

Despite a significant growth in food production over the past half-century, one of the most important challenges facing society today is how to feed an expected population of some nine billion by the middle of the 21st century. To meet the expected demand for food without significant increases in prices, it has been estimated that we need to produce 70-100 per cent more food, in light of the growing impacts of climate change, concerns over energy security, regional dietary shifts and the Millennium Development target of halving world poverty and hunger by 2015. The goal for the agricultural sector is no longer simply to maximize productivity, but to optimize across a far more complex landscape of production, rural development, environmental, social justice and food consumption outcomes. However, there remain significant challenges to developing national and international policies that support the wide emergence of more sustainable forms of land use and efficient agricultural production. The lack of information flow between scientists, practitioners and policy makers is known to exacerbate the difficulties, despite increased emphasis upon evidence-based policy. In this paper, we seek to improve dialogue and understanding between agricultural research and policy by identifying the 100 most important questions for global agriculture. These have been compiled using a horizon-scanning approach with leading experts and representatives of major agricultural organizations worldwide. The aim is to use sound scientific evidence to inform decision making and guide policy makers in the future direction of agricultural research priorities and policy support. If addressed, we anticipate that these questions will have a significant impact on global agricultural practices worldwide, while improving the synergy between agricultural policy, practice and research. This research forms part of the UK Government's Foresight Global Food and Farming Futures project.

The paper:

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