



# HOUSE OF LORDS

## EUROPEAN UNION COMMITTEE Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment Sub-Committee

### CALL FOR EVIDENCE

28 July 2010

### INQUIRY INTO INNOVATION IN EU AGRICULTURE

#### Introduction

The House of Lords European Union Committee will conduct an inquiry, through its Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee D), into how innovation in EU agriculture can be encouraged in the context of new challenges such as climate change, water scarcity and the need to encourage sustainable improvements in output. The inquiry will be held against the background of the EU's new Strategy for Growth and Jobs, Europe 2020, in which innovation is central. It was agreed by the European Council on 17 June 2010 that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should play its part in delivering that strategy. The focus of the Committee's inquiry is not the upcoming reform of the CAP, although some of our conclusions may relate to that debate.

There is a relatively well-developed discourse on the future of the CAP, but this has tended to focus on the architecture of the policy rather than the flanking measures that might assist innovation in the sector and thus improve its competitiveness. The Committee has itself published relevant reports in recent years, including "*The Future of the CAP*" (2008), and "*Adapting to Climate Change: EU agriculture and forestry*" (2010).

In the course of our inquiry into adapting agriculture and forestry to climate change, we heard some evidence to suggest that agricultural research capacity has shrunk over several decades and that, even when the knowledge exists, there appears to be a significant problem in terms of knowledge transfer. At the same time, it was clear that new technologies would become increasingly important in order to adapt agriculture to existing and future challenges, such as climate change, water scarcity and the need to encourage sustainable improvements in productivity, not least in the context of food security.

We consider "innovation" to refer to: new technologies, such as biotechnology and new machinery; incremental change, such as commercial decisions to plant a new crop or alter a label; and to the more generic processes by which ideas are conceived, developed and deployed throughout the agricultural sector.

## **The issues**

The Committee is seeking evidence from interested parties on the issues outlined below. On the basis of that evidence, the Committee will formulate conclusions and recommendations to inform the House of Lords, and to contribute to the development of policy on innovation in EU agriculture by the UK Government and the EU institutions over the next few years.

The Committee invites you to submit written evidence. The Committee would find it helpful if you would focus on a number of specific issues, listed below. You may also wish to draw our attention to additional issues not addressed by the questions below. It is recognised that those submitting evidence will not necessarily have an interest in all the questions and may therefore wish to be selective.

Views are sought on the following:

### **Definition of “innovation” in the agricultural context**

1. We have outlined above how we currently perceive “innovation” in the agricultural context, but we would welcome views on your interpretation of innovation in the agricultural sector.

### **Innovation in EU agriculture as a strategic objective**

2. The EU believes that innovation and knowledge are key to the EU’s economic growth and that all sectors should play their part. Do you agree that innovation in EU agriculture should therefore be pro-actively encouraged? Alternatively, do you see agriculture as a distinct sector faced with particular challenges to which the sector will inevitably react in an innovative manner?

### **Innovation today**

3. How is EU agriculture innovating now? Can you explain under what conditions the agricultural sector is best placed to innovate? Do you have examples of circumstances where innovation would have been possible and would have been helpful, but did not occur?

### **Obstacles to innovation**

4. What are the current obstacles to innovation? Is there a shortfall in research capacity and in technology transfer? To what extent do issues such as intellectual property rules, resistance to new ideas, inertia, fear of failure and lack of communication block innovation in the agricultural sector? What are the obstacles to land managers incorporating forestry into their businesses?

## **Demographic structure of the sector**

5. To what extent is the demographic structure of the sector (an ageing farming population) an obstacle to innovation; and, conversely, might greater innovation in agriculture serve to bring new recruits to the sector? What incentives currently exist to encourage young people to agriculture; what further efforts might be made?

## **Future challenges driving innovation forward**

6. Looking forward, agriculture faces significant challenges, although those challenges may bring opportunities too. What challenges do you think will drive forward innovation in EU agriculture in the future? What do you think should be the responses to these challenges, and who would you expect to deliver these responses?

## **Knowledge and innovation systems**

7. Analysts have suggested in the past that innovation is best served by co-ordinated formal and informal systems of researchers, consumers, producers, retailers, advisers and government. What sort of systems do you think are required to support innovation in EU agriculture?

## **Research and Development**

8. Assuming that R&D has a role to play as part of knowledge and innovation systems, how should the research agenda be established in the field of agriculture? How should such research be funded, particularly in the light of budget cuts driven by austerity measures?

## **Education and skills**

9. What is the current state of education and skills provision relating to agricultural research, the agricultural sector and advisory services? How might such provision be enhanced?

## **Knowledge transfer**

10. How should research be translated into technology transfer and advice to practitioners? What are the respective roles, for example, of professional advisers, professional organisations, peer groups and the public sector?

## **EU policies**

11. What are the roles of the Common Agricultural Policy and EU research policy, including the Framework Programme for Research and Development, in helping to resolve the issues highlighted above? Where public intervention is desirable, what is best done at a lower level of governance?

## **Guidance for those submitting evidence**

Submissions of evidence should be sent to:

Paul Bristow  
Clerk to the EU Environment and Agriculture Sub-Committee  
House of Lords  
London SW1A 0PW  
Tel. (020) 7219 4579  
Fax (020) 7219 6715  
Email: [bristowpn@parliament.uk](mailto:bristowpn@parliament.uk)

Emailed submissions in Word format are preferred.

The deadline for written evidence is **24 September 2010**.

Short submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary.

Evidence must be clearly printed or typed on single sides of A4 paper, unstapled. Paragraphs should be numbered. If drawings or charts are included, these must be black-and-white and of camera-ready quality. Evidence should be signed and dated, with a note of the author's name and status, and of whether the evidence is submitted on an individual or corporate basis. Only one copy is required. All submissions will be acknowledged promptly. The evidence should also be made available in electronic form as a Word document.

Evidence becomes the property of the committee, and may be printed or circulated by the committee at any stage. If your evidence is not printed, it will in due course be made available to the public in the Parliamentary Archives. Personal contact details supplied to the committee will be removed from evidence before publication and from the copy deposited in the Archives. However, personal contact details will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the committee's work, for instance to seek additional information or to send copies of the committee's report.

Once you have received acknowledgement that the evidence has been received, you may publicise or publish your evidence yourself, but in doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee. If you do this parliamentary privilege will not apply to your own publication.

Persons who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster, broadcast in audio and often video format on the internet, and transcripts are published. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed. This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry from the Weekly Bulletin of House of Lords select committees. This is free, and may be ordered from Committee Office, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW, telephone 020 7219 6678. Alternatively, consult the UK Parliament website, at <http://www.parliament.uk/hleud>