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## How can food and farming research deliver for the long-term public good?

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There's an intergenerational problem in setting a 'fit for purpose' R&D agenda for food and farming in the UK. How can research bodies do justice to today's short-term commercial pressures, without letting those pressures overwhelm the need for a longer-term examination of what will 'make for success' in 20 to 30 years' time?

That may sound like hyperbolic rhetoric. But ask yourself: with at least 80% of today's R&D invested in conventional intensive farming, how much of that spend has realistically factored in the dramatic impacts of accelerating climate change – not just here in the UK, but in those countries on which we currently depend for significant imports of food and raw materials? How much of it has factored in the inevitability that we will not be able to use man-made nitrogen and phosphorus-based fertilisers in the ludicrously irresponsible way that we do today?

Have research councils and academics got to grips with the fact that fossil fuels can no longer underpin our wholly spurious notions of agricultural productivity, where we use somewhere between 12 and 20 energy calories to produce one calorie's-worth of food? And what of the soil? Reputable soil scientists here in the UK tell us we have no more than 100 harvests before it's game-over for any serious farming enterprise in much of the UK. Do the maths.

These are big questions. Unfortunately, today's beguiling but utterly hollow terminology about 'climate-smart agriculture' or (even more cynically) 'sustainable intensification' tells us all we need to know about the delusions of those who set today's agenda for the future of food and farming in the UK.