

Peer recognition of outstanding achievement towards UK agricultural progress

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ABSTRACT

This Paper traces the history since its 1970 launch, operation and impacts of the scheme for peer recognition of outstanding contributions to agricultural progress within the UK. The Council for Awards (CARAS) is sponsored by the four national Royal Agricultural Societies (RAS) of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. CARAS awards Associateships (ARAgS) and Fellowships (FRAGS), under a Constitution reframed in 1984, revised in 1990. Potential Associates are invited to apply by National Panels in the four nations and required to provide a submission of their work to date, with two existing Fellows (FRAGS) to provide sponsor letters. Subject to satisfactory submission and sponsors' letters, two Assessors are appointed from among existing Fellows to meet each candidate. The Assessors' joint Report is then considered by a Moderator's Panel of CARAS, which approves Associateships (ARAgS). Advancements to Fellowship (FRAGS) are conditional upon further outstanding contributions to UK agricultural progress based on citations to CARAS. The Paper reviews diverse benefits hypothesised for those thus recognised and some collective activities of members. It seeks to evaluate the impact of these awards in motivating excellence for UK agricultural progress and public benefit by analysis of responses from almost 600 recipients of the awards.

KEYWORDS: agriculture; rural; progress; peer recognition; awards; management impacts

1. Introduction

Agriculture is a worthy profession, blending as it does the arts and sciences, wrestling with the appropriate management of everything from the weather to soils, crops and livestock. Jonathan Swift, in his early eighteenth century classic *Gulliver's Travels* famously wrote that 'whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together!' A similar sentiment was expressed by George Washington who thought 'no more real service can be rendered than by improving agriculture'. Cicero (104-43 BC) was of the opinion that 'of all the occupations by which gain is secured, none is better than agriculture, none more profitable, none more delightful, none more becoming to a free man' (*De Officiis* 1.51). Agriculture has an even older pedigree in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East over 5,000 years ago. What of the calibre, motivations, standards and encouragement of those who work in agriculture now? Space does not permit an exploration of the extensive literature on motivational theory, such as pioneered by McClelland (1953), nor of more recent emphases on the psychology of personality and achievement (such as Cervone *et al.*, 2006).

However, it is the contention of Florida (2002) that peer recognition can promote creativity and effectiveness in a variety of contexts. Does such extrinsic motivation apply in agriculture and what of its changing leadership patterns in the UK (Alliston & Gonzalez-Diaz, 2005)? This Paper asks whether due recognition of distinguished personal achievement in agriculture - by one's outstanding peers (contemporaries) who also work within agriculture - can help to motivate improved agricultural management for sustainable livelihoods and public benefit as may be claimed (see Table 1 and Wibberley, 2007, 2016)? It attempts to answer these hypotheses by the description of a UK scheme for such recognition with feedback from a large sample (n = 593), 49% of those so recognised who are currently living. The approval of CARAS Council to conduct and to fund this postal survey of all its awardees is acknowledged with gratitude by the authors; sincere thanks are due to our wives for their support and to all who responded to the survey.

2. History of the UK scheme for recognition by peers

The four sponsoring Royal Agricultural Societies (RAS) are now: The Royal Highland & Agricultural Society

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Table 1: What outcomes might follow public recognition of agriculturalists by their peers?

1. Consumers gaining quality assurance of the producer not just the product (though obviously linked) transferable between employers and/or clients for produce and outputs.
2. Recruitment of young and new entrants through a recognised, practically relevant route.
3. Fellowship channel for existing leading practitioners to share systematic lifelong learning.
4. Solidarity of competence with others engaged in varied aspects of agriculture.
5. Credibility and coherence of experience and skills to approach policy-makers and public.
6. Boosted morale of those engaged in our most fundamentally important economic activity.
7. Being part of a voluntary scheme to shape the future rather than have it shaped for us.

**Figure 1:** RASE / RHASS / RUAS / RWAS = sponsoring Royal Agricultural Societies of CARAS Scheme in UK

of Scotland (RHASS – founded in 1784), The Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE – founded in 1838), The Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS – founded in 1854) and The Royal Welsh Agricultural Society (RWAS Ltd. – founded in 1904). CARAS (The Council for Awards of Royal Agricultural Societies) acts on behalf of these four national Royal Agricultural Societies. Throughout this Paper when ‘CARAS’ is used as shorthand it must be remembered that it is ‘The Fellowship of Royal Agricultural Societies administered by CARAS’ Figure 1.

In 1969, discussions took place at the instigation of Everard Hosking of the RASE who had envisioned and catalysed the setting up of a working party and invited collaboration from the RHASS and the RWAS to establish a Fellowship scheme for those making significant contributions to the benefit of farming. Alongside practising farmers it would include those in the professions and ancillary industries (Soper, 1994). The three RAS agreed to set up a Council of Fellows of Royal Agricultural Societies to make awards in two grades – a senior award of Fellowship and a supporting award of Associateship. The scheme was launched in 1970 with an initial award of some 70 Fellowships to a group of distinguished agriculturalists from the three countries, with Eric Tasker as Secretary under the chairmanship of Everard Hosking. He was succeeded as Chairman by Sir Harold Sanders, who was followed by Robert F. Gregor MBE of the RHASS (Gregor, 2010). Council meetings were held in London, first at the RASE in Belgrave Square, then at the NFU in Knightsbridge and subsequently at the Farmers’ Club in Whitehall Court where many of them continue to this day. Associateship was initially to be awarded to those who submitted a 10,000 word dissertation demonstrating significant contribution to practical agricultural progress, to be examined by two Fellows. However, such lengthy writing asked too much of busy farmers and a crisis was reached in 1982 when the Council rejected reforms proposed by the RASE, which withdrew its support in 1983 as a consequence (Soper, 1994). There were also some within the Council at that time who wanted it to assume a political role within agriculture, and at the same time quickly to enlarge the

Fellowship by direct election of a considerable number of Fellows. This factor also led to the crisis (Gregor, 2010). At that point, the RUAS was invited to join the remaining two RAS and the UK Council for Awards of Royal Agricultural Societies (CARAS) was established in 1984, with its present Constitution from 1990, and gained UK Registered Charity status (No.327030). From 1983/4, it was under the chairmanship of Sir Meuric Rees CBE of Wales, with John Wigley OBE as Secretary and Professor Jim S. Hall CBE as Moderator. It followed on from that begun in 1970 as a Council of Fellows of the three national Royal Agricultural Societies of the UK, as a ‘grandparent generation’ of those widely acknowledged as having made contributions of real distinction to agricultural progress within the UK, who were designated as foundation Fellows. English members kept their links going after RASE withdrawal – including Ian Gibb OBE who served as CARAS Secretary from 1989-2000. RASE rejoined the scheme in 1991 and provided the next Moderator, Dr Tony Harris CBE who served until 2009.

The objective is to recognise, through this Awards scheme, distinguished achievement in agriculture and related land-based industries, though only with capacity to take account of and evaluate contributions made within the UK. Thus CARAS exists to recognise outstanding contributions already made to agricultural/rural progress but does it not also stimulate and encourage yet further excellence of contributions from its recognised members? The Awards embrace not only practical farming and the development of new husbandry practices, but also research, technology, economics, education, farming care, communication and administration. A Fellowship (FRAGS) or Associateship (ARAGS) is a recognition of outstanding contribution by an individual to the understanding, efficiency and well-being of agriculture. To date, some 1,500 individuals have been so recognised and there are currently some 870 Fellows and some 340 Associates. Council is aware that there will be many other candidates worthy of consideration by meeting the high standards required for an award. It seeks constantly to encourage existing Fellows to nominate such people to the National Panel of the candidate’s nation of UK residence for them to consider and invite to apply.

3. Operation of the CARAS scheme in the UK

Administration

The scheme is administered by the Council for Awards, which consists of representatives of the participating Royal Agricultural Societies, members elected by the Fellows, ex-officio and co-opted members. The Council is supported by a National Panel in each of the four nations of the UK. Candidates for awards are initially invited by National Panels before recommendation to the Council (Table 2).

Associateship (ARAgS) is a recognition of meritorious contribution to the agricultural and land-based industries of the UK and is awarded to those who can demonstrate the required high level of achievement. Candidates do not apply but are invited to do so by Panels appointed within each of the four UK nations, nominating two existing Fellows as sponsors to vouch for their outstanding work.

Fellowship (FRAgS) is the senior Award of the Council. Associates may be considered for advancement to Fellowship if they can demonstrate a continuing significant contribution to agricultural and rural progress in the UK, although advancement is by no means automatic. Occasionally, the Council may award a Fellowship directly for exceptional achievement.

Holders of the Awards of ARAgS and FRAgS cover a wide spectrum. The Awards reward personal achievement in a professional capacity and recipients are frequently individuals of influence within Agriculture. They range from practical farmers to academics, company directors, media practitioners, administrators, advisors,

consultants and those concerned with the well-being of farming and rural communities.

4. Expected privileges and benefits of fellowship and associateship

Members are identified with others who have demonstrated excellence and achievement thus comprising a distinctive group with much to contribute to the future development of UK agriculture, its associated industries and to wider rural progress for public benefit. National Panels arrange meetings and visits to discuss and exchange ideas. Social events provide an opportunity to meet with other Fellows and Associates. Newsletters and Reports on conferences and seminars are circulated regularly. Members of one of the sponsoring Royal Agricultural Societies can enjoy privileges of membership of the other participating Societies on application and at its discretion. A Fellowship or Associateship of Royal Agricultural Societies is a prestigious honour – a recognition of outstanding contribution to the understanding, efficiency and well-being of UK agriculture (Table 3).

5. Methodology and results of membership survey: impacts of recognition

A simple, one side of A4 questionnaire was sent out in January 2017 to all Fellows and Associates of Royal Agricultural Societies in the UK (just over 1200), with a stamped addressed envelope for ease of reply. Members were given over three weeks to respond. Many of the

Table 2: Entry Procedure of CARAS Scheme in the UK

1. Candidates when invited by the National Panel of the UK nation where they live should submit the application form together with an outline of their contributions to agricultural and rural progress. The form and entry fee should be forwarded to the Hon Secretary.
2. Candidates must be sponsored by two Fellows (holders of FRAgS).
3. Applications are subject to approval of a National Panel prior to submission to Council.
4. Two Assessors appointed by Council will interview the candidate to discuss the farming system, practice, project or personal contribution upon which the submission is based.
5. The Assessors will then prepare a Report on the interview for the Council.
6. On consideration of the Assessors' Report by the Moderator's Panel of the Council, a positive outcome will result in the award of Associateship (ARAgS).
7. Certificates are presented at appropriate events of participating Royal Agricultural Societies.

Table 3: Some intended Benefits of CARAS membership

1. **Recognition** of one's outstanding contributions to agricultural/rural progress;
2. **Fellowship** with others who have made similarly important practical contributions;
3. **Database:** Receipt of Annual Bulletin listing all members - over 1200 now - and detailing new members and those advanced to Fellowship, with overviews of their contributions;
4. **New members:** Ability to propose and seek out potential new members thus championing the cause of agricultural progress, which depends on a continual flow of creative people;
5. **Networking** with others to further the cause of agri-rural progress via influencing thinking, research and policy priorities, encouraging and highlighting practical innovations in agricultural science, technology, production, management, marketing and care in agriculture;
6. **Invitations** to Shows and other events - field trips and a February conference in the case of the Scottish and Welsh Panels - but members are also welcome to various events in the other nations;
7. **Expert Panels:** Members may be invited to join panels – or catalyse them - on specific issues related to their expertise;
8. **Service within CARAS:** Fellows may write sponsorship letters for new candidates, and some may be invited to act as Assessors, or to serve on their National Panel, or on Council;
9. **Publications:** Members are circulated twice yearly with the Bulletin in March and the July Newsletter, and by their National Panels during each year;
10. **Collectively,** members of the Fellowship across the UK act as independent custodians of the cause of agricultural and rural progress, bringing together those from diverse sectors - farming, research, government, commercial, communication - in all four nations of the UK.

answers were harvested through the 5-point Likert Scale tick box, plus limited written comment. Additionally – and ‘killing two birds with one stone!’ – members were invited to supply on the same reply form a 50-word profile of themselves to insert on the CARAS website. Invitations to do so hitherto via requests in our Newsletters and Annual Bulletin had only elicited a 9% return. The survey form is presented in Appendix 1. A 49% response rate was achieved by the end of four weeks. Of those, some 85% provided a website profile; some specifically declined to choose giving an entry. Associates (mean age 61.5) were marginally more inclined to do so than Fellows (mean age 68.7) – see Table 4.

Responses were via coded SAEs provided in order to give eight groups on receipt: England Fellows (EF), Northern Ireland Fellows (NIF), Scotland Fellows (SF), Wales Fellows (WF) with four groups for Associates – viz. EA, NIA, SA and WA.

Analysis of opinions of respondents provided the results summarised in Table 5. Assigning numbers to

the Likert Scale responses from 5 = ‘Strongly Agree’ to 1 = ‘Strongly Disagree’, factors were calculated for each choice and an aggregate expressed for the eight categories (four nations of Associates and four of Fellows). These factors indicate the strength of opinion in each case.

Additionally, the percentage who either agreed or strongly agreed for each opinion requested were calculated and are reported in Table 6 and detailed in Appendix 2. There is a notable level of agreement on all questions between the eight groupings of Fellows and of Associates but some significant differentials, which will need pondering by National Panels later. Some interpreted questions like P ‘CARAS urges me to contribute more to life’ in terms of it not being the key motivator or else being one of many. In all cases, the aspect of enjoyment of their membership rated consistently highly.

Questions were then grouped into their hidden categories and analysed accordingly, as shown in Table 7. These categories were inspirational (motivational) factors, consequential outcome factors, cohesive (mutuality)

Table 4: Numbers and Age Profile of Associates and Fellows responding by Nation

GROUP	n	%	Av.Age (Years)	Age range
England Fellows EF	204	56	69	47-94
N. Ireland Fellows NIF	37	46	65	49-81
Scotland Fellows SF	98	46	71	45-93
Wales Fellows WF	111	52	70	46-96
England Associates EA	74	47	63	43-84
N. Ireland Associates NIA	15	49	64	49-81
Scotland Associates SA	30	39	59	43-82
Wales Associates WA	24	30	60	45-81

Table 5: Overall Strength of Responses of Fellows and Associates in the four nations

STRENGTH OF RESPONSE* n =	204	37	98	111	74	15	30	24
% Response	56	46	46	52	47	49	39	30
Topics on which your opinion is sought**:	EF	NIF	SF	WF	EA	NIA	SA	WA
A. Possible CARAS recognition inspired me	3.8	3.8	3.7	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.3
B. My CARAS recognition encourages me still	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.5
C. CARAS motivates me to collaborate with others	3.7	4.2	3.7	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.7	4.3
D. CARAS motivates me to promote Agriculture plus	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.3
E. CARAS scheme is for ultimate Public good	4.1	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.7	4.1	3.8	4.1
F. Advancing A to FRAGS needs far more extra output	3.5	3.8	3.4	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.0	3.6
G. CARAS must stick to its core Awarding role	4.0	3.9	3.7	4.1	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.0
H. It's good CARAS recognises Agric. Plus other rural	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.2
I. CARAS motivates better work standards	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.7
J. CARAS fellowship is enjoyable	4.3	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.3
K. CARAS involvement stimulates creative thinking	4.0	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.9	4.2
L. CARAS involvement stimulates positive action	3.8	4.3	4.5	3.9	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.8
M. CARAS widens my Agric./Rural understanding	4.0	4.6	4.0	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.4
N. CARAS exposes me to other Agric. opinions	4.0	4.5	4.2	4.1	3.9	4.2	4.2	4.1
O. CARAS sharpens my resolve to learn more	3.6	4.2	3.7	3.9	3.6	4.1	4.0	4.2
P. CARAS urges me to contribute more to life	3.6	4.2	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.9	3.9	3.9
Q. CARAS standards are kept with rigour	3.8	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.1
R. CARAS policy to invite applicants is right	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.2	3.8
S. CARAS members' varied Agric.links are good	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.5
T. CARAS website is a welcome development	4.1	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.0	3.4	4.2	4.2
U. I intend to use CARAS website	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.6	4.1	4.2
V. CARAS March & July mailings are enough	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.3	3.8	3.7
W. CARAS should celebrate its Jubilee in 2020	4.3	4.6	4.1	4.3	4.3	3.8	4.3	4.5
X. Members should attend their National Panel events	3.6	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.6	4.2	3.7	3.9
Y. CARAS scheme is well understood by outsiders	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.5	2.4

*Using Likert Scale choices and multiplying the number of respondents to the question by 5,4,3,2,1 respectively (where 5 = strongly agree) which are then aggregated into a factor out of 5.0. Overall, there was a 49% response from all existing members via this SAE postal survey + website entry form (52% response from Fellows and 42% response from Associates). **Associates = A; Fellows = F**

****E, NI, S, W = England; N Ireland; Scotland; Wales.**

Table 6: Averaged Percentage Agreement among Respondent Fellows and Associates

AV.PERCENTAGES Agree + Strongly Agree	n = 450	n =143
*see Note below	Fellows	Associates
Topics on which your opinion is sought:		
A. Possible CARAS recognition inspired me	73.7	72.2
B. My CARAS recognition encourages me still	85.5	90.7
C. CARAS motivates me to collaborate with others	69.7	71.0
D. CARAS motivates me to promote Agriculture plus	79.5	79.5
E. CARAS scheme is for ultimate Public good	81.2	74.0
F. Advancing A to FRAgS needs far more extra output	56.7	40.5
G. CARAS must stick to its core Awarding role	71.5	66.0
H. It's good CARAS recognises Agric. Plus other rural	83.0	86.7
I. CARAS motivates better work standards	64.2	73.5
J. CARAS fellowship is enjoyable	94.5	87.0
K. CARAS involvement stimulates creative thinking	84.0	82.0
L. CARAS involvement stimulates positive action	77.0	79.2
M. CARAS widens my Agric./Rural understanding	82.7	81.5
N. CARAS exposes me to other Agric. opinions	89.7	88.7
O. CARAS sharpens my resolve to learn more	69.7	79.5
P. CARAS urges me to contribute more to life	65.7	76.0
Q. CARAS standards are kept with rigour	72.7	75.2
R. CARAS policy to invite applicants is right	86.5	81.7
S. CARAS members' varied Agric. links are good	93.7	88.7
T. CARAS website is a welcome development	82.2	77.2
U. I intend to use CARAS website	69.7	76.0
V. CARAS March & July mailings are enough	77.5	68.7
W. CARAS should celebrate its Jubilee in 2020	90.5	89.0
X. Members should attend their National Panel events	76.2	63.5
Y. CARAS scheme is well understood by outsiders	6.7	4.7
% Providing Website entry	83.2	85.2

*Note: Differentials between nations are for Panels to ponder and discuss later.

Table 7: Factor Categories from grouped responses

FACTOR CATEGORIES(with Questions)**	EF	NIF	SF	WF	AV.F	EA	NIA	SA	WA	AVA
Inspirational (A, B, K, L)	3.95	4.20	4.07	4.05	4.07	3.82	3.80	3.95	4.20	3.94
Consequential (C, D, E, I)	3.85	4.12	3.75	3.97	3.92	3.62	3.80	3.85	4.10	3.84
Cohesive (J,S,W,X)	4.12	4.48	4.20	4.25	4.26	4.02	4.05	4.12	4.30	4.12
Educational (M, N, O, P)	3.80	4.37	3.87	3.95	4.00	3.75	4.10	4.02	4.15	4.00
Communications (T, U, V)	3.93	3.80	3.83	3.97	3.88	3.93	3.43	4.03	4.03	3.85
Policy (F, G, H, Q, R)	3.90	4.08	3.82	4.02	3.95	3.86	3.90	3.84	3.94	3.88
Public Understanding (Y)	2.10	2.30	2.20	2.40	2.25	2.20	2.00	2.50	2.40	2.27

**Note: Associates = A; Fellows = F; and E, NI, S, W = England; N Ireland; Scotland; Wales.

factors, educational (both learning by members and inclination to share knowledge), communications (both existing publications and web potential), policy (of CARAS organisational procedures) and public understanding.

The 'public understanding' category - about understanding of the CARAS scheme by outsiders - was considered deficient by all groups i.e. the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed that the CARAS scheme is well understood by outsiders. Given that applicants are invited to apply - as consistently supported across all eight groupings - one might question how important it is for outsiders to know about the scheme. On the other hand, if its existence can inspire people in agriculture to aspire to contribute significantly enough to agricultural progress to be recognised by CARAS, then its existence and standards need to be better known. Many respondents commented specifically to that effect, also noting the importance of better understanding within agriculture and the public in general of what the standards mean once awarded. To this end, CARAS is now, and has been for some years, listed in *Whitaker's Almanack* among Charities and Societies. It is noteworthy

that all other categories were rated highly positively by all eight groupings of Fellows and Associates in the four nations of the UK with the exception of Question F 'Advancement from Associate to Fellow needs far more extra output'. This statement proved ambiguous; some took it to mean 'ought to require far more extra effort' (on which opinion varied) while others seemed to take it retrospectively for either their own case or for other awardees, and some thought it had not required 'far more extra effort'. Perhaps it would have been better phrased 'Advancement from Associateship to Fellowship should require far more extra effort'? CARAS Council and the National Panels of each nation will need to digest and debate the findings and differentials between their respondents and respondents as a whole, on which comparisons and contrasts are precluded by time and space here. There was strong endorsement from this survey for the existing procedures and policies of CARAS, where results again merit proper, more detailed reflection.

The strongest trends emerging are shown in Figure 2 where Fellows showed somewhat higher appreciation than Associates of inspirational, consequential, cohesive

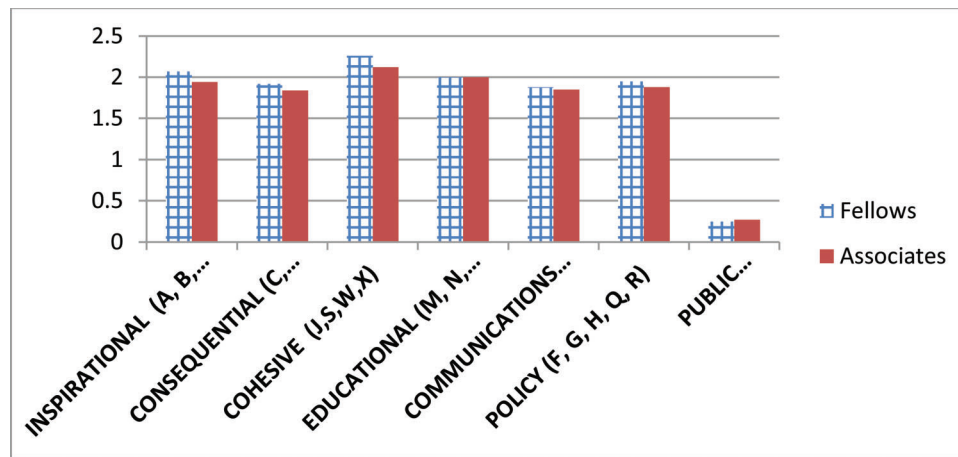


Figure 2: Relative Strength of Grouped Responses: Fellows (n= 450) and Associates (n =143) Website: <http://www.royalagriculturalsocieties.org/>

and policy aspects. There was no difference in the appreciation of educational and communications matters between Associates and Fellows, and both groups clearly thought the CARAS scheme not well understood by outsiders.

The questionnaire also invited members to comment on how the CARAS scheme would best be improved, and also on what if anything they would like to be added to its role (noting that it is **not** a lobbying group). Only some 22% commented – and constructively so - on potential improvements, while around 17% of the respondents chose to comment on the role of CARAS, several of those urging it to concentrate on its core Constitutional role of recognising excellence and making awards accordingly. A full digest of responses has been compiled for fuller analysis and consideration by the Council of CARAS and its National Panels in each of the four nations. However, here is presented an overview of the main issues raised about the improvement and role of CARAS. These concern publicity so that what CARAS Fellows and Associates have to offer is better known to promote agriculture for public benefit with independent, objective and balanced analysis. There is great concern to encourage the next generation into agriculture, by offering mentoring and exploring other ways of encouraging them, including in schools, colleges and universities. There is a desire to monitor research and development priorities, to share in focus groups on specific topics of the moment, and especially to feed into the discussion and policy-making around Brexit. There are several members who believe that CARAS should engage again with the exploration of professional recognition and possible ultimate Chartered Status for Agriculturalists. This would mean liaising with our colleagues in the Institute of Agricultural Management (IAgrM) whom we encouraged to pursue, as they have done, the P.Ag (Professional Agriculturalist) scheme after CARAS catalysed a comprehensive exploration of professional recognition in 2007 (Wibberley, 2007). The reason that Council decided then that its catalytic role was accomplished and to hand on to IAgrM was in order to concentrate on its clearly mandated core role of recognising excellence and making awards. Council will no doubt review its position on this and other matters, especially of policy commented upon.

6. Discussion

It is clear that respondents in our survey are conscious that collectively we have a huge pool of diverse practical

and relevant experience available for the benefit of agriculture. They represent 49% of current membership of The Fellowship of Royal Agricultural Societies administered by CARAS. There is a strong sense that this pool needs to be harnessed to impact the public, policy-makers and the research and development agenda more effectively. However, many members recognise that those who hold CARAS awards are already engaged through many other agricultural and rural organisations and thus exert their influence, and maximise the ‘reach’ of CARAS. Concern to help younger people in agriculture and to recognise potential Associates at an earlier age is common to all four nations. Some of the policy suggestions made would require members to take initiative and responsibility to implement, such as more interaction together and sharing of information, whether by seminars or via the website. Other matters require Council decisions regarding its policies. Overall, its present procedures and standards are endorsed and it can take heart from that while not being complacent that there is much food for thought about its future activities and aspirations. The hypotheses that this peer recognition inspires, motivates to constructive action and improved management, strengthens mutuality, educates and fosters sharing of knowledge/information and enables communication between leading agriculturalists are confirmed by the responses, which show high percentages in agreement (Table7 and Appendix 2).

7. Conclusions and recommendations

While not being a lobbying organisation, as with pressure groups, the Fellowship of Royal Agricultural Societies is a source of independent practical knowledge and information and can advocate for agriculture and rural well-being when and where necessary with suitable diplomacy. More publicity about what CARAS has to offer is clearly mandated by this survey, and perhaps merits each National Panel appointing one of its members as champion for PR and Press/media liaison, as well as Council itself appointing one of its number to that role. Members from each nation have expressed the need to recognise outstanding candidates at an earlier age. England already considers all Nuffield Scholars as they complete their scholarship Reports and pursue further contributions. It is worth remembering that Pitt was Prime Minister at 24, while Mozart was dead at 35!

The average age of members in this survey must be viewed in relation to the fact that healthy agriculturalists tend to live to ripe old ages and that members can continue in the Fellowship for life. Nevertheless, there is clear impetus to search earlier among high achievers who evidently are contributing in distinguished ways to agricultural progress from their early thirties.

It is hoped that this Report may encourage agriculturalists in other parts of the world if no such scheme exists to develop a scheme for peer recognition elsewhere. Agriculture is a vocation that merits such a motivational incentive for the public good of future generations.

About the authors

Malcolm Stansfield is a past President of IFMA and serves on its Council. He was a Visiting Professor at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester and was the longest serving staff member of the University of Reading when he retired as Director of the Farm Management Unit. He is Hon. Secretary of the CARAS English Panel, and works much within farming.

John Wibberley runs his own business since 1989 and is a Visiting Professor at The University of Reading & at The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester. He works

Peer recognition of outstanding achievement in agricultural resource management and extension in UK & abroad. Since 2000, he is Hon. Sec. & part-time Coordinator UK Council for Awards of Royal Agricultural Societies (CARAS).

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Appendix 1

CARAS IMPACTS ON YOU & OTHERS: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE Jan.2017

CARAS exists to **recognise outstanding contributions** to UK Agric. Progress & make Awards.

Does the existence of the CARAS award scheme motivate agricultural progress? How does being an **Associate** or **Fellow** influence your ongoing contributions to agricultural well-being & public good? Please complete & return this form **with your 50-word personal profile** in the SAE provided by **January 27th 2017** to: Professor John Wibberley, Hon Sec. **Thanks!**

A). Please give Your full name, contact e-mail address, best telephone number(s) & Age in box:-

Name:	E-mail:	Tel:	Age
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B). Please underline of which YOU are a member? : Scotland / England / N. Ireland / Wales

C). Please tick appropriate column to indicate *your views* of aspects of your CARAS award/scheme

Topics on which your opinion is sought:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A. Possible CARAS recognition inspired me B. My CARAS recognition encourages me still C. CARAS motivates me to collaborate with others D. CARAS motivates me to promote Agriculture plus E. CARAS scheme is for ultimate Public good F. Advancing A to FRAGS needs far more extra output G. CARAS must stick to its core Awarding role H. It's good CARAS recognises Agric. Plus other rural I. CARAS motivates better work standards J. CARAS fellowship is enjoyable K. CARAS involvement stimulates creative thinking L. CARAS involvement stimulates positive action M. CARAS widens my Agric./Rural understanding N. CARAS exposes me to other Agric. opinions O. CARAS sharpens my resolve to learn more P. CARAS urges me to contribute more to life Q. CARAS standards are kept with rigour R. CARAS policy to invite applicants is right S. CARAS members' varied Agric. links are good T. CARAS website is a welcome development U. I intend to use CARAS website V. CARAS March & July mailings are enough W. CARAS should celebrate its Jubilee in 2020 X. Members should attend their National Panel events Y. CARAS scheme is widely understood by outsiders Z. OTHER?					
What specific matters would best improve CARAS?					
What, if anything, would you like CARAS to add to its role, noting that it's NOT a lobbying group?					
PLEASE provide a <u>50 WORD PROFILE</u> to describe your present activity for the CARAS Website:-					

Appendix 2

Level of Agreement on Opinion Topics Requested

PERCENTAGE Agree + Strongly Agree : n =	204	37	98	111	74	15	30	24
** see Note below	EF	NIF	SF	WF	EA	NIA	SA	WA
Topics on which your opinion is sought:								
A. Possible CARAS recognition inspired me	73	76	70	76	75	62	69	83
B. My CARAS recognition encourages me still	90	89	74	89	85	85	97	96
C. CARAS motivates me to collaborate with others	62	91	58	68	69	62	62	91
D. CARAS motivates me to promote Agriculture plus	73	94	67	84	71	77	79	91
E. CARAS scheme is for ultimate Public good	82	97	70	76	81	77	69	69
F. Advancing A to FRAGS needs far more extra output	47	64	48	68	49	46	24	43
G. CARAS must stick to its core Awarding role	65	73	68	80	61	54	66	83
H. It's good CARAS recognises Agric. Plus other rural	77	80	85	90	82	92	86	87
I. CARAS motivates better work standards	60	67	58	72	70	77	78	69
J. CARAS fellowship is enjoyable	86	97	97	98	85	85	100	78
K. CARAS involvement stimulates creative thinking	78	94	78	86	82	77	86	83
L. CARAS involvement stimulates positive action	68	86	81	73	72	77	85	83
M. CARAS widens my Agric./Rural understanding	76	100	79	76	73	77	89	87
N. CARAS exposes me to other Agric. opinions	82	100	89	88	80	92	100	83
O. CARAS sharpens my resolve to learn more	55	83	62	79	64	85	86	83
P. CARAS urges me to contribute more to life	54	82	56	71	57	77	83	87
Q. CARAS standards are kept with rigour	64	88	61	78	71	77	75	78
R. CARAS policy to <i>invite</i> applicants is right	86	89	84	87	82	77	90	78
S. CARAS members' varied Agric. links are good	93	100	92	90	89	85	90	91
T. CARAS website is a welcome development	82	86	76	85	82	54	90	83
U. I intend to use CARAS website	66	71	69	73	77	54	86	87
V. CARAS March & July mailings are enough	80	80	69	81	76	46	79	74
W. CARAS should celebrate its Jubilee in 2020	88	97	84	93	88	75	93	100
X. Members should attend their National Panel events	57	91	74	83	53	64	63	74
Y. CARAS scheme is well understood by outsiders	2	12	4	9	7	0	12	0
% Providing Website entry	88	81	77	87	81	80	90	90

** **Note:** Associates = A; Fellows = F; and E, NI, S, W = England; N Ireland; Scotland; Wales.