

Environment, natural resources and agriculture research draft strategy

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Introduction

Confor (www.confor.org.uk) is the not-for-profit organisation for the UK's sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses. It has 1,500 member companies, representing the whole forestry and wood supply chain.

The [draft strategy](#) for consultation sets out how the research providers collectively known as SEFARI¹ will help deliver Scottish Government's land use aims.

In the past, SEFARI research has suffered from a lack of integration with forestry. This has resulted in outputs which rely on partial or outdated knowledge of forestry and wood production, and present a skewed picture of land use as a result.

In this response Confor calls for a much closer relationship between SEFARI and the forestry sector's research providers and knowledge exchange professionals.

Answer to consultation questions

1. Are the objectives and priorities set out in the strategy sufficiently clear?

Yes

2. The research strategy outlines 5 Research Themes. Is this an appropriate way of structuring our work?

Yes. Forestry expertise should be embedded in the following research themes: Rural Futures, Natural Resources and Human impacts on the environment.

3. Do you think the research strategy will enable us to get the best research and scientific evidence from the best providers?

SEFARI-funded projects should include input from the forestry sector as appropriate. Too often in the past, land use research has been focused on food and environment, so that where forestry is involved the project has lacked up-to-date knowledge of its governance, of the benefits of forestry, of the Scottish timber supply chain, or of its role in decarbonisation. An example of this is the [Glensaugh natural capital assessment](#) which omitted significant evidence in its assessment of the wood-producing forest on the site.

¹ James Hutton Institute, Scotland's Rural College, Moredun Research Institute, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland and Rowett Institute

4. Are the proposals for maximising impact appropriate?

SEFARI knowledge exchange should have close links with Scottish Forestry / Forestry and Land Scotland / Forest Research knowledge exchange.

Horizon scanning must integrate knowledge not only across land uses, but also across the supply chain to identify future shortages. Timber shortage is likely to be a significant limitation on development of the zero-carbon economy, and should be taken into consideration alongside food, energy and other products of the land. This supply chain integration will be vital to deliver Scotland and the UK's pathway to net-zero, as highlighted by the Climate Change Committee's [Sixth Carbon Budget](#).

5. Do you support the proposals on delivering our investment?

Appropriate expertise from the forestry sector must be included in the Centres of Expertise on climate change, water, plant health, and the new centre on biodiversity.

6. How do you think the Responsive Research Fund (RRF) should be developed and operated?

No answer

7. Do you support our aims in working collaboratively with other funding providers?

Yes

8. Do you support the new structure for Governance set out within the strategy?

Yes. Forestry expertise should be represented on the Scientific Advisory Board. This will be essential to deliver aims such as:

'Planning of different land uses is fully integrated and joined up across sectors and scales' (p.28)

'Develop a single projection model to project GHG emissions under a range of Scottish farming/land scenarios (including grasslands and moorlands), to include changes in land use, agriculture and forestry under different business and emissions scenarios' (p.29)

'Develop evidence-based solutions that enhance nature and biodiversity, across a range of policies, practice and scales (including green infrastructure, farming, protected areas, habitat connectivity and ancient woodland restoration)' (p.35)

'Analyse and identify the best approaches to forestry to address the climate emergency and biodiversity loss, in the context of Scotland's current land ownership pattern.' (p.39)

9. Do you have any further comments or suggestions?