

Churchill champions agri-food innovation in Dubai

The Minister for Agri-innovation and Climate Adaptation Jo Churchill has set out the UK Government's ambition to boost innovation and technology in agriculture during a visit to the UAE.

Building on the legacy of the COP26 UK Presidency – which outlined agriculture and food systems as a major priority for the climate agenda – and looking towards COP28 hosted by the UAE, Minister Churchill highlighted the importance of investment in new technologies to advance sustainable food production, particularly as global demand for food is predicted to rise by 40% by 2030.

Speaking at the [Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate](#) and at the [Food for Future Summit](#) last week, the Minister outlined the need to unlock investment and partnerships to boost innovation which will support farmers and growers to produce food that is more nutritious, adaptive to climate change and resistant to disease.

As part of the visit, the Minister toured some of the most remarkable examples of low-impact and high-tech food production sites in UAE, such as the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture, an international research centre working on food security and sustainable livelihoods for communities living in marginal environments. The Minister also visited Jubail Mangrove Park to see first-hand how nature-based solutions can contribute to tackling climate change.

During her visit, Minister Churchill stressed the importance for countries like the UK and the UAE to share their knowledge in the agri-innovation field to fast-track global climate ambitions. The UK has one of the most highly regarded agricultural technology sectors in the world – from horticulture with vertical growing systems and water conservation techniques, to aquaculture with precision farm management techniques which use sensors to optimise fish health and growth.

Investment in technology and innovation is central to the UK Government's effort to support farmers to increase the profitability of their business with less impact on the environment. That is why a range of Defra funds are available to support this ambition, including the [Farming Innovation Programme](#) and the [Farming Investment Fund](#).

Minister for Agri-innovation and Climate Adaptation Jo Churchill said:

Agriculture and food systems are a major priority for the global climate agenda, and science and innovation play a critical role in supporting the agri-food industry to overcome the challenges posed by climate change and rising food demand.

Action in this decade is paramount. We have to maintain the momentum gained at COP26 and translate commitments into action – making climate-resilient, sustainable agriculture the most attractive and widely adopted option for farmers everywhere by 2030.

The UK Government has also established the Gilbert Initiative to help transform climate-resilient food systems through research and innovation. The initiative is a cross-Government commitment supported by FCD0, Defra, BEIS, DIT and UKRI to help address some of the biggest global challenges in food systems. This includes supporting a food system that by 2030 feeds 9 billion people with nutritious, safe food; enhancing resilience and adaptation to climate change; using environmental resources sustainably; and generating inclusive growth and jobs.

Last November, the UK saw 197 countries come together at COP26 to forge the landmark Glasgow Climate Pact, helping ensure a better world for future generations. In addition, the UK Government launched the Breakthrough Agenda, which includes an Agriculture Breakthrough, designed to promote the uptake of technological, climate resilient and sustainable agriculture practices. The UK wants to use the Breakthrough Agenda to accelerate global progress in this decade of action, by driving collaboration across leading initiatives such as AIM4Climate in support of climate-resilient, sustainable food systems.

The commitments sealed at COP26 sit alongside the UK's domestic Net Zero strategy which sets out an ambition for 75% of farmers in England to uptake low carbon practices by 2030. Furthermore, through the new environment land management schemes, farmers and land managers will be rewarded for delivering environmental benefits alongside profitable food production, creating space for nature and enhancing animal welfare.