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

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I have always cared about the relationship between environmental sustainability and food security. With 52% of the food we eat coming from the UK, more research is needed to find ways of ensuring that our food supplies are secure, particularly in the face of issues such as Brexit and its implications for the agricultural workforce.

We live in a time of technological revolution, and food production and farming are no exception. Through research we can make use of new technologies such as automatic milking, robotic farming and hydroponics, which can be labour saving, environmentally sustainable and secure.

However, we must also give thought to reversing the massive rise in intensive factory farming and mega-farms. As well as concerns about animal welfare, these also have negative implications for public health. For example, almost three quarters of factory-farmed pork and chicken sold in UK supermarkets has been found to be contaminated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria such as *E. coli*.

We could also carry out more research into our eating habits. For example, can we realistically sustain our insatiable appetite for meat? If we want to continue delivering food for the long term, a diet with less meat would reduce the need for intensive farming.

Finally, we would do well to ask how we use the food we generate. Our country throws away more than seven million tonnes of edible food each year. With a steadily growing population we need to find more efficient and environmentally friendly ways of using the food and farms we already have before expanding in an unsustainable way.