Sainsbury's Ploughs £1 Million Investment Into British Farming

Monday 9 September, 2013

Sainsbury's is pledging £1 million to its British farmers and growers as part of an investment in the future of British farming. The Sainsbury's 2013 Research and Development Grant, launching today, calls for long term sustainable solutions to improve UK livestock, aquaculture, horticulture and agronomy practices and processes. The grants which are open to over 2,000 farmers and growers that the retailer works with across the UK, comes at a time when growing conditions and prices have become more volatile.

Applications open Wednesday 4th September and close at 5pm on Friday 18th October 2013, with awarded projects announced at Sainsbury's annual farming conference on Friday 6th December. Positioned at members of Sainsbury's Development Groups, the investment adds to the £1.2 million that was handed out across 14 projects last year. Building on this success it will be looking to take existing research or technology into a commercial environment or commission new research in a farm environment in order to improve welfare, environmental, quality and safety standards. The awarded grants will be made against three priorities:

Improvement in animal, fish or plant health, nutrition and welfare with a tangible impact on final product quality (where applicable)
Development of agricultural solutions that deliver sustainable intensification whilst improving quality and securing resilient supply chains.
Development of new products or processes that improve safety, quality, taste or freshness.

A number of the projects will run over the coming years, however two projects from 2012 have already been completed with successful results, this includes an observational trial on the effects of foot trimming on lame sheep.

Judith Batchelar, Director of Sainsbury's Brand said: "Following the initial success of the R&D grants we awarded last year I look forward to seeing what innovative projects come through the applications. We are proud to work closely with our suppliers, producers and growers as we move towards our stretching 20x20 commitments including doubling sales of British food as part of our 20x20 Sustainability Plan. Our customers want to buy high quality, fresh British food and by finding ways of getting this to them in a more efficient way brings benefits to the whole supply chain.

This along with the imminent start of our Agricultural graduates shows the way in which this vital industry continues to develop despite the impacts of climate change and competition from farming abroad."
Farming Minister, David Heath said: "Global demand for food is rising to such a degree that agricultural production needs to increase by 60 percent in the next forty years just to catch up. There is no better time to invest in the next generation of technologies that will help us meet this challenge. Our food and drink industry trades on the back of a global reputation for quality. I am right behind any initiative that gives British businesses new opportunities to grow economically, employ more people and help Britain compete in the global race."

Sainsbury's Farmer Development Groups has brought together over 2,000 farmers across ten producer groups by agricultural areas (dairy, beef, pork, lamb, veal, eggs, chicken, cheese, wheat, and produce). In particular Sainsbury's has been applauded for its industry-leading Dairy Development Group (SDDG) which operates a Cost of Production model which pays a fair price including a bonus for animal welfare and environmental responsibility. Through these groups Sainsbury's recently committed to all its fresh pork being 100% British, while Veal is the latest group to be established. Made up of seven farmers the calves are raised to RSPCA Freedom Food standards and housed on dedicated farms in small groups. As with SDDG, the Veal Development Group farmers receive all the benefits of the unique Cost of Production model.

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