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*For immediate use*

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**Sustainable food and drink – why it needs a team of all the talents**

The entire food and drink supply chain must be supported with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable a just transition.

SAC Consulting, part of Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC), has recently expanded its Food & Footprint service, recognising the growing need to offer wide-ranging expertise to equip farmers, food processors and retailers, to tackle some of the major challenges facing the sector around climate change and biodiversity loss.

Head of Food & Footprint Andrew Bauer explained: “Becoming a more sustainable food and drink producer, processor or retailer can be a complicated journey. It is vital that credible, research-backed advice is given in an integrated way that delivers environmentally, economically and socially. SAC Consulting has a track record of doing just that.

“Our work across Scotland, the UK and internationally, is diverse. We advise estates on everything from carbon footprinting, peatland restoration and ecology to new forest planting, carbon markets and diversification.

“For food and drink SMEs, we advise on areas such as carbon management, new product development, life cycle analysis and marketing, amongst other things. We work with public sector clients on areas such as natural capital accounting, carbon footprinting and sustainable packaging.

“For corporate clients, we work on everything from carbon management to wider supply chain sustainability, with clients ranging from innovative seaweed farming business KelpCrofting, to South of Scotland Enterprise and Marks & Spencer.”

Senior Ecology Consultant Dr Lorna Cole has recently joined SAC Consulting and will be delivering Natural Capital Assessments, Biodiversity Audits, validation of peatland restoration and providing guidance on enhancing both carbon storage and biodiversity.

She said: **“**Farming faces unprecedented challenges: to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to restore biodiversity while continuing to remain economically viable. Rising fertiliser costs, variable markets and unpredictable weather patterns all add to the pressures faced by farmers. Working as an agricultural ecologist for more than 25 years at SRUC, I want to bring the knowledge I have gained to our farming community and draw on their expertise to help us face these challenges and build a resilient, sustainable future for Scotland’s rural sectors.”

Consultant Brady Stevens reflected on some of the key messages which came out of COP26 around elevating the nature and biodiversity emergency to the same priority as climate and how it resonates with the mission at SAC Consulting.

**“**My colleagues and I are striving to ensure a just transition - the idea that nobody should be left behind as we leap to a greener economy,” he said. “SAC Consulting is challenging itself to examine its new and existing work to ensure that it accounts for the many things we value, not just the ecosystem services we need to live, but also the parts of the natural world that enrich those lives.

“Listening to different perspectives allows us to create the solutions which work for the greatest number and are therefore the longest lasting.”

For more information on the services and support offered by the Food & Footprint service, visit <https://www.sruc.ac.uk/business-services/sac-consulting/sustainability/food-footprint/>

**ENDS**

For more information, contact [claire@janecraigie.com](mailto:claire@janecraigie.com).

**Notes to Editors:**

Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) was established in 2012 through the merger of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) with Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge Colleges. Through these institutions, we can trace our lineage back over 100 years.

Today, SRUC is on a journey to become Scotland’s enterprise university at the heart of our sustainable natural economy. Our mission is to create and mobilise knowledge and talent – partnering locally and globally to benefit Scotland’s natural economy.

To achieve this, we draw upon SRUC’s longstanding strengths in world-class and sector-leading research, learning and teaching, skills and training and consultancy (through SAC Consulting).

As part of SRUC, SAC Consulting provides independent, research-driven, industry-leading expertise, advice, and solutions for agricultural, food, and land-based businesses. With 24 offices and an experienced, expert team, it provides local support, tailored to its customers, nationally.

[www.sac.co.uk](http://tracking.janecraigie.com/tracking/click?d=9i8NH0YxugT77q2FrIW15Y-1ryO8M1iEKPnNjbfhaF8S0ImpnVEsqaR1sJfcpB8GwHMp2Pe2NDzQoxFbH500rw-cYfTMvGl8RBq-NWbgw4EI6QY8wntDCIoDonyd-iRFgA2)