Keenan wins OFC/RASE Practice with Science Award

An innovative, science-based approach to feeding dairy and beef cattle has won Keenan, the feed wagon manufacturers, the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC) and Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) ‘Practice with Science’ Award. Sponsored by AB Agri, the prize money totals £10,000 which Gerard Keenan says the company will invest into furthering their research into feed efficiency and carbon footprinting - two of the fundamental challenges facing meat and milk producers.

The award was set up in 2010 to recognise applied scientific work that has resulted in valuable benefits to the agricultural industry, particularly in relation to on-farm practices.

Commenting on Keenan’s application, John Giles, an Oxford Farming Conference Director, said: "The award is open to individual researchers and to businesses or institutions that have commissioned valuable research. The judges were impressed with Keenan's long-term investment into the Keenan Mech-fiber System which gives farmers a practical approach to improving their economic, environmental and animal health performance by adopting a precision feeding regime targeted at rumen efficiency."

"Their development reach has a strong international dimension which was also of interest to the judges. Keenan has worked with local feed companies in many countries including developing countries like India and developed countries like the USA to adapt the Mech-fiber System to suit local farmers' feed availability and feeding practices."

The Keenan Mech-fiber System was established based on work conducted by David Colman on 1,086 dairy farms which showed that after using the system for one year, milk production increased by 1.74kg/cow/day from 0.64kg less feed, equating to up to 10% improvement in feed conversion efficiency. The net margin gain on these farms translated to the equivalent of 54p/day or an additional 2p/litre of milk.
OXFORD FARMING CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE

Gerard Keenan, the son of the company's founder, added that commercial companies have to play their part in helping farmers tackle the challenges of producing 'more from less'. "British farmers operate in an extremely volatile market with ever changing milk prices and feed costs. The Keenan Mech-fiber System offers farmers greater control over their feed efficiency through the simple management of total mix ration (TMR) physical structure. We are thrilled that our work has been recognised by an award of this standing."

OFC's John Giles made the point that "this award addresses a fundamental need for agriculture because it bridges the big gap between the science-driven innovation farmers need on the ground and the 'leading edge science' work being done in research institutions. Keenan was selected because their work has added direct and measurable benefits to ordinary farmers not only in the UK but throughout the world."

The runner up in the 2013 Practice with Science Award was the eBolus developed by design engineer Seonaid Nimmo of eCow Ltd. The eBolus, in its early stages of development, is used to monitor rumen pH and temperature. The eBolus works wirelessly to alert herd managers to any fluctuations in the rumen environment, acidosis and issues like mycotoxin levels in maize silage.

The Award is funded by the OFC and the RASE with additional sponsored support from AB Agri. It aims to recognise the following areas of research merit:

- Novel and original application
- Clear economic benefit to the industry, food chain and consumers
- Improved sustainability through the more efficient use of resources

The £10,000 prize, is made up of £3,000, funded by AB Agri, awarded to the individual and £7,000, funded by the RASE and the OFC, to the institution or business at which the R&D team or individual is based. The latter monies must be used to support further research work on the subject, through the support of a studentship, traineeship or the purchase of a piece of research equipment.
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RASE Chief Executive David Gardner, a speaker at the 2013 OFC noted the important legacy of the award's intent to the RASE: “Practice with Science” has been the motto of RASE since 1838, and it is still the driving force behind our activity today. Global agriculture faces a huge challenge to feed a growing world population over the coming decades and science has a fundamental role to play in meeting that challenge.”

Commenting on their support for the Award, David Yiend of AB Agri said: At AB Agri we are passionate about sustainability and producing 'more from less'. If UK agriculture is to meet the challenge of sustainable intensification we must prioritise investment in R&D and structure our industry to actively encourage innovation. This highly respected award is one of the key steps towards doing just that."

"Science will play a central role in improving efficiency, increasing yields, reducing our greenhouse gas footprint and enriching our environment. It will also crucially help to project agriculture as a progressive and exciting industry. A positive public image is essential if agriculture is to attract the brightest young talent of the future and, of course, secure the public trust and acceptance of new technologies which will be so instrumental in meeting our future supply challenges."

Keenan will be presenting a short paper on their work at the 2013 Oxford Farming Conference which runs from the 2-4 January 2013.

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831 words

Notes for Editors

For further information contact Jane Craigie on 01466780078 or email jane@janecraigie.com

See the full 2012 Oxford Farming Conference at www.ofc.org.uk

About the Oxford Farming Conference
OXFORD FARMING CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE

For more than 60 years the Oxford Farming Conference has been THE way to start each year. The Oxford Farming research has become an important part of the conference probing some of the fundamental issues facing the British farming industry. Oxford’s speakers are of the highest calibre, from Royalty to agribusiness leaders and from international politicians to entrepreneurial young farmers. The conference’s audience is an essential ingredient, bringing with it a wealth of expertise to the debate. The Oxford Farming Conference is not just a 2-day conference; it is a charity with a reach beyond its focal point in early January. The OFC’s charitable and educational remit has expanded beyond encouraging scholars and young people to attend The Oxford Farming Conference to including young farmers in the Oxford Union Debate and a strong presence at the Cereals Event.

About RASE

Since 1838, The RASE has played a leading role in the development of British agriculture and a vibrant rural economy through the uptake of good science, the promotion of best practice and a coordinated, impartial approach to wide-ranging rural issues. Today our work includes support for business and social welfare in rural communities, education, and our famous shows and events. Since it was granted its Royal Charter in 1840 the Society has aimed to support farming and the rural industries by spreading information about the best in research, development and practice. Today we still work to bring the best of British agriculture to the attention of our members and the wider rural industries through our shows, events, conferences and awards.

About AB Agri

AB Agri, the agricultural division of Associated British Foods plc, operates at the heart of the agri food and drink industry with activities that stretch from ‘plough to plate’. The business’ unique breadth and experience enables it to add value and drive profit for organisations all along the food, drink and biofuel industry supply chain. Today, AB Agri operates in over 70 countries worldwide, supplying products and services to farmers, feed and food manufacturers, processors and retailers through circa 20 individual business divisions operating right across the entire supply chain. AB Agri is fast expanding its global footprint to become a major international agri-business. Sustained investment, customer focus, the recruitment of talented people and innovation in nutrition have all been major factors in establishing AB Agri as a market leader in most of the sectors within which it operates.