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Press Release

*For immediate use*

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**Shining a light on the science behind your food**

Scientific developments are at the heart of Scotland’s ever evolving food and drink story which will be unearthed in a new initiative, aiming to shine a light on the science behind our food.

The RHASS Presidents’ Initiative for 2023 will raise awareness of the critical role of science through a series of case studies in the lead up to the Royal Highland Show, which will highlight examples of farmers benefiting from these advancements.

This year’s initiative focuses on the Perth area and will feature stories from local farmers and scientists who have worked together to safeguard and improve food and drink production efficiency.

Honorary President Ian Duncan Millar explained what inspired the initiative: “Over the coming months we hope to shine some light on the excellent and necessary science that forms the initial understanding and innovation upon which these essentials of our daily lives are built.

“I strongly believe science will provide us with a lot of the answers to problems we are facing both as an industry, and as a population, yet currently that basic science is not generally seen as a source of information or indeed a source of solution.

“The role of science is inextricably linked to our food and drink sector and Perth is a fantastic showcase of where science has already fed into developing a thriving food and drink larder, spanning its numerous farming sectors.”

Over the coming months, bi-weekly case studies will feature a number of local farming voices and innovations, covering a range of different areas, including: field veg; soft fruit; beef and sheep; pigs and poultry; soil health; the environment; robotics; vertical farming; potatoes and developments in cattle EID.

Providing a taster of what’s to come, local soft fruit farmer James Porter, highlights some of the areas in which science has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the future of many horticultural businesses.

“In the last 25 years, science has been key to developing polytunnels and allowing growers to extend the Scottish soft fruit season from six weeks to six months.

“In horticulture particularly, methods of irrigation, with the development of drip and trickle irrigation and automated feed rigs, have reduced water and fertiliser use, saving growers money as well as providing more environmentally friendly solutions.”

Research between farmers and scientists has been critical to developing new varieties of crops and fruit which not only improve taste, shelf life, and reduce waste, but can provide climate solutions and improve yield and harvestability.

“Solar and wind power is already making a big impact in farming, helping us towards meeting our climate change targets, and the only way we will finally get towards net zero in farming is surely through the application of science.  Only Science can help us develop a green way to fertilise our crops, enabling us to maximise yields without compromising the environment.”

The RHASS Presidents’ Initiative will culminate with a showcase at the Royal Highland Show, bringing together different sectors and stories from over the past months and creating a lasting legacy of materials which will be made available for anyone to access.

For more information on this year’s Initiative and to access future case studies, please visit: <https://rhass.org.uk/presidential-initiative/>.

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