



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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Dame Chi Onwurah MP
Chair, Science, Innovation and Technology Committee
House of Commons
London
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16 July 2026

Follow up on oral evidence session on *Innovation and Global Food Security*

Dear Dame Chi,

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee's inquiry on Innovation and Global Food Security on 7 July 2026.

During the session Committee Members requested additional evidence on a number of issues relating to the Government's approach to Official Development Assistance (ODA) funded Research and Development (R&D) on global food security. Please find below further information in response to those requests.

What is the Government's strategy to ODA-funded R&D, and how does it ensure that investments contribute to global food security?

On 18 May 2026 I launched the Government's new approach to ODA-funded R&D, to be delivered through the [Global Research and Technology Development \(GRTD\) portfolio](#)¹. GRTD funds and delivers research and innovation to tackle shared global challenges, working in strategic partnership with governments, multilateral institutions, foundations and research organisations to generate evidence, technologies and insights that improve policy and practice and achieve impact at scale. Food security is a core part of this agenda, recognising the importance of climate-resilient, productive and nutritious food systems for development, resilience and long-term prosperity.

GRTD focuses on producing global public goods that can be adapted and used widely across countries and contexts. This includes supporting scientific advances, new technologies and robust evidence, while also addressing the barriers that often prevent innovation from reaching farmers and communities. Our approach therefore extends beyond research itself, supporting the partnerships, systems, capabilities and

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-research-and-technology-development-approach-paper-2026>

pathways needed to enable adoption and scale. We work with partner countries, multilateral organisations and the private sector to ensure that innovations are relevant, locally-led and capable of delivering lasting impact.

This reflects a broader shift in the UK's approach to development R&D: from donor to investor, from service delivery to system support, from grants to expertise, and from international intervention to local leadership. Through cross-government coordination and the Gilbert Initiative, departments align investments around shared priorities, helping ensure that UK-funded research contributes to stronger, more resilient food systems and wider international development objectives.

What benefits does the UK derive from international agricultural R&D investments such as CGIAR?

The primary purpose of the UK's international agricultural R&D investments is to improve food security, resilience and livelihoods in low- and middle-income countries. However, these investments also generate significant benefits for the UK. Stronger and more resilient global food systems help reduce exposure to climate, disease and geopolitical shocks, support more stable food supplies, and contribute to lower and less volatile global food prices. As a country that imports around 40% of its food, the UK has a direct interest in the resilience of international agricultural systems.

CGIAR provides a clear example of these mutual benefits. As one of the UK's largest and longest-standing agricultural research partnerships, CGIAR has supported the development of climate-resilient and higher-yielding crop varieties used by millions of farmers globally. Recent analysis estimates that around 65% of wheat grown in the UK has origins in CGIAR research and that CGIAR-related innovations have generated at least £193 million annually in additional profitability for UK wheat production since 1971. For every £1 invested by the UK in CGIAR, UK farmers are estimated to receive between £1.60 and £2.40 in productivity benefits.

The UK also benefits through stronger scientific partnerships, international collaboration and continued investment in UK research capability. ODA-funded agricultural research supports a wide range of UK universities and research institutions, including Rothamsted Research, the John Innes Centre, NIAB, and the James Hutton Institute. These partnerships help ensure that UK expertise in areas such as crop science, livestock health, nutrition, climate resilience and emerging technologies contributes to solving shared global challenges while reinforcing the UK's position as a world leader in agricultural science and innovation. The UK-CGIAR Science Collaboration Centre further strengthens these links by connecting UK researchers with global agricultural research programmes and accelerating the translation of research into practical solutions.

How is intellectual property generated through ODA-funded research managed?

The Government takes a proportionate and flexible approach to intellectual property generated through ODA-funded research. Intellectual property in all material produced by our partners or their personnel is the property of the delivery partner, and partners must commit to appropriate management of intellectual property in accordance with all applicable laws and best practice. There is no single model for licensing that applies across all programmes. Instead, licensing arrangements are designed to ensure that publicly funded research delivers the greatest possible development impact while also supporting innovation, investment and the effective delivery of technologies at scale.

In many cases, open access is the preferred approach, particularly where research outputs are intended to function as global public goods. This includes research evidence, tools and crop varieties that can be adapted and used widely by researchers, governments and farmers. CGIAR is an important example of this model, with many research outputs made openly available to maximise uptake and impact. However, open access is not always the most effective route to deployment. In areas such as animal health, commercial partners may play an important role in developing, manufacturing and distributing livestock vaccines. In these cases, FCDO-supported programmes may use licensing arrangements that encourage investment while maintaining access for low- and middle-income countries.

The Committee asked whether individual multinational companies have benefited from IP associated with our research. We have in place robust safeguards to ensure that IP arising from UK ODA funded research cannot be used to generate exclusive commercial advantage for particular companies. Where private sector partners are involved, intellectual property arrangements are designed to support the development and scale-up of innovations while ensuring they remain accessible and affordable. The focus is not on ownership of IP but on putting in place robust, typically non-exclusive licensing and access arrangements so that innovations can reach the people who need them most.

How does the Government address concerns around fair use of biodiversity internationally?

The UK plays an active role in the international governance of genetic resources, including addressing concerns around so-called “biopiracy” and the fair use of biodiversity. The UK was a founding Contracting Party to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, with Defra acting as the UK National Focal Point. The Treaty provides a framework for the conservation and sustainable use of crop diversity and facilitates the sharing of genetic resources alongside fair and equitable benefit-sharing, helping to reduce the risk that resources originating in low- and middle-income countries are used without appropriate returns.

Through mechanisms such as the Treaty’s Multilateral System of Access and Benefit Sharing, genetic resources can be shared internationally in a transparent, rules-based way that supports research, crop improvement and food security, while recognising

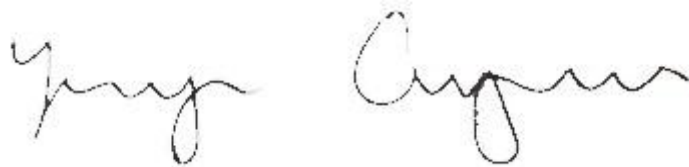
the contribution of source countries. The UK also participates in the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which develops international approaches to the sustainable use, conservation and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

We recognise that advances in science, including the increasing use of digital sequence information, have raised new questions internationally about how benefit-sharing frameworks apply and whether existing arrangements fully address risks. The UK is actively engaged in these discussions, including recent agreements under the Convention on Biological Diversity, such as the establishment of the Cali Fund, which are designed to strengthen global approaches to benefit-sharing in light of these changes.

Across our research partnerships and development programmes, we support approaches that combine scientific excellence with equitable access, technology transfer and local capability development. This ensures that countries contributing genetic resources are partners in innovation and benefit from its application, helping to mitigate the risk of misappropriation while maintaining an open and collaborative international research system that underpins global food security and sustainable development.

I look forward to continuing working with you on this important agenda.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Chapman', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon. Baroness Chapman of Darlington
Minister of State for International Development and Africa