

## A COORDINATED AGENDA FOR MARINE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS SCIENCE (CAMERAS) (2011-2016)

Scottish Rural Property & Business Association Limited  
Stuart House  
Eskmills Business Park  
Musselburgh  
East Lothian  
EH22 4PN

The Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on a Coordinated Agenda for Marine, Environment and Rural Affairs Science (CAMERAS) (2011-2016). The SRPBA is the leading representative body for land managers in Scotland and is committed to helping deliver a vibrant rural sector that is sustainable, well managed, progressive and mutually responsible.

### General Comments

- The SRPBA believes that appropriate investment in scientific research and development is vital to the sustainable model of economic growth for Scotland. We therefore welcome the Scottish Government's cross-cutting proposal for a co-coordinated approach across all existing strategies for Agriculture, CAP, Forestry, Food and Health, Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- The SRPBA fully supports the vision outlined in the Scottish Government Economic Strategy which provides the framework for CAMERAS. In setting the context we would suggest that the CAMERAS should provide a more comprehensive background to the wider and complex policy context in which their work sits e.g. Rural Land Use Study, National Food Policy, Climate Change Bill and Flooding Bill. This would provide a more holistic approach to the paper and the ambitions of the CAMERA research. Although a number of policy papers have been referred to on page 3, the list is not exhaustive and it is not explicit how they interact with the Scottish Government Economic Strategy.
- Although CAMERAS will coordinate the Scottish Government's science and research agenda which should react to policy, there should also be scope for horizon scanning and a proactive research approach. The headline themes seem wide enough to allow this to occur but as the paper is general in its comments it is difficult to determine. The SRPBA recognises that Scotland produces internationally recognised research and researchers and we are minded that CAMERAS should allow for continued development in fields of excellence.
- The SRPBA believes that although the ambitions of the paper are worthy, the structure of the paper is quite general and confusing in its presentation. For example, it does not go on to describe CAMERAS until section 2. Perhaps a paragraph at the start would assist in framing the paper. It would also be helpful to demonstrate how CAMERAS interacts

with the current Strategic Research for SEERAD 2005-10 as it is not clear from the paper. Nor is it clear how CAMERAS will operate e.g. to facilitate opportunities to strengthen the linkages between organisations or to enable organisations to align and integrate their activities in support of high level priorities.

- Finally, the paper aims to provide knowledge for the Scottish Government as an audience; we believe that CAMERA should recognise and demonstrate wider stakeholder benefits.

### **Headline Themes (Questions 1-7)**

- We agree that the 2 categories of “Local Responses to Global Change” and “Optimising the Potential of Scotland’s Natural Assets” are appropriate and relevant as headline themes and are sufficiently clearly described.
- The language used in the description of the National Capability Theme is less clear to the layman. Our understanding is that this theme reflects the need to collect data and build facilities to be able to respond better to emergencies such as animal disease outbreaks. The document talks of a funding model and it is not entirely clear whether this relates to funding for the research/data collection or funding for dealing with the emergency in question.

### **Policy Issues (Questions 8–12)**

- In the section titled ‘Globalisation, Trade and Other’, the paper states that *‘there will also be a need to maintain a watching brief on technologies that do not currently contribute to policy choices in Scotland ....e.g. genetic modification of plants and animals and cloning’*. In order to achieve the delivery of national outcomes, particularly on sustainable food production in the face of global challenges such as population growth and climate change, it is necessary that the remit of any scientific research is active in considering these issues. Research into the potential benefits and risks of biotechnology/GMOs must be included in any programme of research. GM crops are now grown widely in both developing and industrialised nations, including 8 EU countries. The major threats to food security around the world are drought, saline conditions as sea levels rise, pests, disease and loss of agricultural land. The potential (both risks and benefits) of biotechnology must be fully investigated and understood before Scottish policy is developed. Scotland has world class scientific expertise and could be a leader in this field but risks being left behind.
- The scoping review on which the generic issues, headline themes and associated policy issues were based took place in 2007 before the current global economic crisis. Therefore responses to the crisis have not played a central role in the paper. As this issue is likely to impact on farmers’ decision making and behaviour, we believe it should be given a more central focus in the paper.

### **The Science (Questions 13-18)**

- The SRPBA has limited knowledge of the scope or levels of self reliance of Scotland's science, however, we would wish any future research to build on the current Strategic Research for SEERAD 2005-10.

#### **Delivery (Questions 19-24)**

- There is very little reference to Knowledge Exchange in the paper. As a stakeholder organization, we would wish to see effective interface between the science community, government and practitioners. Knowledge Exchange has improved in recent times but there is still scope for improvement. The lack of reference to stakeholders in this paper, other than the Scottish Government, should be addressed.

In general, we feel that the paper requires quite a bit of work. It is quite difficult to understand the structure and its interaction with the current research strategy. We would wish the paper to demonstrate a greater level of interaction with key stakeholders and a firm commitment to Knowledge Exchange.