



12th November 2014

UK 'ON EDGE OF AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION'

The UK is on the edge of another agricultural revolution, which will be achieved through new technology, innovation and shared knowledge within the sector, according to Mark Bowyer, Head of Farming at the Produce World Group.

Speaking at the Suffolk Agricultural Association's (SAA) annual conference 'Innovation for Agriculture' on 11th November, he urged the agriculture sector to work together on new farming innovation and shared knowledge in this area to help make the UK a global leader.

At a workshop during the conference, Mark explained how the Produce World Group is gearing up for this new agricultural revolution through 'precision farming' with new technologies to improve farming best practice. These include a broccoli forecasting model to estimate the timings and yield of broccoli crops; a project to promote pest-free organic brassicas; assessment of fertilizer requirements 'on-the-go'; and projects looking at irrigation.

The group has also developed a knowledge-base of information and data about soil types and properties of the land farmed by Produce World and its growers. The Knowledge Transfer Partnership project called 'Soil-for-Life' in collaboration with Cranfield University, provides data and information to inform on-farm decision making and drive innovation in soil management.

Mark Bowyer says, "The workshop was a fantastic opportunity to discuss how the sector can get involved in new innovation and how farmers can test and evaluate new technology on their fields. We work closely with independent growers in the East of England so are always keen to share best practice and learn from their experiences, while looking at how the latest technologies can work for them and their land. Produce World Group is already showing what can be achieved through new technology and innovation."

In June 2013, the government pledged to invest £160 million in the Agri-Tech sector, with the strategy setting out how the government, science researchers and the food and farming industry will build on the strengths of the UK agricultural technologies sector. £70 million of this funding, known as the Agri-Tech Catalyst, is available for projects that aim to improve the translation of research into practice through support at different stages of development. The remaining £90 million is proposed for Centres for Agricultural Innovation that aim to increase support to develop new technologies in the sector.

Through Agri-Tech Catalyst funding support, the Produce World Group and Cranfield University will be building on the success of the 'Soil-for-Life' project, with the aim of developing a commercial prospect for the industry. The next stage of the project, known as 'Soil-for-life Beta', will test and analyse the data collected using different approaches, while expanding further research to a core group of Produce World Group grower beta testers..

The group is also keen to support the Centres for Agricultural Innovation, with a Centre for Agriculture Informatics being proposed as part of the funding. This centre will look at the use of informatics, data and statistics in supporting agricultural innovation.

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Produce World Group Website: www.produceworld.co.uk **Produce World Group Twitter:** [@produceworld](https://twitter.com/produceworld)

About Produce World Group

Produce World Group is one of the largest expert growers and suppliers of high quality fresh vegetables in Europe. It is a privately owned business, founded by the Burgess family in 1898, and the family ethos and values remain in place. The Produce World Group business is customer and category focused and it is an industry leader in sustainable and responsible agronomy, growing and lean supply chain management.

Its sourcing is a combination of produce from its own farming division Burgess Farms, joint-ventures, and collaborative working with dedicated grower groups, supplying a variety of root vegetables, potatoes, brassicas, alliums, and organic produce to leading retailers, food service and manufacturing customers.

In 2013 Produce World Group featured in primetime TV programme Harvest in a bid to raise consumer awareness of how the nation's food gets from field to fork. The Produce World Group also celebrated success at the Waitrose Way Awards when it struck gold in the Treading Lightly - Water category, and was highly commended for its entry into the Championing British category.

Media Enquiries:

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