

NATURAL CAPITAL LEADERS PLATFORM

Creating a net-positive dairy industry: The UK Dairy Action Research Collaboratory

Background

On 15 January the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) convened a roundtable for businesses along the UK dairy value chain. The discussion explored the opportunities for companies that would arise from tackling natural capital challenges, particularly those arising at the farm and landscape level. CISL had discussed this opportunity with a large group of leading companies from crop science to dairies, food producers and retailers and the consensus was that while there was no shortage of commitments and initiatives there was a gap in identifying a small number of interventions that would have a proven and positive impact on soil, water and biodiversity.

Companies including FirstMilk, ForFarmers, Nestlé UK, Tesco, Volac, Lactalis McLelland and Yara International have already expressed interest in this collaboratory and look to their customers, clients and industry colleagues to join them in a collaborative effort with Cambridge to create a net positive industry.

Through our discussions with industry leaders we have identified some important gaps, how Cambridge and others organisations supporting the dairy industry might help address these and how this Action Research Collaboratory (ARC) could provide outputs of direct value to individual companies.

Key outputs

The proposed outputs of the ARC (informed by the companies involved) are to be delivered over a 6-9 month period:

- A summary of the natural capital impacts and dependencies (especially around soil, water and biodiversity) directly related to the UK dairy industry and highlight possible metrics that could inform progress. Where appropriate, this understanding should be translatable to other food sectors;
- An intervention matrix to help rank dairy interventions most likely to impact on natural capital, drawing on work such as the Sustainable Intensification Research Platform. This would analyse existing as well as proposed interventions and consider location and the nature of the commercial returns for farmers.
- A collective business voice to leverage change with Government and other policy-makers. This will build on previous CISL collaboratories and reports such as *The Best Use of UK Agricultural Land 2014*, which engaged policy-makers with some simple key messages which resonated with both the media and general public.

The business consensus is that the ARC should focus on the links between profitability and the management of soil, water and biodiversity, whilst not ignoring their social dimension. It must also build on existing dairy initiatives, such as the *Dairy Roadmap* and *Leading the Way* and, whilst providing practical guidance to businesses in the dairy sector, must also feed in to key policy making processes.

An indicative timetable is below:

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Agree ARC process		◆	Initial meeting						
Summarise impacts & dependencies									
Develop intervention matrix					◆	Progress meeting			
Launch event to engage policy makers								Launch event	◆

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