

Press release: Business Secretary calls for new tech revolution in agriculture

- new £90 million investment to bring together AI, robotics and earth observation to improve supply chain resilience in the agri-food sector
- UK agri-tech sector contributes £14.3 billion to UK economy, employing 500,000 people, with companies and researchers developing pioneering technologies from farming drones to 3D printing
- helping to fuel rural growth, create high-skilled jobs and open up new export opportunities as part of the [Industrial Strategy](#)

The Ordnance Survey's use of cutting edge satellite imagery and digital data collection to map over 200,000 miles of England's farmland and the CROPROTECT app which helps farmers protect crops from pests, weeds and diseases are among the technological innovations improving farming and food production that were hailed today (21 February 2018) in a speech by Business Secretary Greg Clark as he set out his ambition for a revolution in agri-farming, as part of the government's Industrial Strategy.

In a keynote speech to the National Farmers' Union conference, the Business Secretary highlighted how new technology is boosting farmers' earning power and making agri-businesses more productive and profitable than ever before.

To make it easier for farmers and agricultural supply-chain businesses to embrace technology and innovation, Mr Clark today announced £90 million of new funding to bring together the UK's world-class agri-food sector with expertise in robotics, AI and data science.

The funding, delivered as part of the new the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#), will make it easier for food and agri-business to embrace technology and innovation that will be critical to meeting the increasing food demands of a growing population, fuel rural growth and create high-skilled jobs.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

As someone who has known all my life that farming is foundational not just to our economy, but to our country. Providing the food and drink we live on and stewarding the countryside that is so much part of our national and local identity means there is no more essential industry.

The agricultural sector is the biggest industrial sector in the UK, Employing almost 4 million people and larger than the automotive and aerospace sectors combined.

For your unique role in stewardship and in feeding the nation like

big industry, you need to be profitable and we need to help make the conditions right for investment in the future.

With the technological revolution that is happening, the skills of the farming workforce need to keep pace. New technologies require new abilities and today's modern British farmer is a Swiss-Army-Knife of skills. An engineer, an environmentalist, a data scientist a biochemist, an energy producer, a tourism entrepreneur, and an investor too.

As part of the Industrial Strategy, we announced a Transforming Food Production Challenge and I'm delighted to announce the government will invest £90 million to make this challenge a reality.

This will include the creation of 'Translation Hubs' bringing together farmers and growers businesses, scientists and Centres for Agricultural Innovation to apply the latest research to farming practice.

Today's investment forms part of the government's Industrial Strategy which sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. Through this strategy government is working with industry to help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs as well as setting a path for Britain to lead in the high-tech, highly-skilled industries of the future.

The announcement follows the government committing, through the Industrial Strategy, to raise public and private investment in UK research and development to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. This will be the UK's biggest ever increase in research and development investment and help to make Britain's economy the most innovative in the world.

Commitments

Government investment will help build on the strengths of the UK's booming agri-food sector, which employs around 4 million people across the UK, and support it by:

- bringing together businesses, farmers and academics to take forward priority research projects through new Challenge Platforms
- supporting Innovation Accelerators which will be responsible for exploring the commercial potential of new tech ideas at pace
- demonstrating innovative agri-tech projects and how they will work in practice
- launching a new bilateral research programme that will identify and accelerate shared international priorities and help build export opportunities for pioneering agricultural-technologies and innovations overseas

UK companies leading the way

UK farmers, agri-tech companies and research centres are already leading the way in this area, using technology like data, robotics and AI to help create new technologies and herald innovative new approaches, including:

- the Agricultural Engineering and Precision Innovation (Agri-EPI) Centre is bringing together leading organisations in the food supply chain to become a world-leading centre for excellence in engineering and precision agriculture
- the mobile app and website CROPROTECT, developed by Rothamsted Research, is helping farmers to protect their crops with farmers and agronomists using it to exchange best practice and tips on smart management of pest, weed and diseases
- Ordnance Survey have used their satellites to accurately map 232,342 miles of England's farmland hedges to create a new digital dataset and use planes with fixed state-of-the-art digital cameras to record thousands of individual photos that can map out farms and entire green landscapes

The funding forms 1 of 8 key areas that the government, together with business and academia, has identified through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF), as being priority areas where research and innovation can help unlock markets and industries of the future in which the UK can become world-leading.

In the [Industrial Strategy white paper](#), the government announced £725 million of investment through the fund in cutting-edge technologies to create jobs and raise living standards.

Other areas set to receive government support through the ISCF in 2018 to 2019 includes early diagnosis and precision medicine to help detect life-changing diseases earlier, new products and services that support older people in the UK to remain active and independent, and new smart energy systems that deliver cleaner, cheaper energy for consumers and their communities.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will shortly open a new expressions of interest call for more industry-led challenges that will form part of the next wave of the ISCF.

This third wave of programmes will invest in further ground-breaking ideas to tackle our major industrial and societal challenges, boost our productivity and delivery economic growth.

Professor Sir Mark Walport, Chief Executive of UKRI, which is responsible for the ISCF said:

Developing and effectively utilising the latest technologies and research methods will revolutionise the way we produce our food. Right across the agricultural sector, we can make the process more

efficient, more productive and more sustainable to deliver benefits for growers, producers and consumers. This is precisely why the ISCF was created.

We are now launching the process for businesses and researchers alike to come together to identify both pressing problems in food production and farming and opportunities that could benefit from the next wave of ISCF funding. I want to strongly encourage everyone in the sector to respond to our call for expressions of interest.

Press release: Employment remains at near-record high

Today's figures also show that groups across society are accessing new job opportunities:

- nearly 500,000 more people from a black and minority ethnic background (BAME) have started working since 2015
- the gender employment rate gap is at a near-record low, just 8.9%
- every region across the UK has seen employment increase since 2010
- youth unemployment has fallen by over 40% since 2010
- there are a record breaking number of workers aged 50 plus in work, reaching 10 million



EMPLOYMENT RATE AT A NEAR RECORD HIGH

75.2%

Department for Work and Pensions | Source: ONS, February 2018, stats relate to period October to December 2017

Minister for Employment Alok Sharma said:

High employment rates are a reliable feature of today's economy – and this is an incredible achievement. It is equally important that across society everyone has the opportunity to get a good job and get on in life.

Today's figures show that this government is building a fairer economy that supports people from all backgrounds to get into work. We are closing the BAME and gender employment gaps, and people across the country are accessing new opportunities.

Separate figures out today showed that [730,000 people are now on Universal Credit](#). Of these, 40% were in employment (290,000).

Read the [Labour Market Statistics – February 2017](#) from the Office for National Statistics.

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[Press release: January 2018](#) [Transaction Data](#)

In January:

- HM Land Registry completed more than 1,782,080 applications to change or query the Land Register
- the South East topped the table of regional applications with 403,526

The transaction data shows HM Land Registry completed 1,782,088 applications in January compared with 1,266,641 in December and 1,563,358 last January, of which:

- 462,352 were applications to update existing titles compared with 319,721 in December
- 825,613 were applications to obtain an official copy of a register

compared with 551,427 in December

- 211,393 were official searches compared with 197,327 in December
- 26,002 were postal applications from non-account holders, compared with 26,377 in December

Applications by region and country

Region and country	November applications	December applications	January applications
South East	408,756	287,649	403,526
Greater London	339,086	250,636	339,286
North West	200,475	139,168	222,150
South West	173,351	124,681	173,058
West Midlands	152,816	107,079	150,292
Yorkshire and the Humber	135,373	98,017	139,207
East Midlands	125,846	90,239	122,812
Wales	82,646	58,854	80,315
North	81,197	56,648	77,912
East Anglia	74,499	53,549	73,345
Isles of Scilly	92	79	110
England and Wales (not assigned)	86	42	75
Total	1,774,223	1,266,641	1,782,088

Top 5 local authority areas

Top 5 local authority areas	November applications	Top 5 local authority areas	December applications	Top 5 local authority areas	January applications
Birmingham	27,715	Birmingham	19,714	Birmingham	27,561
City of Westminster	23,565	City of Westminster	17,977	City of Westminster	25,488
Leeds	20,137	Leeds	14,262	Leeds	20,256
Cornwall	18,823	Manchester	13,384	Manchester	19,350
Manchester	18,542	Cornwall	13,332	Cornwall	18,367

Top 5 customers

Top 5 customers	November applications	Top 5 customers	December applications	Top 5 customers	January applications
Enact	49,360	Enact	36,313	Enact	50,327

Top 5 customers	November applications	Top 5 customers	December applications	Top 5 customers	January applications
Optima Legal Services	25,532	Optima Legal Services	19,826	Nationwide Building Society	31,589
O'Neill Patient	24,260	O'Neill Patient	19,764	Optima Legal Services	27,284
TM Group (UK) Ltd	19,701	HBOS PLC	16,649	O'Neill Patient	26,073
HBOS PLC	19,315	TM Group (UK) Ltd	16,444	My Home Move Limited	19,103

[Access the full dataset on data.gov.uk.](#)

Notes to editors

1. Transaction Data is published on the 15th working day of each month. The February Transaction Data will be published at 11 am on Wednesday 21 March 2018 at [HM Land Registry Monthly Property Transaction Data](#).
2. The monthly Transaction Data showing how many applications for new titles, leases, splitting titles, updating existing titles, official copies of the register and searches were received, reflects the volume of applications lodged by customers using an HM Land Registry account number on their application form.
3. Completed applications in England and Wales, shown by region and by local authority include postal applications as well as those sent electronically.
4. Transaction Data excludes pending applications, bankruptcy applications, bulk applications and discharge applications (to remove a charge, for example, a mortgage, from the register).
5. Transactions for value are applications lodged involving a transfer of ownership for value. For an explanation of other terms used, see [abbreviations used in the transaction data](#).
6. Most searches carried out by a solicitor or conveyancer are to protect the purchase and/or mortgage. For example, a search will give the buyer priority for an application to HM Land Registry to register the purchase of the property. This can give an indication of market activity.
7. Reasonable skill and care are used in the provision of the data. We strive to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible but cannot guarantee that it is free from error. We cannot guarantee our data is

fit for your intended purpose or use.

8. Transaction Data is available free of charge for use and re-use under the [Open Government Licence](#) (OGL). The licence allows public bodies to make their data available for re-use.
9. If you use or publish the Transaction Data, you must add the following attribution statement:
Contains HM Land Registry data © Crown copyright and database right 2017. This data is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.
10. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.
11. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
12. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth in excess of £4 trillion, including around £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for some 85% of the land mass of England and Wales.
13. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
14. Follow us on: Twitter [@HMLandRegistry](#), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Speech: 13 years since Kyoto and the UK is still leading the charge to a low carbon future

This article first appeared in [The Times Red Box section](#).

Cast your mind back 13 years to 2005. The world was a very different place. The phrase 'climate change' was not exactly a buzzword and yet an extraordinary moment occurred. A groundswell of momentum across the globe brought the Kyoto Protocol into force, a pivotal agreement committing more

countries than ever to internationally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Last week the impact of climate change on sports was in the headlines. Climate change affects us all – and if it takes melting ski slopes and waterlogged cricket pitches to get people’s attention, then so be it.

Momentum on climate action is accelerating with the UK in the driving seat. Climate change is no longer just a phrase used by environmentalists and scientists, it forms part of our everyday narrative. This is the moment not only for global efforts to reduce our CO2 output, but also for the growth of green industries and for international climate collaboration.

Climate change crosses party political lines and doesn’t respect borders. That cross-party support for climate action and UK leadership was demonstrated in 2008 with the introduction of the historic Climate Change Act, setting an ambitious legally-binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80% of 1990 levels by 2050.

But it was the Kyoto Protocol that truly kickstarted international action in 2005. When world leaders signed up to the charter, it signalled a sea change. Left unchecked, climate change would ravage our natural environment and, along with it, our health and prosperity.

Fast forward 10 years and in 2015 the UK was instrumental in securing the Paris Agreement, committing 175 countries to protect the world from catastrophic warming.

Three years ago in Paris, the UK and other developed countries committed a joint contribution of \$100 billion to help the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world cope with the increasing risk of droughts and floods and provide access to clean energy. We should be proud that the UK is regarded so highly for its climate action overseas as well as at home.

I’m proud that we have got our own house in order. In 2011, the government slashed emissions from 3,000 buildings across Whitehall by nearly 14% in a single year.

It is not only a moral imperative that we leave the world in a better place for future generations, there is an economic argument for tackling climate change. The UK has shown that reducing emissions and growing the economy can, and should, go hand in hand. Since 1990 our national carbon emissions have fallen even more and our national income has risen faster than any other nation in the G7.

The shift to clean energy presents a multibillion-pound investment opportunity for businesses. Our low-carbon sector already directly employs more than 200,000 people. We are clear: through our ambitious industrial strategy the UK is ready to embrace the economic opportunities presented by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

And there’s more good news. Latest figures indicate that more than half of our electricity generation in 2017 came from low-carbon sources such as wind,

nuclear and solar. Just 5 years ago, dirty coal power accounted for 40% of our electricity – this figure is now 7%. The government has driven this change, investing more than £52 billion in renewable energy since 2010 and committing to phasing out unabated coal power by 2025. We now have the biggest installed offshore wind capacity in the world, and the cost of offshore wind is constantly falling thanks to government support.

On the international stage the UK is leading the charge for clean, green energy. In November the Canadian environment minister, Catherine McKenna, and I launched the Powering Past Coal Alliance, a global coalition of countries, businesses and cities committed to ending unabated coal power. Coal is the dirtiest fossil fuel, emitting twice as much CO₂ as gas per unit of electricity generated. Phasing out coal will not only reduce pollution and carbon emissions, it will improve our health.

Our action at home and abroad is delivering real results and we are on track to meet or over-deliver against our first 3 carbon budgets. We have come a long way in the last 13 years, but we cannot step off the pedal now. Ambitious climate action must continue, with the UK leading the way to a low-carbon future.

Statement to Parliament: Safeguarding in the aid sector

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on my Department's response to the sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by charity workers in Haiti in 2011, and the measures we are taking to improve safeguarding across the aid sector.

I'd like to start by paying tribute to Sean O'Neill of The Times and the two sets of whistleblowers – those in 2011 and later – for bringing this case to light.

On February ninth, The Times reported that certain Oxfam staff when in Haiti in 2011 had abused their positions of trust and paid for sex with local women. These incidents happened in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in 2010, which killed hundreds of thousands of people and left millions more homeless and reliant on aid for basic needs such as food and shelter.

This is shocking, but it is not by itself what has caused such concern about Oxfam's safeguarding. It was what Oxfam did next.

In chaotic and desperate situations the very best safeguarding procedures and practices must be put in to place to prevent harm, but when organisations fail to report and follow up incidents of wrongdoing that occur, it

undermines trust and sends a message that sexual exploitation and abuse is tolerated. We cannot prevent sexual exploitation and abuse if we don't demonstrate zero tolerance.

In such circumstances we must be able to trust organisations not only to do all they can to prevent harm, but to report and follow up incidents of wrongdoing when they occur.

In this duty Oxfam failed under the watch of Barbara Stocking and Penny Lawrence.

They did not provide a full report to the Charity Commission. They did not provide a full report to their donors. They did not provide any report to prosecuting authorities.

In my view Mr Speaker they misled, quite possibly deliberately. Even as their report concluded that their investigation could not rule out the allegation that some of the women involved were actually children.

They did not think it was necessary to report to the police in either Haiti or the country of origin for those accountable.

I believe their motivation appears to be just the protection of the organisation's reputation. They put that before those they were there to help and protect – a complete betrayal of trust.

A betrayal too of those who sent them there – the British people – and a betrayal of all those Oxfam staff and volunteers who do put the people they serve, first.

Last week, I met with Mark Goldring, Chief Executive of Oxfam, and Caroline Thomson, Oxfam's Chair of Trustees.

I made three demands of them –

That they fully cooperate with the Haitian authorities, handing over all the evidence they hold.

That, they report staff members involved in this incident to their respective national governments.

And, that they make clear how they will handle any forthcoming allegations around safeguarding – historic or live.

And I stressed that for me holding to account those who made the decision not to report and to let those potentially guilty of criminal activity slip away, was a necessity in winning back confidence in Oxfam.

As a result of those discussions, Oxfam has agreed to withdraw from bidding for any new UK Government funding until DFID is satisfied that they can meet the high safeguarding standards we expect of our partners.

I will take a decision on current programming after the twenty-sixth of

February as I will then have further information which will help me decide if I need to adjust how that is currently being delivered.

Given the concerns about the wider sector this case has raised, I have written to every UK charity work working overseas that receives UK aid – 192 organisations – insisting that they spell out the steps they are taking to ensure their safeguarding policies are fully in place and confirm they have referred all concerns they have about specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities.

I have set a deadline of the twenty-sixth of February for all UK charities working overseas to give us the assurances that we have asked for and to raise any concerns with the relevant authorities.

We are also undertaking in parallel a similar exercise with all non-UK charity partners – 393 organisations in total and with all our suppliers including those in the private sector – over 500 organisations – to make clear our standards and remind them of their obligations, and we are doing the same with all multilateral partners too.

The UK Government reserves the right to take whatever decisions about present or future funding to Oxfam, and any other organisation, that we deem necessary. We have been very clear that we will not work with any organisation that does not live up to the high standards on safeguarding and protection that we require.

I will also be sharing details of this approach with other governments departments, who are responsible for the ODA spend.

Although this work is not yet complete it is clear from the Charity Commission reporting data – and lack of it from some organisations – that a cultural change is needed to ensure all that can be done to stop sexual exploitation in the aid sector, is being done.

And we need to take some practical steps. Now.

We should not wait for the UN to take action. We must set up our own systems now.

My department, and the Charity Commission, will hold a safeguarding summit on the fifth of March, where we will meet with UK international development charities, regulators and experts to confront safeguarding failures and agree practical measures, such as an aid worker accreditation scheme we in the UK can use.

Later in the year, we will take this programme of work to a wide-ranging, global safeguarding conference to drive action across the whole international aid sector.

And I'm pleased to say the US, Canada, the Netherlands and others have already agreed to support our goal of improved safeguarding standards across the sector.

The UK is not waiting for others to act. We are taking a lead on this.

I will also be speaking to colleagues across government and beyond about what more we can do to stop exploitation and abuse in the UN and broader multilateral system.

The message from us to all parts of the UN is clear – you can either get your house in order, or you can prepare to carry out your good work without our money.

I welcome the UN's announcement on the fourteenth of February that the UN does not and will not claim immunity for sexual abuse cases. This sends a clear signal that the UN is not a soft target, but we must hold the UN to account for this.

Further actions we have taken in the last week include the creation of a new Safeguarding Unit. We have also promoted our whistleblowing and reporting phone line to encourage anyone with information on safeguarding issues to contact us.

We have appointed Sheila Drew Smith, a recent member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, who has agreed to bring her expertise and her challenge to support my Department's ambition on safeguarding. She will report to me directly.

I have asked to meet leaders of the audit profession to discuss what more they can do to provide independent assurance over safeguarding to the organisations that DFID partners with globally.

And I have held my own Department to the same scrutiny that I am demanding of others. I have asked the department to go through our centrally held HR systems and our fraud and whistleblowing records as far back as they exist.

I am assured that there are no centrally recorded cases which were dealt with incorrectly.

Separately, we are reviewing any locally reported allegations of sexual misconduct involving DFID staff. To date our review of staff cases has looked at 75% of our teams across DFID and will complete in a fortnight.

Our investigations are still ongoing and if, during this process, we discover any further historic or current cases, I will report on our handling of these to Parliament.

DFID, other government departments and the National Crime Agency work closely together when serious allegations of potentially criminal activity in partner organisations are brought to our attention and we are strengthening this, as the new Strategy Director at the NCA will take on a lead role for the aid sector.

I am calling on anyone who has any concerns about abuse or exploitation in the aid sector to come forward and report these to our counter fraud and whistleblowing team. Details are on the DFID website and all communications

will be treated in complete confidence.

Later today I will have further meetings, including with the Defence Secretary, regarding peacekeeping troops, and the Secretary of State at DCMS regarding the Charity Sector.

My absolute priority is to keep the world's poorest and most vulnerable people safe from harm. It is utterly despicable that sexual exploitation and abuse continue to exist in the aid sector.

The recent reports should be a wake-up call to all of us. Now is the time for us to act, but as we do so we should note the good people working across the world in this sector – saving lives often by endangering their own – and all those from fundraisers to trustees who make that work possible across the entire aid sector.

In the last week alone UK aid and UK aid workers has helped vaccinate around 850,000 children against polio.

And we should also recognise that work can only be done with the support of the British people.

I commend this statement to the House.