

Aberystwyth University

IBERS



At the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) we have positioned ourselves to be able to influence farming policy and strategy to benefit agricultural communities worldwide through our expertise in plant-breeding and application of scientific discoveries.

The Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) is Aberystwyth University's largest academic department, accounting for more than 75% of the University's total research and enterprise income.

From the time the Institute was created in 2008, we have promoted cultural change and emphasised an entrepreneurial, outward-looking organisation that champions and embraces mission diversity in a modern 21st century department.

Our vision is to be the UK's premier land-based science department, tackling the major global challenges of food, water and energy security in the presence of a changing climate.

Delivering Impact

We are making sure we develop the potential impact of our research by:

- ensuring our unique public good plant breeding programme generates new products that capture the benefits of biotechnology
- creating highly visible, unique major national facilities such as the phenomics complex
- attracting new faculty to help build a distinctive and innovative Institute that integrates dissemination, delivery and inspiration-led research.

To provide oversight and guidance, IBERS has established both a Scientific International Advisory Board (SIAB) chaired by Professor Dick Flavell and an External Advisory Board (EAB) chaired by Professor Russell Jones. Both boards review IBERS' activities on an annual basis.

IBERS has recently created the Waitrose Chair in Sustainable Agriculture, in post since September 2010. This post focuses on policy and the socio-economic aspects of upland farming, and together with the associated Centre of Excellence for UK Farming, acts as a conduit between IBERS science and UK farming communities. The two initiatives have the potential to influence and deliver policy and increase delivery of science to the wider community. They also send a strong message internally that impact is a central theme at IBERS. These types of activities are facilitating cultural change by demonstrating the Institute's commitment to high quality science and its implementation beyond the scientific and academic communities.



IBERS research tackles some of the major challenges of our age

Centre of Excellence for UK Farming (CEUKF)

As the research base and knowledge in agri-food and environmental sciences expands, there is a need to bring together its many strands to provide an authoritative source accessible to non-specialists. CEUKF, which IBERS is leading, has been formed in order to do this. CEUKF aims to help UK farmers and food suppliers by providing clear, evidence-based knowledge on which to found the decisions and strategies that will enable them to meet supply, quality and environmental demands in food production.

Waitrose provided initial seed funding. IBERS, in partnership with the National Institute of Agricultural Botany -The Arable Group (NIAB TAG), seeks to increase this funding through both public and private sector sources.



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The Centre of Excellence for UK Farming aims to provide an authoritative voice on the latest scientific developments in agriculture for a non-specialist audience

Improving vital food crops

Pearl millet is a vital subsistence crop in some of the world's driest and poorest regions.

Scientists at IBERS have mapped the genetic regions of selected varieties of pearl millet to understand the genes that affect their ability to resist drought and disease. They have used their understanding of the plant's genome to cross these traits into high-yielding varieties to create a new, highly productive variety of pearl millet that will transform the lives of many farmers and their families.

IBERS is working with scientists in India and Ghana and the international body ICRISAT to transfer these valuable traits into other varieties of pearl millet worldwide.



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Mapping the areas of the millet genome to understand the genes that enable the plant to resist drought could help many farmers and their families

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The BBSRC Excellence with Impact 2011 scheme ran from 2008 to 2010. It was developed to reward and esteem those university departments most active in embedding a culture that recognises and values the achievement of impact alongside excellent research.