**Date: 27 July 2021**

**Growers’ Better Levy Group outlines its vision for the future of grower led investment in critical Innovation, Research & Development**

The Growers’ Better Levy Group (GBLG) is calling for Defra to support a grower managed research agency run by growers following the ballot on the AHDB statutory levy for horticulture and potato growers.

Made up of a voluntary group of 36 highly influential, independent and representative business operators in the horticulture and potato sectors, the group believes in a future with a collaborative approach to innovation, research and development, as well as knowledge exchange and connecting researchers to growers.

“The aim of the group is to ensure a healthy and sustainable UK horticultural industry within which businesses can thrive,” said Martin Emmett, an ornamental grower. “The GBLG is group of concerned levy payers, not a democratically elected board.

“We feel that our proposed way forward on how R&D is conducted for the industry is the right approach and has the support of all 36 businesses involved, as well as a number of research organisations and grower groups.”

The group has outlined all the priority areas of critical Innovation, Research & Development required by the UK’s horticulture and potato sectors and has also defined how a grower-run R&D investment board might operate.

The Group chair, Phil Pearson, Group Development Director at APS Group, added: “We have met Victoria Prentis from Defra yesterday and explained that we want to see the green light, and Defra’s support for, an independent, grower-managed research agency funded by an investment levy.

“The Agency would emulate models that already exist in both New Zealand and Australia. The R&D would be directed by an elected, independent board of representative growers who would decide on research priorities and projects, in consultation with the wider industry, including businesses and grower associations.”

The group has also shared the following asks with Minister Prentis:

1. R&D provision will be competitively tendered for.
2. Key AHDB staff must not be lost from the industry and halted projects deemed vital by the sectors must be completed.
3. The continuation of a small Statutory Levy is necessary to fund critical work.
4. A larger voluntary investment levy will be necessary for agreed programmes of work and growers should have the ability to vote for this by sector on a regular basis.
5. Within crop sectors, voluntary funds will be raised for the whole sector to fund projects that benefit all, or they will be raised on an individual crop basis for crop specific projects. The option will be there to fund longer term projects.
6. To fund programmes of work, crop specific investment funds will be created, accessing investment funds. Tax relief and match funding by Defra should be made available.
7. The overhead costs should not exceed 15% of levies paid.

The GBLG includes businesses from all relevant crop sectors: tree fruit, soft fruit, potatoes, protected edibles, mushrooms, field vegetables, ornamentals, as well as crop associations and research organisations. The representation also includes businesses and research bodies in the devolved nations.

-ends-

487 words

**Notes to Editors**

**Contact:**

Philip Pearson (Chairman), Tel: 07785241856, email: phil@apsgroup.uk.com

Ali Capper, Tel: 07973562139, email: alicapper@mac.com

Martin Emmett, Tel: 07733082061, email: memmett@binstednursery.co.uk

Marion Regan, Tel: 07850295670, email: marion.regan@hlf.co.uk

Dr Phil Morley, Tel: 07812200203, email: phil@britishtomatoes.co.uk

Jane Craigie, Tel 07795278767, email: jane@janecraigie.com

**About the Grower Better Levy Group**

The Growers’ Better Levy Group is a voluntary group of business operators in the horticulture and potato sectors that believe in a future with a collaborative approach to critical Innovation, research and development, as well as knowledge exchange and connecting researchers to growers.

The aim of the group is to ensure a healthy and sustainable UK horticultural industry within which businesses can thrive. The mission of the group is to create a structure of collaborative innovation which supports the needs of the industry in an efficient manner.

The priority areas of R&D required by the UK’s horticulture and potato sectors have been identified by the GBLG.

The GBLG is made up of 36 highly influential, independent and representative businesses and organisations in the horticulture and potato sectors (tree fruit, soft fruit, potatoes, protected edibles, mushrooms, field vegetables, ornamentals), crop associations and research organisations. This representation includes businesses in the devolved nations.

The GBLG is group of concerned levy payers, not a democratically elected board.

[Website link](https://britishgrowers.org/growersbetterlevygroup/) for more information.