

Dr Alastair Leake Receives National Agricultural Award for Leading The Allerton Project

Friday 8 September, 2023

The Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) has awarded its 2023 National Agricultural Award to Dr Alastair Leake, the director of policy at the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT). The award recognises his outstanding contribution to British agriculture through his work leading The Allerton Project, a research and demonstration farm in Leicestershire that showcases how commercial farming and high levels of biodiversity can co-exist.

Dr Leake received the award from Andrew Wraith, Head of Food & Farming at Savills, at a ceremony held at the Royal Windsor Estate, courtesy of His Majesty the King. The award is given annually to an individual who has made a significant impact on the advancement of agriculture in the UK.

Dr Leake has been at the helm of The Allerton Project for 22 years, overseeing and leading ground-breaking research on the effects of different farming methods on biodiversity. The Allerton farm is one of the DEFRA Sustainable Intensification Demonstration Platforms and has attracted thousands of visitors, including farmers, policymakers, researchers, and students, who have learned from its innovative practices.

The award judges praised Dr. Leake for his tireless efforts to discover and communicate how agricultural production systems can allow for high levels of food production and biodiversity to occur simultaneously. David Grint, CEO of the Royal Agricultural Society, said "We were delighted to present Alastair with the RASE National Agricultural Award. He has made an extraordinary contribution to British agriculture through his work leading The Allerton Project, which has done so much to pioneer and popularise ways of farming with nature."

At a when intensive agriculture has too often been associated with environmental degradation, Dr Leake has shown how farming with nature can benefit both farmers and wildlife.

Dr Leake said he was "humbled, honoured and thrilled" to receive the award. "I have been fortunate to have worked alongside some outstanding colleagues through my 30 years of involvement with agricultural and environmental trials", he commented, "the incredibly generous gift of the Loddington Estate by the Late Lord and Lady Allerton and their vision for the Allerton Project has inspired all of us. Never before has it been so important for us to find ways to grow our food and protect nature and the environment simultaneously."

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