



Supporting Seed Innovation



**BRITISH SOCIETY OF
PLANT BREEDERS LTD**

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Information from the British Society of Plant Breeders

WINTER 2021

SAMANTHA BROOKE HEADS UP BSPB

Dealing with the combined challenges of Covid-19 and the UK's exit from the EU have certainly been a baptism of fire for me and the BSPB team. However, we are now back in the office and working together to help you as the nation adjusts to the changes we have all experienced.

The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the potential fragilities of our food system. The critical role of British agriculture and its allied industries to safeguard the nation's food supply has never been clearer. We have been working to demonstrate the value that plant breeders, seed suppliers and farmers bring to the food chain and how we are all supporting the ongoing food requirements of the nation.



Since taking over as chief executive I have instigated a number of changes, including a fresh look for BSPB with a new website. I am confident that this will reflect our renewed commitment to be more outward-facing and transparent as an organisation and as an industry. This will enable us to be more vocal in championing the positive contribution of seed innovation to our planet, our people, and our climate.

Sam Brooke, BSPB Chief Executive

Andrew Newby / BSPB Chairman

The BSPB has undergone some changes since our last newsletter. We have a new brand, website, and CEO. Samantha Brooke joined us as CEO in 2020 and has been busy developing the new look BSPB to help position the organisation more closely with its members, farmers, and growers.

It has been a busy year with adjustments being made as a result of the pandemic and Brexit. 2022 promises to be a more optimistic year so we wanted to bring you a flavour of what has been happening and what we have to look forward to.

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DAVID LEAPER – SEED TECHNICAL SPECIALIST – AGRII

David has worked for seed companies for much of his career. He is an advocate of quality certified seed and supports the efforts of plant breeders bringing new genetics to farming. He also sees the benefit of farmers having the opportunity to multiply quality seed through the farm saved seed process.

“Having the flexibility to enable farmers to save seed is an excellent buffer to cope with the prospect of not having enough certified seed. However, certified seed is the only way to get new varieties and the only way to secure quality seed for the future. It reduces the likelihood of diseases and improves the prospect of higher yields,” he says.

Seed represents the start of the crop and the day of drilling is the most important. In order for a crop to realise its full potential farmers and growers need to be using the purist and most productive seeds available.

“Farmers should aim to use the best quality seed which is underpinned by the certification process. As a tradable commodity the purity and quality of certified seed is ensured. Field and lab inspections offer the attention of detail needed to regulate the system, and seed treatments makes sure that there are low levels of disease.”

Seed treatments are the most targeted way of controlling

diseases like smut and bunt. Today’s seed treatments are very well regulated to minimise risk to non-target species and the environment.

“We have an excellent system that keeps seed-borne diseases at very low levels. Laboratory testing is increasingly being used to establish disease levels to decide whether to treat for disease or not. This is particularly evident in farm-saved seed but even here seed treatments continue to be widely used to build yield by stimulating root and shoot growth or providing early crop nutrition.”



THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD SEED

Using quality seed is the foundation of farming. Plant breeders are continually developing new genetics to help crops be more resistant to disease and more resilient in our changing climate. Using certified seed offers farmers and growers greater confidence. However, farm saved seed is also important to maintain the quantity of seed needed to meet crop demand.

In the UK we have an excellent system for royalty capture. Our breeders are able to use the royalties to fund further development which helps to introduce new genetics. Our farmers have the opportunity to save and reuse the best seed which offers cost savings. BSPB is here to help both breeders and farmers to work together.

Our goal is to promote quality seed which produces the best crops and helps secure the sustainability of UK agriculture.

BSPB HAS LAUNCHED A NEW WEBSITE

The new BSPB website has been designed to help you find out more about our work and how you can contribute.

We want to involve farmers and growers in our work, and we also want to demonstrate the value of your seed payments to agricultural sustainability and food security.

The website is updated regularly with industry news and announcements which we hope will keep everyone better informed.

There is a new payments portal for you to make farm saved seed declarations. This new digital method is faster and easier to use. If you need any advice, please contact us and we can help you.

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