

## Agri-Tech Sector Strategy - Action Plan

To:	The Business Board
Meeting Date:	8 November 2021
Public Report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Austen Adams, Chair of the Business Board
From:	Martin Lutman, Agri-Tech Specialist
Key Decision:	No.
Forward Plan Ref:	(Not applicable)
Recommendations:	The Business Board is asked to:  (a) approve the Agri-Tech Sector Strategy and Action Plan  (b) recommend that the Combined Authority Board approves adoption of the Agri-Tech Sector Strategy/Action Plan

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report asks the Business Board to approve the Agri-Tech Sector Strategy and Action Plan (and the conclusions and recommendations set out in the document) and then to recommend to the Combined Authority Board that it formally adopts the Agri-Tech Sector Strategy and Action Plan, with the next step to develop an implementation plan across all 4 strategies and bring that implementation plan back to the Business Board. The Business Board took a similar approach with the other 3 sector strategies.
- 1.2 All the Sector Strategies contain a number of recommendations or actions in order to deliver those strategies' outcomes. In terms of implementation, not all of those recommendations or actions are focussed on the Combined Authority or Business Board for delivery, so by adopting the strategies, the Business Board and Combined Authority are aiming to address the required actions, but not committing to delivering them all.
- 1.3 The implementation of the strategies will also be contingent on future funding opportunities from National Government and how they clarify over the coming year with funding streams such as Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund plus any other relevant new or

existing funding policies. The adopted sector strategies will provide the basis upon which bids and proposals can be constructed.

- 1.4 Any interventions subsequently prioritised for delivery by the Business Board will require Officers to work up business cases and submit bids to secure funding from future funding streams, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) in 2022.
- 1.5 Any business cases or bids developed will be brought back to future Business Board meetings for approval and recommendation to the Combined Authority Board to submit to secure funding.
- 1.6 The sector strategies and their overall implementation plan, once developed, will also provide opportunity to feed into content development of refresh of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) or any replacement of the LIS.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Agri-Tech was featured as one of four important sectors in the Local Industrial Strategy.
- 2.2 Promar International Ltd was commissioned by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) in 2020 to produce a strategy to guide the Business Board in its decision making and development of investment into this important sector. This would emulate strategies produced for the other key sectors highlighted in the Local Industrial Strategy. Promar's report describing requirements for an Agri-Tech Strategy was presented to the Business Board on 10 November 2020. A copy of Promar's report is linked in Section 8.1 of this report.
- 2.3 The Business Board concluded that although Promar's work had provided a helpful start in enabling the Business Board to understand the make-up, strengths and opportunities of the sector in the CPCA area, it was felt that a more succinct, focussed report was needed which set out a clearer set of recommendations which would enable the Business Board to focus its effort and future funding investment decisions. Agri-TechE (previously known as Agri-Tech East) was commissioned to deliver this work as it was considered to be the best placed organisation to do so.
- 2.4 Agri-TechE is a (membership) cluster organisation that brings together farmers and growers with scientists, technologists and entrepreneurs to create a global innovation hub in Agri-Tech. Members are located in the UK and overseas. Dr Belinda Clarke, Agri-TechE's Director, is a plant scientist and holds many Agri-Tech related positions including membership of the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative Programme Board.
- 2.5 Building on Promar's work, senior representatives from and with an interest and expertise in Agri-Tech were invited to a (virtual) workshop held on 24 September 2021, chaired by Dr Clarke. The aim of the workshop was to collect views and opinions on what the CPCA should do to fully support the area's Agri-Tech eco-system. Participants were asked to do some preliminary work ahead of the workshop. Those representatives that could not attend the workshop provided their contributions to Agri-TechE separately.

## 3. The Action Plan

- 3.1 In essence, Agri-TechE's report contains 14 possible interventions grouped around 5

recommendations. Under each recommendation there are several suggested actions. The main thrust of the report is that the CPCA geography is becoming globally renowned for Agri-Tech and stakeholders across the Agri-Tech value chain are clear that the opportunity to build on this excellence should not be missed.

- 3.2 Key intervention areas for consideration resulting from the stakeholder consultation include (i) providing an **enabling environment for “Agri-Tech” business scale-up**, (ii) specific support for **de-risking technology adoption by farmers**, (iii) **skills development and augmentation** and (iv) accelerating the **journey to net zero**.
- 3.3 In addition, there is appetite to develop a clear understanding of the assets within the CPCA area and using this to support the ongoing engagement with neighbouring LEPs (particularly New Anglia LEP and Lincolnshire LEP) to develop (v) a **robust shared regional narrative for Agri-Tech** to present to the world. We also suggest a possible overarching mechanism to enable greater leverage of the potential for **multi-disciplinary engagement around Agri-Tech**, to harness the synergies with other sectors such as health and life sciences, digital and advanced manufacturing.
- 3.4 The report encourages caution so as not to conflate “*agri-tech*” with “*agriculture*” or the wider “*agri-food supply chain*.” For the purposes of this report, Agri-TechE considered the Agri-Tech value chain to operate across fundamental and applied R&D and its commercial application on farm and in primary processing in packhouses, for example. Secondary processing (such as new product development by food companies, for example) is deemed out of scope.
- 3.5 A copy of the proposed Action Plan is linked in section 7.1 of this report. The five recommendations (and the suggested supporting actions) are set out in Appendix 5 of the Action Plan. Each has been colour coded in terms of importance and potential budget, subject to future funding opportunities.
- 3.6 If the Action Plan is approved and adopted by both the Business and Combined Authority Boards, the Action Plan will form part an overall implementation plan that will be developed for the four key sectors and presented to the Business Board together with appropriate business cases to bid for any possible future funding opportunities.

## Significant Implications

### 4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Adoption of the Action Plan does not have a direct financial implication. The next stage of developing the detail behind the potential implications into a case which could be put to the Business and/or Combined Authority Boards, will be undertaken using existing resources within the Combined Authority.
- 4.2 Individual interventions which require funding, or further support, will be brought back along with the case for investment for the Boards to consider.

### 5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are none at this point.

## 6. Other Significant Implications

6.1 There are none at this point.

## 7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Agri-TechE's Report.

## 8. Background Papers

8.1 Promar International Ltd's proposed AgriTech Strategy.

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2000/Committee/69/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx> (Agenda item 3.1 refers).