



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture

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Agri-science MP concerned over axing of EU chief scientist role

The EU must guard against politicising decisions on agri-science if Europe's farmers are to contribute fully to the urgent global challenges of food security and climate change.

That was the warning issued today by Mark Spencer MP, chair-elect of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture, in response to the decision by newly appointed EU Commission President Jean Claude Juncker to scrap the role of EU chief scientific adviser.

Professor Anne Glover's appointment as the European Commission's first chief scientist in January 2012 followed a pledge by Juncker's predecessor Jose Manuel Barroso to put science-based decision-making at the heart of Europe's drive for innovation and economic growth.

Mr Spencer expressed concern that the political signals now emerging from Brussels looked set to reverse that commitment, damaging future prospects for modern, science-based agriculture in Europe.

"Although the EU-28 is one of the world's major food producing economies, and a leading global centre of agricultural research, current EU policies on agri-science do not reflect the pressing need to increase the productivity, resilience and resource-use efficiency of our farming systems.

"Continued access to scientific and technological innovation in agriculture will be essential to address this challenge of 'sustainable intensification', yet EU policy-makers appear intent on blocking progress in key areas such as biotechnology and crop protection.

"This latest decision to axe the post of chief scientist is a serious setback, and should serve as a wake-up call to Europe's leaders to ensure EU agriculture is not consigned to a technological backwater by an anti-science policy agenda in Brussels," concluded Mr Spencer.

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Notes to Editors

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science & Technology in Agriculture provides a forum for Parliamentarians and other interested parties to debate and highlight the value of science and technology in agriculture. The Group aims to promote debate among UK politicians and other stakeholders, not only to understand the role and contribution of science and technology in 21st century agriculture, but also to identify any policy, knowledge-based or regulatory barriers to its adoption. For further information visit <http://appg-agscience.org.uk/>