

**April 2017**

**Contents:**

- 1 **Industrial Challenge Strategy Fund will support industry and world-leading science**
- 2 **Researchers urge a more holistic post-Brexit approach to the rural economy**
- 3 **Legacy of Relu lives on**
- 4 **Make evaluation count – event for policymakers, analysts, evaluators and practitioners**
- 5 **Post Brexit Futures for Agri-Environment and Fisheries**
- 6 **Clover could lower beef carbon footprint**
- 7 **Rural firms feel held back by red tape**
- 8 **Hens developed for use as surrogates to lay eggs from rare breeds**
- 9 **Sunshine eggs could be good for people and for hens**
- 10 **Fishing, photos, news**
- 11 **Have your say on approaches to our changing environment**
- 12 **New Agri-Brexit Coalition to work together to ensure positive industry outcomes**
- 13 **BES launches Brexit working group**
- 14 **Enterprise fellowship call for applications**
- 15 **Forthcoming events from N8 Agri Food**
- 16 **Changing Europe newsletter**
- 17 **New research impact magazine launched**

**1 Industrial Challenge Strategy Fund will support industry and world-leading science**

Innovate UK and Research Councils are now gathering input from industry and the UK research base on how the cross-disciplinary [Industrial Challenge Strategy Fund](#) can best support UK industries and our world-leading science in some of the greatest societal challenges of our time. Innovate UK (KTN) has facilitated workshops across the nations and regions of the UK in January as part of activities to ensure that the challenges identified match UK business capability and are based on the best available evidence for scientific and commercial success. The Fund was [announced by the Prime Minister at the 2016 CBI Annual Conference](#). It will help identify and develop UK industries that are fit for the future, driving progress in technologies where the UK can build on our existing areas of industrial and research strength. The Fund will form part of the Government's overall Industrial Strategy.

**2 Researchers urge a more holistic post-Brexit approach to the rural economy**

Researchers from the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University have urged the UK Government to look beyond agriculture and consider the interconnections and opportunities for economic growth in the post Brexit countryside. [In a discussion paper](#) they argue that while predominantly rural areas in England alone contribute at least £237 billion a year to the UK coffers, policymaking often fails to make the most of their potential and communities risk being left behind, but leaving the EU offers the possibility of a new approach. The questions raised will form the basis for an expert panel discussion with policymakers and parliamentarians in central London at 5.30 pm on Thursday 27 April. Stakeholders are welcome to attend. For details and registration contact [melanie.reed@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:melanie.reed@ncl.ac.uk).

### **3 Legacy of Relu lives on**

Relu was still very much on the minds of delegates when Defra launched updated evidence needs and current research interests in March at a joint Defra and Royal Society conference "[Science for Defra: excellence in the application of evidence](#)". Many comments about the need for interdisciplinary research, including social and natural sciences, to get at complexity and uncertainty referenced Relu and panel member Professor Maggie Gill asked how many of those present had been involved in the programme. A forest of hands revealed Relu's ongoing legacy.

### **4 Make evaluation count – event for policymakers, analysts, evaluators and practitioners**

Evaluations should help policymakers to do better. But does it always work out like that? How can we maximise the impact of evaluations and ensure they make a real difference? What makes an evaluation really count? How is evaluation used in nexus and complex policy settings? We will be addressing these real world problems in a workshop hosted by the Centre for Evaluating Complexity Across the Nexus ([CECAN](#)) on 16 May at St Martin in the Fields in central London. There will be plenty of opportunities to have your say and it's free to attend, with presentations from policy makers and evaluation practitioners highlighting areas of good practice, and open discussion sessions exploring how we could improve evaluation practice. To register, please follow the link to [Eventbrite](#) or contact [cecan@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:cecan@surrey.ac.uk) for more information.

### **5 Post Brexit Futures for Agri-Environment and Fisheries**

The triggering of Article 50 and the publication of the Great Repeal Bill have set in motion a chain of events that will have major repercussions for the agri-environmental and fisheries sectors for many years to come. Yet all too often the voices of key stakeholders are ignored. With this in mind, in March, the University of York Environment Department brought together leading academics, policy experts and practitioners to identify the key challenges, opportunities and priorities raised by Brexit in the field of agriculture and fisheries and to map out possible future policy directions. A follow-up meeting, at which a policy briefing will be launched to an audience including key policymakers and politicians, is being held in London on 23 May at One Birdcage Walk. Email [fay.farstad@york.ac.uk](mailto:fay.farstad@york.ac.uk) for further details.

### **6 Clover could lower beef carbon footprint**

Research has been carried out by the [Sustainable Intensification Platform](#) to analyse the carbon footprints of three distinct pasture-based beef production systems on the North Wyke Farm Platform in Devon. The three systems were: permanent pasture of perennial ryegrass unploughed for more than 15 years; a mix of high sugar perennial and white clover; and high sugar perennial ryegrass. Each system is grazed by 30 Charolais x Hereford-Friesian cattle. The study provides scientific evidence that sowing clovers could be an effective means to lower the carbon footprint of beef finishing systems. However, further research is required to examine economic trade-offs between costs saved from reduced Nitrogen fertiliser application and costs incurred for establishing legume-based pastures. [More details are available in their latest newsletter.](#)

### **7 Rural firms feel held back by red tape**

[Rural Enterprise UK](#)'s analysis of the UK Government's Longitudinal Small Business Survey 2015 has looked in detail at the 28 per cent of responses classified as rural and found that while urban firms were most concerned about competition, their rural counterparts were more likely to feel held back by red tape. [The report with full results on Rural Business Aspirations, Obstacles and Support is available online.](#)

### **8 Hens developed for use as surrogates to lay eggs from rare breeds**

[Hens that do not produce eggs of their own have been developed by researchers.](#) The advance – using gene-editing techniques – could help to boost breeding of endangered birds, as well as improving production of commercial hens, the scientists say. The team led by The University of Edinburgh's The Roslin Institute used a genetic tool called TALEN to delete a section of chicken DNA. They targeted part of a gene called DDX4, which is crucial for bird fertility. Hens with the genetic modification were unable to produce eggs but were otherwise healthy. Primordial germ cells from other bird breeds could be implanted into eggs carrying the gene-edited birds. The hens would then grow up to produce eggs containing all of the genetic information from the other breeds. The surrogate chickens are the first gene-edited birds to be produced in Europe.

## **9 Sunshine eggs could be good for people and for hens**

[A pioneering Innovate UK/Industry funded research project](#) that aims to increase the vitamin D content of eggs could benefit hens as well as human consumers. Working closely with the egg industry, researchers from the School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at Newcastle University have demonstrated that they can increase the vitamin D content in eggs by over 40 per cent across a range of production systems by enriching the feed given to laying hens. This could go a long way towards helping people in the UK to consume the new recommended daily intake of 10 mcg for most of the population. At present few of us manage this, leaving the majority of us vitamin D deficient, particularly during the winter months when sunlight is in short supply.

## **10 Fishing, photos, news**

Looking for news about fishing and sustainability? FARNET is the community of people implementing Community-Led Local Development under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. [Their new website](#) about all things to do with fishing communities in the European Union, and the results of their recent photography competition has just been launched. The network brings together Fisheries Local Action Groups, managing authorities, citizens and experts from across the EU to work on the sustainable development of fisheries and coastal areas.

## **11 Have your say on approaches to our changing environment**

There are several current opportunities for inputting views on developing projects focusing on aspects of climate and environmental change. IUCN UK Peatland Programme is consulting on the topics to include in their 2017 Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands and welcome your [comments via their website](#). The IPCC is also planning a Special Report on Climate Change and Land. [Nominations for lead and contributing authors](#) opens on 10 April. NERC is to scope two new areas for potential large investments: enhancing the resilience of UK peatlands; and designing future landscapes for biodiversity and ecosystem services. [They will shortly publish open calls for community members](#) to join scoping groups for these strategic programme areas, which will develop full cases for assessment and funding decisions this autumn.

## **12 New Agri-Brexit Coalition to work together to ensure positive industry outcomes**

Eight organisations and trade associations involved in agribusiness are bringing their expertise together to represent the interests of the industry as negotiations on Brexit progress. The Agri-Brexit Coalition has been founded by: Agricultural Engineers Association, Agricultural Industries Confederation, British Society of Plant Breeders, Central Association of Agricultural Valuers, Crop Protection Association, Grain and Feed Trade Association, National Association of Agricultural Contractors, and National Office of Animal Health. The Coalition Coordinator is David Caffall, who is Chief Executive of [AIC](#). This new group will focus on key issues in Brexit negotiations which are pertinent to the UK trading and supplying of goods, services, technology and advice to UK farmers. Their aim is to achieve a positive outcome to negotiations for UK Agriculture as well as the EU and the wider world.

## **13 BES launches Brexit working group**

The British Ecological Society has launched a Brexit Working Group to help shape their engagement with the opportunities and challenges of leaving the EU. [The group is seeking further members and details may be found on their website](#).

## **14 Enterprise fellowship call for applications**

The Royal Society of Edinburgh Enterprise Fellowship scheme provides support to researchers and innovators who have promising business ideas. The programme, delivered by the RSE with support from BBSRC, STFC, Scottish Enterprise and Quantic allows fellows to focus solely on developing their idea. They receive one year's salary, expert business training, business development funding and access to mentors from a pool of successful individuals in the commercial community. The programme has helped fellows to create and develop some of the UK's exciting new spin-out companies. Topics that are eligible cover a wide range of industries including food and drink, forest and timber technologies, manufacturing, energy, tourism and life sciences. The next call for applications is now open, closing on 26 April 2017. For more information visit the [RSE website](#).

## 15 Forthcoming events from N8 Agri Food

[N8 AgriFood](#) is an interdisciplinary research programme of the [N8 universities partnership](#) that combines crop and livestock research with expertise in social sciences in a single research initiative. [Details are available online about three forthcoming events:](#)

**Translating crop research from lab to field:** N8 Crop Innovation Pipeline Workshop  
Tuesday, 2 May and Wednesday, 3 May 2017.

**Measuring animal welfare and applying scientific advances - Why is it still so difficult?** UFAW International Symposium 2017 from Tuesday 27 June 27 to Thursday 29 June.

**N8 AgriFood 2017 International Sustainable Food Production Conference** from Tuesday 11 July to Thursday 13 July 2017.

## 16 Changing Europe newsletter

Sign up for ESRC's [UK in a Changing Europe newsletter](#) to receive quality, independent analysis of UK-EU relations, Article 50 and Brexit.

## 17 New research impact magazine launched

A new magazine [Fast Track Impact](#) has been launched by a spin-out company based on LWEC research. The magazine may be downloaded freely or bulk copies ordered from [Fast Track Impact pa@fasttrackimpact.com](mailto:pa@fasttrackimpact.com).

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**Edited by Anne Liddon and Jeremy Phillipson**

Centre for Rural Economy

School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Newcastle University

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 7RU

Tel: 0191 208 6623

Fax: 0191 208 5411

Email: [relu@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:relu@ncl.ac.uk) to subscribe/unsubscribe