

CABI OPEN DAY

Familiarisation Visit by London-based Executive Council members Silwood Park, Ascot, Monday, 29th June 2026

Remarks from the Chair of the CABI Executive Council

Distinguished fellow Executive Council representatives, Excellencies, members of CABI staff, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a distinct pleasure to join you this morning at Silwood Park for CABI's Open Day. This gathering is both timely and deeply appreciated, not only because it allows us to see CABI's work more closely, but because it reminds us of the larger purpose behind that work: knowledge placed in the service of life, science translated into practical solutions, and international cooperation directed towards food security, sustainable development, and human well-being.

I am honoured to deliver these remarks on behalf of the CABI Executive Council, which brings together representatives from each of CABI's 48 Member Countries, many of whom are present here today. As I mentioned at our last Executive Council meeting in March, I am deeply grateful to have been re-elected to serve as Chair of the Council for a second term. I regard this responsibility with humility and with a strong sense of duty to the shared interests that bind our countries to CABI's mandate.

Over the past two years, through participation in various governance events—many of them virtual—as well as a visit to CABI's corporate office near Oxford, I have developed a much deeper understanding of CABI's strategy, programmes, projects, and products, as well as their progress, performance, and impact.

Today's event, designed especially for London-based Executive Council representatives, is both timely and highly appreciated. I can say with confidence that in-person gatherings such as this Open Day are invaluable. They provide us with a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of CABI's work, to strengthen connections—with CABI colleagues and fellow Executive Council representatives alike—and to explore further collaboration opportunities. At the same time, we celebrate an important new chapter: the co-location of CABI's UK research facilities with the prestigious Imperial College London.

Today's Open Day gives us an equally valuable opportunity: to connect that institutional understanding with direct experience, personal engagement, and renewed partnership.

The theme "Knowledge for Life" is simple, but profoundly meaningful. It speaks to the farmer seeking to protect a harvest, the community confronting invasive species, the national authority relying on trusted diagnostics, and the policymaker searching for solutions that are evidence-based, practical, and sustainable. In a world facing climate stress, food insecurity,

biodiversity loss, and unequal access to innovation, CABI's role remains both relevant and indispensable.

Today's programme reflects that mission in action. Through the sessions before us, we will engage with CABI's work in microbial collections, invasive species management, biopesticide research and development, diagnostic services, digital knowledge, PlantwisePlus, One Health, pesticide risk reduction, biosafety cooperation, and crop loss. These are not isolated areas of technical expertise. They form part of a wider effort to strengthen resilience, build capacity and support sustainable development across member countries.

From CABI's regular updates, we are reminded that strengthening engagement with Member Countries and responding to their priorities remain central to the organisation's strategy and plans.

The four regional consultations held in 2025—bringing together CABI Liaison Officers face-to-face—represent an important step forward in identifying more effective and innovative ways of working together between Member Countries and CABI. We look forward to the implementation of the action points arising from these regional consultations. In this regard, I would particularly like to commend CABI for its strong commitment to promoting multilateral, triangular, and South–South cooperation among its Member Countries. We look forward to hearing some of the success stories arising from these efforts later today.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all fellow Member Country representatives for the vital role you play in fostering strong partnerships between your countries and CABI. I encourage you to continue your invaluable support and to work closely with CABI in our shared mission—to advance food and nutritional security and promote sustainable development across the Global South.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Dr. Zhang for her support and guidance through my mandate as Chair of the Executive Council. I am equally grateful to CABI for organising this important event, and to all CABI staff for their dedication and hard work in ensuring its success. May today deepen our understanding, strengthen our partnerships, and renew our shared commitment to advancing food and nutritional security and sustainable development across the Global South.

Thank you.