

**25 July 2006**

**BBSRC and DFID Launch a New Scheme for Research on Sustainable Agriculture for International Development**

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID) have announced a [new scheme](#) to promote biotechnology and biological sciences research that addresses the challenges of agriculture in developing countries. The scheme will strengthen collaboration between BBSRC and DFID to support research that provides answers on how to increase agricultural productivity and food security so as to make significant differences to the lives of poor people in Africa and Asia.

This scheme is one of the new initiatives being implemented under DFID's £100 million Strategy for Research on Sustainable Agriculture, announced in March this year. When announcing the Strategy earlier this year, the Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn said: "New technology developed with the help of innovative research will give poor farmers the seeds, knowledge and the tools to make a better living for themselves and help lift their communities out of poverty. When farmers are successful the rest of the economy flourishes too. Investment in research today will lead to fewer people having to live tomorrow without basic healthcare, education or the many services we take for granted."

"2005 was an important year in the fight to defeat extreme poverty all over the world. By turning research into practical help for poor farmers we will be closer to making poverty history."

Professor Julia Goodfellow, Chief Executive of BBSRC said: "This new scheme offers exciting opportunities to build on work which has already shown the vital contribution biosciences research can make in improving sustainable agriculture globally. BBSRC has a strong track record in supporting basic plant sciences research and we are increasingly able to understand at a molecular level how plants interact with their environment,

including how they respond to attack by disease and to other hostile conditions. This offers new opportunities for developing crops that specifically meet the needs of farmers in developing countries. BBSRC is looking forward to building on these successes by working with DFID to fund world class science to help meet the needs of the world's poorest nations.”

The scheme has a total budget of £6 million over four years and will provide research grants to UK and non-UK researchers to undertake strategic research that contributes to growth and poverty reduction in developing countries. The first research call of the scheme will focus on crop sciences.

The scheme builds upon DFID's and BBSRC's strengths in development and scientific research. DFID currently spends 4% of its development budget on research, placing it in the top three bilateral donors, and has over the last three decades supported research on new technologies and ideas to help achieve poverty reduction. BBSRC is the UK's largest funder of basic and strategic biological research and has supported development related research at UK universities and its sponsored institutes. Combining this experience BBSRC and DFID aim to support research which meets the needs of poor people, and helps build the research capacity of developing countries.

## **Ends**

### **CONTACTS**

BBSRC Media Office

Matt Goode, Tel: 01793 413299, email: [matt.goode@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:matt.goode@bbsrc.ac.uk)

Tracey Jewitt, Tel: 01793 414694, email: [tracey.jewitt@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:tracey.jewitt@bbsrc.ac.uk)

DFID Press Office

Tel: 020 7023 0600 (24 hour number) or call the DFID Public Enquiry Point on: 0355 84 3132.

### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

For more information about the new scheme visit:

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/news/welcome.html>

In 2005 the UK helped to achieve commitments by the EU and G8 for an extra \$50 billion a year in aid by 2010. Half of that will go to Africa and help achieve close to universal AIDS treatment by 2010 and access to free basic education and health care by 2015.

Extreme poverty affects 1.3 billion people around the world who live on less than \$1 a day. Three billion people live on less than \$2 a day (source: UN). Copies of the new Strategy for Research on Sustainable Agriculture can be found at [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk). Details of research funded by DFID can be found on our Research for Development portal (R4D):

[www.research4development.info/](http://www.research4development.info/)

### **About BBSRC**

For more information on BBSRC go to: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk> and for examples of BBSRC-funded research and developing countries visit [http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/science/spotlight/developing\\_countries.html](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/science/spotlight/developing_countries.html)

BBSRC annually invests around £350 million in a wide range of research that makes a significant contribution to the quality of life for UK citizens and supports a number of important industrial stakeholders including the agriculture, food, chemical, healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. BBSRC carries out its mission by funding internationally competitive research, providing training in the biosciences, fostering opportunities for knowledge transfer and innovation and promoting interaction with the public and other stakeholders on issues of scientific interest.

### **About DFID**

DFID has allocated £100m over five years to fund the three new initiatives of the Strategy for Research on Sustainable Agriculture. These will commence in the financial year 2006/07. Funding for the first two financial years, £40 million, is part of the total £255 million DFID announced for all research in these two financial years.

DFID is already giving an additional £20 million per year to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research – a group of international research centres working on agriculture and natural resource management. The new White Paper *“Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance work for the poor”* includes a commitment to double funding on research including agriculture.