

Press Release

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Immediate Release



New metrics to build consumer trust in agriculture

Stepping-up and taking responsibility for emissions was the central theme to the Map of Ag. fringe meeting on the first evening of the Oxford Farming Conference, in which the speakers identified that the whole agricultural supply chain needs take responsibility for its own impact, to build consumer trust. Jim Williams, Head of Market Research, quoted Peter Drucker 'If you can't measure it, you can't improve it' and the situation today is that agriculture and the entire supply chain needs to improve, not simply 'manage' the problem.

'Agriculture should be organizing itself to measure its own impact' he said, 'and without that detailed evidence the battle for consumer hearts and minds is being lost to far more organised and influential interest groups. The process of improving agriculture starts with proper organisation of many existing sources of data at farm level, which, although currently held in silos of self-interest, could be permissioned for a higher purpose and common good.'

Dr Michelle Cain and Professor Myles Allen from the Oxford Martin School, both leading climate scientists with Oxford University, are challenging the current thinking around agriculture's impact on climate change, evaluating the impact of emissions on global *mean surface temperature*, rather than simply the level of emissions. The usual 'CO₂ equivalent emissions' method (which uses something called GWP100, Global Warming Potential over 100 years) does not base its equivalence on temperature, but it is the basis of much climate change impact assessment. Their method called GWP*, uses GWP100 differently for short lived gases like methane, and allows for their short lifetime (half-life).

'This is important for making decisions about which mitigation strategies are most effective, or for evaluating trade-offs between different gases' said Dr Cain 'or for estimating what impact our overall mitigation strategy has on global mean temperature. This total impact on global mean temperature is, after, all the main goal of the Paris Agreement'.

In terms of farm level data, to use our method to estimate impact on temperature, we need a way to estimate the individual GHG emissions from the farm, for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O. Any data that gives more accurate insight into that (e.g. numbers of animals over the year, feed including any additives, management of waste, etc.) improves the accuracy and leads to more effective farm management strategies.

Professor Allen stressed that reducing methane emissions has a massive beneficial impact on global temperatures similar to, but potentially much larger than, turning land over to trees. 'If farmers are to be able to argue to get credit for this, they will need to know exactly what their methane emissions are doing from year to year' he said.

Jim Williams argued that there is plenty of data out there, it is just stuck in silos, serving a narrow commercial perspective chasing short-term competitive advantage. 'The agricultural industry needs to share data for the common good of the wider industry, so that agriculture can compete with other industries to reduce its impacts.'

'Others argue that agriculture is the 'bad boy', but if the industry shares it's data with the science community, and bases it's strategies on evidence-based science and measured results, we can continuously improve and start to tell the good news about our industry' he said.

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Notes to editors:

Founded in 2012 by New Zealand farmer, Forbes Elworthy, Map of Ag is a global pioneer in agricultural analysis and modelling technology.

Powered by innovative data organisation technology, data modelling and pioneering analytics, their solutions enable sound decision making for any business within the agri-food supply chain based on accurate, timely information.

Map of Ag provide services on a global basis from offices in the UK, Argentina and New Zealand.

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