

TAA Officer Reports, Annual General Meeting, 11th November 2015.

Chairman and General Secretary

Keith Virgo and Elizabeth Warham

It has been yet another exciting year for TAA. We have new overseas and UK branches. Generous contributions by members have further strengthened TAAF. Membership continues to increase, with more younger people and corporates joining. Ex-Co has met quarterly to strengthen effectiveness of TAA and we are creating a webpage that lists ExCo members and summarises their expertise, so that the general membership is more aware of who we are and how to contact us. Without such a dedicated ExCo, my job as Chairman would have been impossible.

UK Regional Branches. A Scotland Branch, under John Ferguson, joined our UK Regional branches, which have offered exciting programmes of meetings: the Southwest (Tim Roberts) laid on successful meetings, seminars with partner organisations and a 3-day tour of Dorset, as well as a major seminar on 'Soils' at RAU. Sadly, Bill Reed, a key member of the Southwest Branch and ExCo, passed away in the summer; East Anglia (Keith Virgo) promoted several successful events in association with Cambridge institutions, including the annual May seminar on food security - demand and supply; Northern England (John Gowing) has been quiet but London & South East (Terry Wiles) has generated loyal support for the bimonthly 'Curry Club Talks' and strengthened links with APPG Agriculture & Food for Development, for which TAA is a formal supporter. The Agribusiness (Roger Cozens) and land Husbandry (Amir Kassam) groups have arranged pub lunch meetings and farm visits. We are still seeking a member to open a branch for the Midlands and Wales.

Overseas Branches. Established branches continue to act as points of contact in the Caribbean (Bruce Lauckner), India (Sanjeev Vasudev), SE Asia (Wyn Ellis). Ireland (Paul Wagstaff) and the Pacific (Ravi Joshi). A new branch is being opened in Zambia (David Kapembwa), who has joined us at this AGM. We welcome 'Nathan' Duraisaminathan, who has taken over as Branches Coordinator, to ensure that we provide the support and services required by these branches. There are tentative plans for a TAA study tour of the Caribbean, being discussed by Bruce, CARDI, Jane Guise and Tim Roberts.

Agriculture for Development: Each edition of the journal seems to get bigger (the latest one is 82 pages) and better! We should all be proud of the quality of the journal and grateful to the editorial team (Paul Harding, Elizabeth Warham, Brian Sims). The results of the questionnaire survey indicate satisfaction with the journal and provided some useful suggestions.

TAA Website (www.taa.org.uk): The Web Manager (Keith Virgo) continues to make improvements to the website, aided by our very competent web developer (Scott Wilson). Members have been adding their details to the Career Summaries and Directory of CVs. The TAA Forum, aimed at TAAF members, was little used and has been deleted. 'The alert' system for latest news, vacancies and new events, reaches direct to members almost every day. We are now working on pages that introduce the ExCo team. The Vacancies team (Alan Stapleton, Bookie Ezeomah, Michael Fitzpatrick) has posted a constant stream of new job opportunities.

Annual Memorial Lectures. The traditional Ralph Melville Memorial Lecture (RMML) and the mid-year Hugh Bunting Memorial Lecture (HBML) at the University of Reading have been our high profile international public events. Trevor Nicholls, of CABI, spoke on "Going the extra mile". However, declining attendance at Reading and the AGM has necessitated rethinking the nature and timing of these annual lectures. This year, of course, we are testing a TAAF-focussed RMML, focussing on "Changing Needs and Changing Opportunities for UK professionals in International Natural Resource Development", as a means to encourage younger members. An ExCo sub-committee is examining the best options for the lectures, in particular to time the HBML so as to enable Reading students to participate, perhaps modelled on the successful 'Soils' seminar at RAU, which engaged many students.

TAA Award Fund: The TAAF programme thrives, especially for MSc students, wishing to conduct their dissertation studies overseas. There have been few takers for longer duration assignments. The TAAF committee (Antony Ellman, Jim Watson, Lawrence Sewell et al) has refined the rigorous selection procedure

and provides a valuable mentoring service for awardees. Generous donations from members have strengthened TAAF funds. The Chairman of the TAAF committee (Antony Ellman) will be reporting separately and introducing our ex-TAAF speakers.

Organisational Memberships. TAA is a 'supporter' of the **All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Agriculture & Food for Development**. This was established in 2008 by UKFARD and corporate TAA members. We have increased its financial contribution this year. Our convenor for L&SE group (Terry Wiles) continues his dialogue with the APPG Coordinator. A recent meeting was addressed by the Minister for International Development, introducing the new DFID 'Conceptual Framework on Agriculture'. TAA is an 'organisational member' of the **Royal Society of Biology**: the L&SE Branch liaises with RSB and one of our members (Ian Martin) has been invited to join the RSB's UK Plant Sciences Federation as an advisory panel member.

Honours. The reconstituted Honours Panel (under Paul Harding) has canvassed in vain for nominations from our corporate members. This year we present Awards of Merit for contributions to TAA, to George Taylor-Hunt and (posthumously) to Bill Reed, both of the Southwest branch. The "Development Agriculturalist of the Year" is awarded to George Rothschild.

Membership. The membership secretary (Lin Blunt), through much dedicated work, has rationalised our membership list and, with help from our Web Developer (Scott Wilson), we are now better able to interrogate our member database and ensure that membership fees are paid. She has responded quickly by sending invitations to people who members feel may wish to join TAA. Please keep sending suggestions to her. The current active membership is: 543 individual members. This total is lower than last year but it represents active, fee-paying members (14% female): many previously non-paying inactive members have been filtered out. We have 24 corporate members. We welcome four new members (Blue Vanilla, Coventry University, Akola University in India, and ECHO in E Africa). However, four corporate members are behind on their subscriptions (such as Bicton College) and two have resigned (VSO and UKCDS). We welcome our new Coordinator for Corporate Members (Martin Evans), who will seek to encourage greater involvement and more prompt payments by our corporate members.

Charitable Status. Since 1989, TAA has been a registered charity, mainly due to our TAAF initiative. Our link with CARE-International and their *LendwithCARE* (Jim Ellis-Jones), a peer-to-peer micro-finance lending relationship between people in the UK and farmers in developing countries, has strengthened our charitable ethos. We continue our link with *GrassrootsAfrica*, set up by a member (Benny Dembitzer) to provide a pool of advice to farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, and with *AgriTechTalk* which is now linked to *LendwithCare*.

General Administration and Executive Responsibilities. Shortly, we will hear an important report from our Treasurer (Jim Ellis-Jones), who has efficiently managed our finances. This will include proposals for increasing and rationalising subscriptions rates.

Meantime, Elizabeth and I would ask the membership to join us in expressing grateful thanks for another year of hard work by ExCo, the convenors of the UK Regional Branches and Specialist Groups, and the organisers of our Overseas Branches. We also thank the many members who have contributed ideas, posted news in Ag4Dev and participated in the Association's activities. We always welcome suggestions on how to improve further.

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