



PRESS RELEASE

FARMING INDUSTRY TECHNOLOGY WINS TOP INNOVATION ACCOLADE

Aberystwyth University's Institute of Biological Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) has won the **Outstanding Contribution to Innovation and Technology** award in the 2013 Times Higher Education Awards with a winning entry based on the breeding and development of Aber[®] High Sugar Grasses (Aber HSG).

IBERS' breakthrough with ryegrass breeding succeeded against competition from five other shortlisted universities that had submitted technological advances in a diverse range of scientific arenas including super computers and bio-medicine.

At the awards evening at the Grosvenor House Hotel on 28 November, judges for the category acknowledged a combination of excellence in "challenge-led" and interdisciplinary research and a strong entrepreneurial culture lying behind the successful plant breeding programme at IBERS. They noted that the researchers being honoured with this award had developed new strains of grasses that can make beef, lamb and dairy farming more productive and more environmentally friendly.

Aber High Sugar Grasses, developed through traditional breeding techniques to have increased sugar levels, allow cattle and sheep to use more protein from the grass. Tests show that this increases the production of meat and milk while reducing emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas, and other pollutants.

Marketed through a partnership with seed company Germinal Holdings, varieties of the grasses now account for some 175,000 hectares of UK grassland.

Awards judge Chris Cobb, chief operating officer and secretary of the University of London, said Aberystwyth's innovations won out against an excellent field. "The combined impact on food production and the environment makes this bid doubly compelling and a worthy winner."

This success follows four other prestigious awards relating to Aber High Sugar Grasses, these being the NIAB Variety Cup (AberDart 2003), the RASE Award for Technology and Innovation (2007), the Queen's Anniversary Prize (2009), and the British Grassland Society Innovation Award (2011).

Aber® is a registered trade mark of Germinal Holdings Limited



Sandy Toksvig (far left), Science Minister David Willetts (far right) with members of the IBERS plant breeding team.