stressed that BBSRC’s role was not to lobby, but to place science and societal need at the centre of the discussions and to use its position statement to engage and encourage dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders.

Professor Hunter outlined the need for all involved in NCBTs to clearly convey risks and benefits to the public. She also highlighted that regulation around these technologies is more than likely to happen at some point, be it in plants or animals first and so it was important to consider openly the newer technologies and the issues they raise now.

Professor Hunter invited attendees to share their thoughts on BBSRC’s position statement, an opportunity welcomed by those attending.
During the robust and constructive discussions, several themes emerged. These included:

- Need for BBSRC to be aware of the unintended consequences that might arise from the position statement being interpreted differently in different contexts and by different readers. Clarity of meaning and unambiguous drafting is essential.
- There was not consensus on whether NCBT’s require regulation, nor on the pros and cons of different regulatory methods. Those discussed included the current EU regulation and regulatory systems employed in the US, Canada and Argentina
- There was general concern over the high-level of regulation around GM techniques in general and a feeling that this can perpetuate fear around such technologies
- It was agreed that there is a need for improved communications about the purpose and risk/benefits of NCBTs and modern agriculture more generally set in a global context
- BBSRC invited attendees to submit any specific comments on its position statement, particularly any perceived inaccuracies or ambiguities in drafting, which will then be passed to the expert panel responsible for the statement for consideration

**Next steps**

There was consensus that NCBTs would be a good discussion topic for the APPG on Science and Technology in Agriculture. The sponsors will discuss at their September meeting what shape such an event may take.

While the event would not be based on BBSRC’s position statement, it was agreed that BBSRC would have a role to play in representing the scientific viewpoint at any such event.