

ANALYSIS, INSIGHT, OPINION



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The Herald



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Scots team finds way to boost food and protect the planet

Game-changing dairy system can produce more milk without harming environment

DAVID LEASK
CHIEF REPORTER

SCIENTISTS in Edinburgh say they have come up with a game-changing farming model to boost food production while protecting the planet.

Experts have been at loggerheads for years as they try to square conflicting needs to feed a growing population while staving off catastrophic climate change or species collapse.

Now Scottish researchers, in a breakthrough that is potentially globally important, have modelled a dairy system that produces more milk but still manages to ensure biodiversity.

Scientists from Napier University in Edinburgh and Scotland's Rural College, as well as the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London, made the breakthrough by tweaking the diets of milking cows.

They found they could grow an optimal diet for cows on farms – using indigenous crops such as rapeseed or oats – in such a way that life-giving and life-sustaining bugs thrived on farmed land.

This marks a dramatic switch from a policy over recent years that encouraged farmers to set aside potentially productive land as wild in order to protect plants and animals, including insects.

Good farming practice has always meant protecting wildlife, since food production depends on pollinators, such as bees, as well as natural predators and decomposers.

One of the researchers, Napier University's Patrick White, said: "Until recently a lot of agricultural research has related to an agri-environment type of approach where you are sparing-up land to target towards biodiversity."

"If we are to meet growing consumption we have either got to produce more food on the land we already have or develop virgin land. So people are starting to look for sustainable development of the land we already farm."

Scientists found tweaking cow diets from crops grown on farm delivered increases in output – but also found that crops they farmed encouraged wildlife, including spiders and specific plants they modelled.

Dr Mark Lee, Research fellow at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, said: "With increasing pressure on our finite agricultural land, sustainable intensification is important both for local and wider scale biodiversity. Our results highlight a potential route to sustainable intensification."

In recent decades intensification

Continued on Page 2

Breaking down barriers



■ Carrie McCoy, with daughter Abigail, aged three, says she tries not to judge people too harshly for ignorance when discussing her daughter's condition. Her comments come as a survey, to mark the start of World Down Syndrome awareness week, reveals negative language about the condition is still commonplace. Full story: Page 7

Man arrested over 'far-right terror attack'

A 50-YEAR-old man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder in what police are describing as a far-right terror incident.

The 19-year-old victim sustained non-life threatening injuries and remains in hospital.

Surrey Police were called to a street in Stanwell just before 10.30pm on Saturday to reports of a man acting aggressively and shouting racist

comments while carrying a baseball bat and a knife.

A further call was received by Surrey Police at about 10.30pm reporting that a man had been stabbed. It is believed that the suspect is the same man who was reported as acting aggressively, Counter Terrorism Policing South East said.

Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu, head of Counter Terrorism Policing,

said "Whilst this investigation is still in its infancy, it has hallmarks of a terror event, inspired by the far right, and therefore it has been declared a terrorism incident."

It comes after at least 50 people were killed in a horrific far-right attack on two mosques in New Zealand, on Friday.

New Zealand recovers: Page 14

Indian tycoon to re-open Pinneys after £1.7m public cash windfall

DAVID LEASK

AN Indian businessman based in Russia has secured £1.7 million in Scottish public money to re-open the former Pinneys fish-processing plant in Annan.

Keshav Bhagat has pledged to create 120 jobs and invest £9m in the site, which closed last year in what was seen as a major economic blow for the south of Scotland.

Mr Bhagat, 67, is currently based in Russia's economically troubled exclave of Kaliningrad, where foreign investors, until recently, could secure substantial tax breaks and support.

His new business is a newly formed UK limited company called Bhagat Holdings and will receive its £1.7 million in a regional selective assistance grant from jobs quango Scottish Enterprise.

The Pinneys factory was sold to Young's a decade ago and mostly processed Scottish salmon, including for Marks & Spencer ready meals.

Speaking from the Pinneys' site, Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing said: "I'm delighted an international company like Bhagat Holdings has chosen to invest in Scotland, with the immediate creation of a significant number of jobs, which will make a real difference to local people and the local economy."

"When Young's closed last summer, I said we would leave no stone unturned and we would keep working to find a solution and an alternative use for this site."

"That hard work has now paid off and it is Annan and the local community and families who will benefit."

Some 450 people lost their jobs last year when Pinneys closed.

Mr Bhagat owns at least 75 per cent of Bhagat Holdings, which was incorporated in England last year.

His main company is Russian-registered OOO Atlantis.

NEWS



Celebrating Munro's legacy ... by cleaning up litter on hills

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NEWS



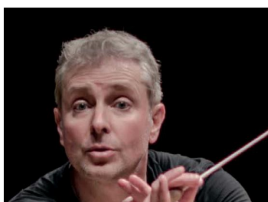
Scottish weather is killing Mackintosh masterpiece

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BUSINESS

Plumbing firms face going bust under pensions shake-up

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Afternoon Performance
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Scottish Symphony Orchestra

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