

Proposed New Specialist Group: 'Food systems'

At the AGM we will hear a proposal for the establishment of a new specialist group- "Food Systems". With the closing of the Post Harvest specialist group, members of the AAB were canvassed as to their interests in the area of post harvest and food chain research, this has resulted in a series of multi-disciplinary meetings under the title "Greening the Food Chain", which have taken place in 2007/08. In addition many of the discipline-based groups within the AAB have already organised meetings and have members that reflect the importance of applied biology within food systems e.g. Multi-disciplinary approaches to reducing the level of acrylamide in food (Plant Physiology and Crop improvement); Traceability - Tracking and Tracing in the Food Chain (Pesticide Application); Residue Reduction through Biocontrol (Biocontrol).

Food systems integrate activity from farm to plate; these systems are not always linear and so the commonly used term "food chain" is not always appropriate. As in ecosystems, the outcomes are the result of the interaction of a complex web of substrates, environments and management interventions. Currently within the UK research community, there is considerable expertise in food systems including specialists who would otherwise call themselves agronomists, nutritionists, biochemists, material specialists and even engineers. While other organisations are focussed on one or two aspects of the food system (e.g. IFST on engineering and technology applications, SCI on particular ingredients), there is no organisation in the UK currently providing a platform for broad and inter-disciplinary discussions on issues at the forefront of the agenda for food systems such as sustainability, water use efficiency, C footprints, provision of environmental and health information etc. Biological processes are at the heart of these systems and therefore we are bringing forward a proposal for a broad-based "Food Systems" group within the AAB to represent the relevant interdisciplinary interests both in the UK and across Europe both within the research community and practitioners.

Working together with the Cropping and the



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Environment Group, we have already established a small group of interested parties who are organising a conference 'Food System Sustainability', which will run following the 'Traceability - Tracking and Tracing in the Food Chain' meeting in November. This group are happy to be nominated as the initial members of the proposed Food Systems Group and would suggest that Wayne Martindale (Sheffield Hallam) takes on the role of Convenor in the first instance. If you are interested in taking a role in this new group please contact Carol Millman at the AAB Office for further details. If you would like to be nominated as a member of the Group, please contact Alf Keys before 30 August.

Elizabeth Stockdale, July 2008

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