



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

**Agroecology for Sustainable
Food and Farming**

Annual Report 2015-16



APPG Annual Report 2015-16

ELECTION OF OFFICERS JUNE 2015

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer and Kerry McCarthy MP* were elected to Co-Chair; Baroness Jenkins of Kennington, Countess Mar and Jeremy Lefroy MP were appointed Officers. Baroness Young of Old Scone was appointed Officer in April 2016.

*Daniel Zeichner MP was elected Co-Chair at an EGM October 2015.

The APPG Agroecology for Sustainable Food and Farming continued to meet with experts and academics from across the food, farming and research sector. A summary of meetings is outlined here:

JUNE

15 of the UK's most innovative farmers and community food projects exhibited at the APPG's 'Farmers in Parliament' event. Businesswomen, Deborah Meaden opened the exhibition, Farming Minister George Eustice MP joined Deborah in meeting all exhibitors.

Producers from dairy to horticulture, traditional mixed farms, agroforestry and community growing initiatives demonstrated the wide variety of techniques that innovators in agroecology use to ensure their farms are economically viable, productive and efficient, while also producing a range of benefits to society and the environment. Over 35 MPs & Peers attended the exhibition.

Farmers in Parliament 2015 was kindly sponsored by World Animal Protection

NOVEMBER 2015

The APPG Agroecology for Sustainable Food and Farming and The APPG on Agriculture and Food for Development jointly hosted a meeting which explored the importance of seed conservation and looked at the on-going work of the Global Crop Diversity Trust in this field.

Maria Haga, Executive Director of the Crop Diversity Trust outlined the current programme to build and fund a global system to conserve all major agricultural food crops with particular focus on the international pledging conference April 2016.

The meeting highlighted the need to give priority for international support for in situ/on farm conservation by small-scale food providers, in addition to ex situ crop collection which need to focus on diversity and remain in the public domain.

The APPG recognised the importance of diversity. Without this agriculture cannot continue levels of productivity, nor meet the future challenges presented by population growth and climate change.



Farming Minister, George Eustice MP, Deborah Meaden, and Stephen Briggs, farmer, AbacusAgri consultant & head of soils at Innovation for Agriculture discussing Agroforestry



Peter Melchett, Soil Association with Deborah Meaden



Alice Holden, Growing Communities, with Deborah Meaden



Farming Minister, George Eustice MP and Patrick Holden, Dairy Farmer & Sustainable Food Trust



Baroness Parminter, Lib Dem, DEFRA Spokesperson with Neil Darwent of Free Range Dairy



Baroness Jenkins of Kennington, with Patrick Krause, Scottish Crofting Federation

World Animal Protection with Deborah Meaden



NOVEMBER 2015 - JANUARY 2016

The APPG conducted an inquiry into soil health and protection. Evidence was heard across three oral evidence sessions from the witnesses including

- Martin Rodgers (National Farmers Union)
- Peter Melchett (Soil Association)
- Prof. Andy Whitmore (Rothamsted Research)
- Lord Deben (Committee on Climate Change)
- Robert Askew (land classification specialist)
- Prof. Steve McGrath (Rothamsted Research)
- Georgina McAllister (Garden Africa)
- Vicki Hird (War on Want)
- Prof. Mark Kibblewhite (Emeritus professor, Cranfield University)

With written evidence from

- Graham Harvey (Agricultural journalist, author of *The Carbon Fields*)
- Prof. Tim Wheeler (Department for International Development)

The Group produced four reports highlighting serious concerns around the following key areas:

- **Climate change:** soil can act as both a carbon sink and emitter, but government policy does not go far enough to preserve soil quality and current incremental plans to improve agricultural performance are far from sufficient. Soils must be incorporated into the Government's climate change strategy.
- **Knowledge:** it is not possible to study soil science below postgraduate level, often making soil the most neglected component of land use. Policymakers, farm businesses and advisers are less likely to consider soil as the cause or solution to a problem.
- **Testing and data collection:** the national picture on soil health is deplorably lacking, and there are currently no assessment plans, despite the Government commitment to ensure that all soils are managed sustainably by 2030.
- **Farming methods:** maize crops for energy use are often proving to be implicated in soil compaction and flooding. Policy must also encourage extensive farming over intensive farming, and business and political infrastructure surrounding our diverse farm sector must work harder to safeguard soil.

The reports were sent to Ministers and Shadow Ministers, MPs/Peers, non government stakeholders and are on the APPG website www.agroecologyappg.org

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer, who led the inquiry panel, concluded *"Failure to tackle current problems are a path to an environmental catastrophe. Reversing the loss of soils, building a national knowledge base and ensuring good practice are essential first steps to sustainable soil management and food production."*



OCTOBER 2015

The role of Agroecology in Sustainable Intensification.

The APPG hosted a meeting to review The Land Use Policy Group of the UK's Nature Conservation (LUPG's) report on the role of agroecology in sustainable intensification, published June 2015 (available on the APPG Website).

The report looked at the range of agroecological practices relevant in the UK, and the most common farming approaches making use of them (including integrated, organic and agroforestry). The report evaluated their contribution to productivity, profitability and environmental performance of farming systems, concluding that some approaches, such as agroforestry, might generate win-win situations for productivity and the environment.

James Petts from Natural England outlined the background to the work, the report's lead author Nic Lampkin, Director of the Organic Research Centre presented the main findings and co-author Alistair Leake of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust reflected on the implications of agroecology for the wider farming community.

The APPG agreed with the policy needs set out in the Report and will work to support its efforts to encourage the adoption of agroecological principles and practices.

MAY 2016

The APPG held a briefing session for MPs and Peers to review the French Agroecology plan and 2014 Act.

Eric Giry (Agricultural Counsellor for the UK and Ireland, Embassy of France in London) who was involved in developing and introducing the French Agroecology plan and 2014 Act outlined the background and process for the Act and Plan.

Agroecology recognises that agriculture, land use, food and environment is a complex and interrelated system. It is not sustainable to single out just one objective, such as maximising production, without also ensuring that the systems which delivers those increased yields meets

society's other needs such as public and environmental health. The wide-ranging initiatives are coordinated between the French Ministry of Agriculture and key stakeholders and include education, support for farmers, public engagement, public and private research.

Professor Nic Lampkin, Executive Director, of the Organic Research Centre provided a review of agroecology

in the UK, and the fact that it is beginning to receive attention from DEFRA and the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), research institutes, universities, and agricultural colleges. The meeting concluded with a short discussion on policy opportunities. The APPG along with the Organic Research Centre agreed to return to this discussion early in 2017.

STAKEHOLDERS

The aims of the APPG are supported by the following:



www.cpre.org.uk



www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/agroecology-water-resilience/



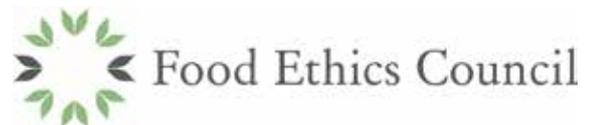
www.ciwf.org.uk

ECONEXUS

www.econexus.info



www.find-your-feet.org



www.foodethicscouncil.org



www.gardenafrica.org.uk



www.globaljustice.org.uk



www.gmfreeze.org



www.organicresearchcentre.com



www.pastureforlife.org



www.campaignforrealfarming.org



www.rspb.org.uk



www.soilassociation.org



www.ukfg.org.uk



www.waronwant.org



www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk

WHAT NEXT?

Agroecology has a key role to play in 21st century food production and reducing climate change. The APPG will continue to push for the adoption of agroecological principles, policies and practices across all relevant departments of government. In 2016/2017 the APPG will

continue its work on soil and climate change, but with an added focus on social justice. The APPG would like to thank all the NGOs, businesses, farmers, community projects, individuals and academics it has worked with for their help and support during the year.

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CO-CHAIRS OF THE APPG ON AGROECOLOGY



Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer. Sue Miller has a long and deep interest in and experience of agricultural and rural issues. As a Somerset Councillor in the 1990s she led the council to develop both local food policies and later to redefine the purpose of the county farms estate. She was MAFF then DEFRA spokesman for the Lib Dems in the

House of Lords from 1999-2007. She also co-chairs the Food and Health APPG.



Daniel Zeichner was elected MP for Cambridge in 2015. Daniel study History at Cambridge and worked in IT before working for the Norfolk Labour Party and serving as a Norfolk Cllrs for 8 years. Daniel also served on Labour's National Policy Forum. Prior to entering Parliament Daniel worked for public sector trade union Unison. Daniel currently serves

as Shadow Transport Minister.



Baroness Jenkin of Kennington became a Conservative life peer in 2011 in recognition of her charity and political work. She is Chairwoman of International Development, the Sustainable Resource APPG. Baroness Jenkin also works with the Prince's Trust and is a leading advocate for reduction in food waste. Anne takes part in the annual 'Live

below the line' campaign, living on £1 per day for a week.



Jeremy Lefroy was elected as Conservative MP for Stafford in 2010. Prior to entering Parliament Jeremy worked as a qualified chartered accountant in manufacturing, international trade and agriculture. Jeremy believes in tackling poverty through enterprise and job creation and founded Equity for Africa (www.equityforafrica.org). He currently

serves on the International Development Select Committee and also co-chairs the APPG Agriculture and Food for Development. Jeremy is also Chair of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and IMF.



The Countess of Mar, an Independent Crossbencher member of the House of Lords since 1975, is Deputy Chairman/Speaker and a member of the Delegated Legislation and Regulatory Reform Committee. A former farmer in Worcestershire, she has a strong interest in the effects of toxic chemicals in agriculture and in all aspects of ME/CFS and other

related illnesses. She is also interested in animal health and welfare.



Baroness Young of Old Scone, a Life Peer since 1997. She served 20 years in health service management, was Chief Executive of the RSPB and the Environment Agency, Chairman of the Care Quality Commission and Vice-Chairman of the BBC. She served as a member of the Government's Climate Change Adaptation Committee and is

President and Vice-President of a range of wildlife and conservation charities. She is currently the Chairman of the Woodland Trust.



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Agroecology for Sustainable Food and Farming

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