

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

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this consultation. The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) is the trade association representing c90% of the Scotch Whisky industry. Our members are distillers, blenders, bottlers and those engaged in the wholesale and export trade in Scotch Whisky. The Scotch Whisky industry' annual exports are valued at over £2bn, making Scotch one of the UK's leading exports. The industry supports thousands of jobs across the Scottish and UK economies.

Our members rely on a clean environment for production and reputation purposes: plentiful and high quality cereals supplies (they source cereals from Scotland wherever possible); adequate volume of and good quality water supplies which are vital to our production and we rely on efficient and well connected infrastructure to ensure quick transport of our raw materials, people and final product.

We are regulated by a number of Scottish and UK regulatory bodies and we look to academia and research organisations in Scotland to provide both the fundamental research and applied science needed to support the science base required by our growing industry.

We have a number of general observations to make as well as specific comments on the consultation questions.

General Comments

Overall we welcome the consultation but found it very confusing and difficult to understand. We have, however, found it difficult to comment as the consultation is so broad and the overall themes so strategic that it is difficult to understand how these will translate down into specific research programmes. This is disappointing as the previous research strategy has 4 areas with 3 cross-cutting themes and we believe provided a clearer explanation of the priority areas. We would be concerned if the Government moved quickly to finalise CAMERAS without making more specific proposals for research strands and consulting on the detail. We would be very happy to meet with the Scottish Government to discuss our needs in terms of the Government's science policy.

We very much agree with the analysis on page 9 of the consultation on the desirability of “centres of excellence”. We rely on plentiful supplies of cereals (mostly barley, wheat and maize), preferably from Scottish sources. The quality of our cereals supplies is crucial to a successful Scotch Whisky industry – for example, barley required for distilling into Scotch has very narrow parameters in such that it doesn’t produce undesirable process breakdown products and that the distillation qualities we require are available in local grains.

Despite the Scotch Whisky industry’s importance to the UK economy, it is unlikely that barley research centres outside of Scotland and the UK will see our sector as ‘critical’ clients. Other users of cereals, such as the biofuels industry and other parts of the food and drink sector will also have their own specific requirements and research organisations and overseas centres of excellence will wish to be responsive to their diverse audiences. It is crucial therefore that local centres of excellence are encouraged and supported in Scotland. The Scotch Whisky industry relies on good cereals scientists that understand and are responsive to the research needs of the industry (strategic and applied). The Scottish Crop Research Institute (SCRI) is the centre of expertise in the UK for Barley Excellence and we would wish that the important work it undertakes to support the sustainability of the Scotch Whisky industry is suitably recognised by, and that funding flows to it from the Scottish Government.

The consultation is strong on how the environment will be supported but says little as to how rural industries such as ours will be supported. Rurally based industries also require science funding.

One area of concern for us is that whilst the document acknowledges that ‘science’ includes statistics, social sciences and economics etc., there appears to be little if any mention of social aspects of food chain research. We would expect that any RAE Directorate funded research programme should include consideration of health and social aspects of the agricultural supply chain of which the food and drink industry is critical. It would be particularly helpful to understand whether CAMERAS will include consideration of these areas of research which will undoubtedly be driven by the Government’s evolving Food and Drink Strategy (e.g. obesity and alcohol and health). It is critical that these areas of research are fully recognised as important to informing joined up Government policies and that full consideration is given to which part of the Scottish Government drives and funds such social and economic research.

Similarly we would expect CAMERAS to focus on other elements such as fundamental and strategic research to support the relevant indigenous marine and agricultural-based industries, protection of natural resources (e.g. gene banks/culture collections), training/education, etc.

Consultation Questions

Headline Themes

Do you agree that the two broad categories of 'Local Responses to Global Change' and 'Optimising the Potential of Scotland's Natural Assets' are helpful in providing an overlying structure to the Co-ordinated Agenda?

These themes are broadly helpful in providing a structure but they are so very broad, it is difficult to see precisely what is envisaged under each heading. Much more detail on the strands of work beneath each heading is required. For example, the document refers in general to the need for Scottish-based research and science to serve industry as well as policy makers but it is difficult to see from the headline themes where support for particular sectors lies, or indeed if the sustainability of Scotland's indigenous agricultural and food and drinks industry is a priority at all for CAMERAS.

Are the descriptions of these set out in Section 3 (and [Annex 3](#)) comprehensive? Do these cover the major policy challenges where science can contribute as you see them?

It is difficult to understand from the consultation where the key issues of energy security, GM and food security fit into the Scottish Government's structure. They don't appear to fit into any of the headline themes neatly. We wish to put a marker down that these are areas of science and research that are of key importance in terms of ensuring that Scotland has adequate energy (renewable or otherwise), understands the challenges of and consumer attitudes towards GM and ensuring that adequate quality supplies of indigenous Scottish crops are available to all users.

What facilities, resources and data do you think are important for Scotland to maintain?

As set out above, it is vital that Scotland ensures that we have the correct expertise and research capability (both in knowledge and facilities) to serve our important and indigenous cereals based industries. It may be argued that we could outsource cereals science overseas but it is less likely that the specific needs of the Scotch Whisky industry would be catered for alongside industries with a much larger demand for a less bespoke crop. Scottish businesses and supply chains are likely to transform small investments in the Scottish Science base into value added revenue generation that will continue to benefit the whole of Scotland and UK.

Policy Issues

What do you think will be the most important influences on Scotland's future in the Marine, Environment, Rural Affairs and related areas?

As previously mentioned, energy security, GM and food security are key influences. Additionally, we expect consumer behaviour and expectations to drive changes in the way industries operate and the design and environmental footprint of goods and services. Climate change is widely accepted to be one, if not the key influence on marine, environment and related areas – it will have an impact on the quality and quantity of our water supplies, the ability of crops to grow in our changed Scottish climate and will undoubtedly have an impact on landuse patterns in future.

A reliable, convenient, affordable and sustainable transport system is needed in Scotland. CAMERAS will need to consider relevant research and data needs to support its development in a sustainable fashion.

We would expect any Government research strategy to be alive to policy issues forthcoming from the international and European institutions. We would expect CAMERAS to have the capability to horizon-scan for new initiatives and understand how they would impact on Scotland or what opportunities there are in Scotland to deliver on aspects of new policies. This horizon scanning should also take account of understanding what potential technologies are being developed that Scotland's communities, businesses and public sector might take advantage of or even develop as research or commercial opportunities.

The Science

In which areas does Scotland need to be self reliant?

As previously mentioned, Scotland needs to remain responsive to the needs of its indigenous industries.

We hope that you find this input of use. We are keen to be consulted on further details of the research strategy as it emerges and would extend an offer to Scottish Government colleagues to meet to discuss our research needs during the development of the CAMERAS Strategy.