

## **Syngenta – Written evidence (LSI0125)**

### **Introduction**

1.0 Syngenta is a global multinational agricultural technology company headquartered in Switzerland. We are an innovation-driven company so our focus is on inventing and commercialising new agricultural technologies to help farmers produce our food, specifically new crop protection technologies and new varieties of seeds. We are unique amongst our peers in that we have a disproportionate number of sites located in the UK supporting global or regional functions – R&D, manufacturing, supply chain, legal & taxes. So the UK industrial strategy is really important to us.

### **Feedback on the Industrial Strategy**

2.0 There are several points we would wish to make based on the Industrial Strategy Green Paper and Sir John Bell's report on the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy:

#### **The scale of the opportunity in agriculture**

2.1 Agriculture is not mentioned at all in either the Green Paper or Sir John Bell's report, whereas many of the other technologies which featured prominently in the previous industrial strategy are still present. This would seem to indicate a deliberate de-emphasis of the agri-food sector. It feels wrong that the UK's biggest manufacturing sector, worth over £100 billion a year and employing 12.5% of the country's workforce, doesn't even get a mention in the nation's flagship new Industrial Strategy.

2.2 The agri-food sector is a fundamental and essential component of the global economy. Future growth in global food demand is assured, and there is huge potential for the UK to play a leading role in developing new technologies to deliver both improved food security around the world and economic prosperity for this country. These arguments are eloquently made in Sir John Beddington's 2011 report *The Future of Food and Farming: Challenges and choices for global sustainability*, and they remain just as relevant today.

#### **The unique position of the UK**

2.3 Syngenta is a truly global company with over 100 research and development sites all around the world. Collaborating with external partners – universities, research institutes and other companies – is now an increasingly important approach to innovation. We currently have over 500 active collaborative R&D projects, and more of these are with partners based in the UK than any other country in the world.

2.4 This suggests that UK is a great place – maybe even the best place – in which to participate in collaborative research in agricultural technology. Two key factors are responsible:

- The excellence of the science base: we have some of the world's best scientists at some of the world's best scientific institutions.
- Government policy can also take much credit, for example the recent focus on demonstrating impact in public sector research, the ability of the private sector to leverage public funding to part-support research collaborations, and the recent focus and investment in agri-tech have all made a significant difference.

### **Exploiting synergy between sectors**

- 2.5 The way the Green Paper is written treats each sector as if it were discrete and self-contained, but this is not a true reflection of the situation. There are clear links between technologies for use in agriculture and technologies in other sectors such as robotics and autonomous systems, health and nutrition, big data and digital technologies, synthetic biology, nanotechnology, climate change mitigation and clean energy, genetics, drug design, etc.
- 2.6 The phenomenon of convergence is a megatrend in global science, and makes the compartmentalisation of science and technology into discrete sectors less and less relevant. In fact there is significant opportunity in embracing convergence and focussing more on exploiting synergies between sectors in a more integrative and systematic way. If this could be successfully achieved it would be an exciting new development and make the UK a desirable destination for inward investment and technical innovation.

### **Conclusions**

- 3.0 The UK industrial strategy is really important for Syngenta. The current definition of "Life Sciences" appears to be very narrow: essentially just biomedical sciences. The agri-food sector got a real boost as a result of its prominence in the previous industrial strategy, but there is no mention of agriculture or food production in the current Industrial Strategy. The UK is uniquely positioned to take a global lead in agricultural technologies, and the economic opportunities are compelling. The strategy is also not constructed in a way which would best enable the exploitation of synergies between technology sectors which may be a missed opportunity in an increasingly convergent world.

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