

JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

NETWORK NEWS

We are halfway through 2020, and what a year it is turning out to be! As is said, change is the only constant in life, and we hope that you are coping with and adapting to the extraordinary amount of change happening around us. Change also drives creativity and learning, and the recently held Cambridge University Botanic Garden [Festival of Plants](#) illustrates how some of our members rose to the challenge of delivering their work online. Please take a look at some of their contributory [talks](#), including: the [TIGR2ESS](#) and [MillNET i](#) programmes' discussion on their approach to ensuring food security, Helen Anne Curry's discussion on the role of British home and allotment gardeners in the conservation of heritage vegetables, and Gita Yadav's discussion on how her research in the TIGR2ESS programme addresses the combined challenges of climate change and food security. This is just a small selection of what happened over the three-day festival, and we encourage you to immerse yourself in the rest of the content.



Grassroots Seed Saving

Seed Savers Exchange
member John Withee
with a display made
from his bean
collection, 1981

Photo courtesy Seed
Savers Exchange

Video still from Helen Anne Curry's discussion on the role of British home and allotment gardeners in the conservation of heritage vegetables.

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We have recently introduced our 'Food for Thoughts Coffee Break Series'. The aim of these chats is to meet regularly on Fridays between 2.30 - 3.10 pm GMT via Zoom, to learn from colleagues and external speakers, to discuss and exchange ideas, to network, and to have a coffee break together in a very relaxed and informal way. PhD scholar Dorien Braam launched the series, leading the discussion on infectious disease and food security in [displaced populations](#). Last Friday, Dr Jean Adams from CEDAR sparked a very interesting conversation on [food insecurity in the UK](#), and the limitations that certain groups face with healthy eating. These coffee breaks welcome a wide range of academics, including PhD scholars, and show how interdisciplinary the Global Food Security network is. Do join us to learn from fellow colleagues and network over a cup of virtual (or real) coffee!

Veterinarian and PhD scholar Chioma Achi conducted field research on antimicrobial resistance in Nigeria in January 2020, with the support of our Early Career Researcher Travel Fund 2019. She visited farms and selected slaughterhouses, conducting interviews to collect data. Find out more about her trip [here](#).

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Chioma visiting a pig slaughterhouse in Kaduna State. This location houses a section for keeping live pigs, another section for slaughter and processing, and a separate section for selling raw meat and processed finished products.

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Chioma visiting a farm to assess the animal husbandry practices that could serve as risk factors for the spread of antimicrobial resistance.

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In collaboration with the EIT Food project #AnnualFoodAgenda, we have begun publishing excerpts from a series of interviews with University staff and students. The Interview Series began in early June with Emily Servanté from the Department of Plant Sciences, and each week two more excerpts will be published. The Interview Series is an informal and fun way to meet the people behind our research, and to learn a little about them. You can find Emily's interview, and keep up-to-date with each release, on our Facebook [page](#).

We welcome our two new steering committee members [Lynn Dicks](#) and [Helen Anne Curry](#). Lynn is a conservation scientist focused on insect conservation, biodiversity in agricultural landscapes and high quality evidence synthesis. Helen is a science historian whose current research focuses on the history of efforts to conserve genetically diverse varieties of agricultural crops.

And finally, we would like to take this opportunity to remember our colleague Dr Amit Bhasin, who [passed away recently](#), leaving a great hole in all of us. Amit was a keen contributor to our programme MillNET_i and a fantastic person to work with; kind, generous with time, and always positive. He will be greatly missed, and we wish his family find the strength they need to go through these difficult times.

LISTINGS

INTERNAL EVENTS

22-26 June. [University of Cambridge Festival of Wellbeing](#).

EXTERNAL EVENTS

24 June. [Reimagining Food Systems: Driving Action for a Post-COVID World](#). Join food systems leaders from across the globe to dig deeply into dialogue that drives our actions forward for change.

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29 June. [TAA Webinar: 'From the ground up: soil management in a changing climate.'](#)

A discussion on the ways in which soil management and cropping practices can influence climate change.

1 July. [Agri-TechE Virtual Innovation Hub.](#) Learn about the latest innovations in research, farming and technology, join exhibitors to learn about their work, and interact with other visitors.

PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

[Contact us](#) if you are an IRC member and would like support in promoting your new publication.

[COVID-19 Impact on Zoonotic Disease Risk Solutions in Displaced Populations.](#) IRC member Dorien Braam's article looks at the complex outcomes that result when COVID-19 mitigation strategies are implemented in displaced populations, and how these worsen food insecurity.

[COVID-19 and agriculture: the coming contradictory hunger pandemic.](#) IRC member Felix Anderl argues that conceptualizing agriculture as a way of catering to large-scale food needs while protecting nature will be a major political task in the future.

[COVID-19 impacts on food security: an opportunity to address old problems?](#) IRC member Daniella Salazar Herrera looks at the sustainability of the food system in the light of growing populations, and how COVID-19 mitigation strategies can increase food insecurity.

[Food insecurity in the UK – why we need a new normal.](#) Co-authors and IRC members Jean Adams and Amy Yau found that almost a quarter of adults in the UK are food insecure, and argue for a sustainable economic solution to this urgent problem.

The TIGR2ESS programme has published a [news](#) page highlighting the efforts of their researchers to document the effects of the pandemic and associated lockdown on the communities they work with in India.

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British farmers need all the help science can offer. Time to allow gene editing. IRC member Sir David Baulcombe argues we must adapt the way we produce food to meet future agricultural challenges.

Journal articles

A modelling framework to assess the likely effectiveness of facemasks in combination with 'lock-down' in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proc. R. Soc.* April 2020. Involving IRC member **Chris Gilligan**.

Remote sensing reveals Antarctic green snow algae as important terrestrial carbon sink. *Nature Communications*. May 2020. Involving IRC member **Matthew Davey**.

The negative regulator SMAX1 controls mycorrhizal symbiosis and strigolactone biosynthesis in rice. *Nature Communications*. April 2020. Involving IRC members **Jeongmin Choi, Giles Oldroyd, Uta Paszkowski, Emily Servante** and **William Summers**.

Development of Novel Riboswitches for Synthetic Biology in the Green Alga *Chlamydomonas*. *ACS Synth. Biol.* June 2020. Involving IRC member **Payam Mehrshahi**.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

If you are a University of Cambridge researcher interested in putting together an interdisciplinary application and would like assistance in finding suitable collaborators/coordinating a group meeting, please [contact us](#)

The Open Call of the Parliamentary Academic Fellowship Scheme is now live. The window for Expression of Interest applications closes on **26 June**. Applications are invited from all UK-based university researchers who have a PhD or are employed in a university on an academic contract, or university staff working in impact or knowledge exchange (including university libraries), and who are eligible for a parliamentary pass.

HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships, supporting proposals for frontier, potentially transformative research in the life sciences. Applications for high-risk projects are

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particularly encouraged. The projects should be interdisciplinary in nature and should challenge existing paradigms by using novel approaches and techniques.

Scientifically, they should address an important problem or a barrier to progress in the field. **Application deadline: 27 August.**

[Secondment Bursary for Early Career Researchers.](#) Funding to support early career researchers as they grow and expand their skills beyond those available within their current research group. **Application deadline: 28 August.**

[The Cambridge-Africa ALBORADA Research Fund 2020 Call for Applications.](#) The Fund supports pairs of researchers (post-doctoral level and above) from the University of Cambridge and sub-Saharan African institutions, across all disciplines, to initiate and/or strengthen research collaborations. **Application deadline: 6 September.**

Ceres is launching the next round of the Agri-Tech Knowledge Exchange Partnership, supported by Research England (CCF). The objective of the partnership is to translate agri-tech research from laboratory to field, with funding valued up to £250k for a duration of 20 months. Please contact Louise.Sutherland@enterprise.cam.ac.uk for more details. **Application deadline: 16 September.**

[Food insecurity – health impacts and mitigation. NIHR.](#) Interventions that aim to decrease food insecurity in the longer term. **Application deadline: 17 November.**