

*This is an update on the newsletter we circulated shortly after the Defra Consultation on the future of AHDB opened in mid-November.*

*On 10 November, we held a meeting of the Crop Association Chairs. Part of the meeting was devoted to 'what happens next'. There is a broadening consensus that a 'do nothing' option is not the right solution, and that the industry will need to come to an agreement about how best to manage and fund the 'must do' R&D functions in the future.*

*One area where there is a significant amount of agreement is on the question of crop protection and emergency use approvals. The Government has made it clear that it is not willing to pay for this activity and if the industry wants it to continue, then the industry will need to fund it.*

*The second area of general agreement is that the fairest way of funding this activity is if all growers contribute to the cost on the basis that all growers stand to benefit. Historically AHDB has carried out the EAMU function but that is not to say this is the most efficient way of organising this activity in the future. There could be other organisation that might be willing to do this work.*

*The Grower Better Levy Group has been exploring the cost of the EAMU work and suggested a levy of between 10% and 15% of the old ADHB levy would raise sufficient funds to allow this work to continue. Consequently, the issue for consideration is whether there is merit in asking Defra to retain the compulsory levy raising powers to allow the collection of funds from all growers to fund the cost of future crop protection work. This is effectively what Defra is asking in Q 10 of the consultation.*

*On the question of the wider R&D work, the appetite to continue to invest in R&D projects varies from crop to crop.*

*A further suggestion from the GLBG is for the statutory levy powers to be retained for this activity but with the proviso that crop groups should have the power to determine their R&D priorities and then vote on these and the cost. If there is a majority in favour, then the choice to raise the required funding through a statutory levy would remain as an option. This is the model which operates in New Zealand and commands widespread support from its growers.*

*I should stress that the role of British Growers is not to tell growers how to vote but we do see our role as keeping growers up to date with thinking from other parts of the industry and with this in mind we have agreed with the GLBG to circulate their document setting out their draft response to the consultation.*

*This is undoubtedly a complicated issue, and the knock-on effects are far reaching. There is still a long way to go in terms of what a future crop protection and R&D function could look like. Ultimately everything will come down to resources and the issue for consideration now is what is the most effective and efficient way to ensure those resources are available as and when required for the future.*

*Finally, after a pretty traumatic year can we take this opportunity of behalf of all the team here at British Growers to wish you a peaceful and Covid free Christmas and let's hope 2022 turns out to be a better year for us all.*

*Kind regards,  
c/o Jack Ward N.Sch, FRAGS  
British Growers Association  
Ltd*