**Agriculture: Brexit VISION to 2040 + *Environment*** John Wibberley**[[1]](#footnote-1)** [**ejwibberley@btinternet.com**](mailto:ejwibberley@btinternet.com)

1. In a world of some 7.5 billion; 1 in 8 hungry; <500 million farming families, these are hopeful times for farming when our UK and each country’s **Agriculture must again become central** in :-
2. Global **Ecosystem Security** policy (with greater UK Food Sovereignty recovered from the EU & WTO);
3. **Biodiversity and Landscape Conservation** to care for the Countryside, integrating trees;
4. **Achieving Sustainable Rural Livelihoods** within Relational (well-connected) rural communities.

*People are integral to global environmental management & Civil Society needs to be mobilised/ led accordingly*

1. An enabling, simple and understanding governance framework is needed both within the UK and in taking **international leadership** with Defra alongside DFID in raising agriculture’s world-wide profile.

*International issues require concerted leadership - e.g. climate change mitigation & adaptation, soil & sea care*

1. Further encouragement of Food Chain **linkages** is merited from ‘land to mouth’ in all countries.

*Whole systems approaches need analysis & monitoring for environmental impacts – both negative and positive*

1. Relationships between farmers and government need to be revived more from their lowest ever level in the UK in 2010. Better TB control is vital in this, as are initiatives to catalyse **Farmer Networks** and to strengthen **farmer sovereignty** in decision-making & voluntary collaboration for **resilience** using **natural capital**

*Environmental good practice is only deliverable through positive relationships with farmers & local people*

1. Reintroduction of **Regional Advisory Panels/*Fora***of Farmers and objective rural Practitioners would help to harness the pool of experience, professionalism & good will for UK agricultural progress.

*Engaging with over-arching experience & wisdom of communities is vital, with specialisms alongside to inform*

1. Great caution needs to be exercised regarding GM technology. A principal issue is its potential to erode farmers’ control over their natural resources, including timely availability of seeds & intergenerational selection from a wide gene-pool of crops & livestock breeds. Research on GM needs to be independently and not commercially funded (NB. USA RR soya & maize issues). Other **improved technologies within agro-ecologically mixed frameworks** offer much greater scope e.g. use of gene markers, composite crosses; precision aids, low ground-pressure, less oil-dependent farming; **conservation agriculture** (globally adopted more than yet in UK).

*Agro-ecological approaches are sustainable; technological innovations need objective, precautionary research*

1. **Energy-efficiency** needs to become the accepted baseline technical criterion for comparing alternative agricultural systems and in encouraging and evaluating integrated rural development & resilience.

*Energy-efficiency on a planet basis within ’the big picture’ needs analysis, monitoring, ‘best practice’ guidelines*

1. **Renewable Energy** sources notably micro-hydro need an enabling planning environment but beware biofuel crops & solar-panelled arable fields when reasonably-priced food is increasingly important worldwide.

*Renewable energy conflicts with priority land uses need cataloguing, strategic appraisal and management*

1. Encourage special schemes for **family-worked farms and ‘territorial succession’**, including using revised National planning laws that once unduly restricted housing retired farmers on their own farms.

*Cultural heritage is a vital part of ecosystem services and environmental integrity for future generations*

1. Explore **modulation using satellite-maps** based on real land area to take account of the greater costs and difficulties of farming uplands & steep slopes. Retain, simplify & improve upland support.

*Conserve Family farms & coastal/marine communities retaining those ‘there to care’ versus displacement costs*

1. The UK needs to assume a clear leadership role in **reform of WTO trading rules and *versus* land-grabbing** so that genuine, private enterprise of smaller farms and rural micro-businesses is not ruined.

*Fairer International Agricultural Trading (FIAT) is required to counter adverse environmental impact/ land grab*

1. The UK needs to lead in improving sustainability of global farming practices/farm livelihoods, rewarding farmers for ‘**comprehensive Ecosystem Security**’ i.e. food, timber plus clean water, carbon capture (soil N), and other income streams from therapeutic, recreational/touristic and heritage/cultural values of land.

***Ecosystem Security*** *needs to be embraced and templated as over-arching Environmental Management Vision.*

1. Professor E John Wibberley, PhD, NSch, FRAgS, FRGS is an agriculturalist and resource management specialist who works in the UK & internationally, especially in Africa. He is a visiting Professor (Comparative Agriculture & Rural Extension) at the University of Reading & at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, where he was until 1989 Head of Agriculture. He was a Secretary of State Appointee on Exmoor National Park Authority (2008-16), is an *Exmoor Society* Trustee, serves on National Trust Council & co-ordinates the Council for Awards of Royal Agricultural Societies, which seeks to recognise outstanding contributions to UK agricultural progress. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)