



2019 GENERAL ELECTION

Crop Protection Association Mini-Manifesto

Our policy priorities for the next government

We stand on the threshold of the fourth Agricultural Revolution. Where advances in science and agricultural technology will ensure a supply of healthy, affordable food, whilst reducing the impact on the environment and leaving space for nature.

This is essential if we are to meet the challenge of feeding a global population expected to rise from 7.5 billion today to 9 billion by 2050 in the face of climate change and competition for finite natural resources.

Brexit has shaken the entire political landscape, but amidst the challenges there is a unique opportunity for UK farming to lead the way in agricultural science, technology and innovation. An opportunity to design an agricultural policy that enables UK farmers to compete with the rest of the world by ensuring they have the tools and support they need to bring healthy, safe, affordable food to tables across the UK.

To realise this opportunity there are three policy areas we believe the next government should focus on:

1. Food

Crop protection plays an essential role in ensuring there is a reliable supply of healthy, safe and affordable food. Our crops have to compete with around 30,000 species of weeds, 10,000 species of insect pests and countless diseases.

Without crop protection, these pests would reduce our yields by between 20 and 40%. A recent report by independent economist Séan Rickard found that average UK family shopping bill would soar by £786 per year if pesticides were no longer available. In a country where 8 million people are in food poverty and 4 million are regularly using foodbanks any policy that restricts the availability of crop protection tools to UK farmers is not a viable option.

We welcomed the National Food Strategy consultation launched by the previous government and hope that the next government will continue this work, ensuring our food system is robust, sustainable and delivers safe, healthy, affordable food that is accessible to everyone regardless of their socio-economic status.



2. The Environment

To help fight climate change, government must develop policy which allows us to be as productive as possible on land currently under cultivation. By using crop protection products, farmers can maximise the productivity of existing farmland, resulting in more land being spared for nature. Low yield farming systems would require more land to be brought into production for yield levels to be maintained, with significant impacts on nature as a result of habitat loss.

UK farmers are amongst the best in the world when it comes to environmental stewardship and commitment to best practice in pesticide use. The crop protection industry also promotes best practice in pesticide use through farmer training and education, promotion of integrated pest management (IPM) and through collaborative stewardship programmes to protect water quality and enhance farmland biodiversity, such as the Voluntary Initiative and Championing the Farmed Environment.

The CPA would like to see the Government commit to an agricultural policy that recognises the value of UK agriculture and the importance of domestic food production. In particular, government policy should strike a balance between protecting and enhancing the environment and supporting productive agriculture in the UK, including promoting the role of technology and science providing solutions that meet this aim.

3. Innovation

The technological advances necessary to deliver the Fourth Agricultural Revolution will only be available to farmers if government embraces innovation. Regulation of crop protection products must always consider the protection of human health and the environment. The associated risk assessments should be implemented in a pragmatic and transparent way so as not to stifle innovation and ensure farmers have access to safe and effective products. To achieve this the government must adopt a scientific, risk-based approach to regulation, one that will encourage companies to invest in the UK as a world leading research and development hub and potentially give UK farmers and growers earlier access to the latest agricultural technologies.

Our view is that, at present, whilst current EU regulations could be workable, the politicisation of almost every recent decision on crop protection products delineates a trajectory that will ultimately lead to EU farmers losing access to most of the crop protection tools currently at their disposal. This creates a gap in the toolbox of solutions available to farmers and will lead to the EU becoming uncompetitive and perhaps unable to provide a steady and reliable supply of safe, affordable food.

Post-Brexit, the UK has an opportunity to build upon existing regulation, whilst providing greater opportunities for collaboration, faster decision making and greater variety. This approach would also maintain the current high standards of protection for human health and the environment. A risk assessment and risk management-based system would be in line with the rest of the world and would ensure that the UK would not become isolated in the global marketplace.



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