



## All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture

9 January 2025

### **Cross-party group welcomes Government confirmation of timetable to implement precision breeding rules in England**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture (APPGSTA) has welcomed today's confirmation by Environment Secretary Steve Reed MP at the Oxford Farming Conference that the secondary legislation needed to implement the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023 in England will be introduced to Parliament by the end of March 2025.

Amid recent reports that EU-UK realignment talks could delay or even block plans to press ahead with the new gene editing rules in England, on Monday (6 January) the All-Party Group [sent a letter](#) to the Defra Minister responsible, Daniel Zeichner MP, signed by more than 65 leading politicians, scientists and investors, calling on the Government to set out a clear timetable to implement the legislation.

Welcoming the Environment Secretary's announcement, APPGSTA chair George Freeman MP said:

“This All-Party Group first led the way in calling for more proportionate and enabling regulation of gene editing technologies in agriculture. It is very good news that the Government has now announced a firm timetable to move forward with this ground-breaking legislation. The Precision Breeding Act is progressive, coherent and evidence-based, and will help unlock the promise of these critical technologies in accelerating access to the agricultural innovation needed to boost food security, to make our farming systems more resilient, to support nature recovery, and to reduce the climate and environmental footprint of food production.”

“Delays and speculation are potentially damaging to confidence among prospective investors and innovators. Getting our rules in place now will enable investment to flow and innovation to take place. It will allow the first precision bred products to be commercialised, and for the market to demonstrate that it can deal with diverging regulations on an international basis, as is already the case for a range of agricultural technologies and inputs.

“Importantly, however, today's announcement related only to the implementation of precision breeding in plants, not to farmed animals which are also covered by the Act. The Government must bring forward the parallel implementing rules for farmed animals at the earliest possible opportunity. This is urgently needed to enable research using gene editing techniques to tackle virulent livestock diseases such as bird flu in poultry, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) and African Swine Fever in pigs, bovine TB and viral diarrhoea in cattle, and sea lice infestation in farmed salmon.

“British livestock science is at the forefront of this research. Through the Precision Breeding Act we have a unique opportunity to demonstrate regulatory leadership on a global stage, and to put our agriculture sector at the cutting edge of innovation across the world.”

## **ENDS**

### **Notes**

A copy of the APPG letter calling on the Government to set out a clear timetable to implement the precision breeding legislation, signed by more than 65 leading politicians, scientists and investors, is [available here](#).

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture exists to promote debate among politicians and other stakeholders on the value and role of scientific innovation in UK agriculture. The Group works to ensure that the Government's support for agri-science is maintained and strengthened, that the regulatory environment is evidence-based and enabling, and that the contribution of modern agriculture to our society, economy and environment is valued and understood as widely as possible.

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