



# University of Reading

Appointment of  
**Head of Strategic  
Partnerships and Investment  
– Agrifood Futures**



Saxton Bampfylde

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# Foreword from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

We are delighted to be recruiting five new posts to the Agrifood Futures leadership team, who will play a pivotal role driving forward the delivery of our new ambitious strategy for agriculture and food research.

Agrifood Futures builds on the University of Reading's long-standing reputation for world-leading research in agriculture and food. It sets out the opportunities through which our research will make a major contribution to addressing the challenges facing the global food system of 2050.

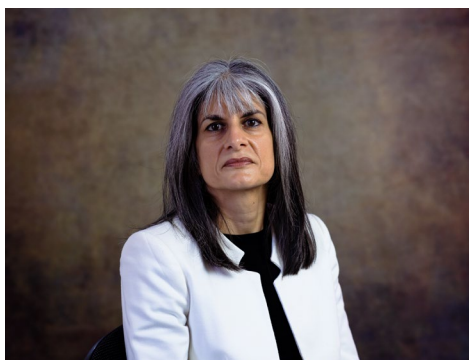
At a time when financial constraints are re-shaping the higher education landscape, the University of Reading stands apart. Thanks to anticipated growth in the ring-fenced assets of a Trust for food and agricultural research, we are in the exceptional position to make significant forward-looking investments in our people, infrastructure and capability. We are seizing this opportunity to reinforce our position as a global leader in food and agricultural research, while also addressing critical gaps in agrifood research capacity at both national and international levels.

Recruiting an outstanding leadership team to drive our Agrifood Futures strategy is the next critical step. We are seeking internationally recognised experts with exemplary leadership skills and the vision to shape the design of new facilities, foster a thriving interdisciplinary research culture across the University, and forge ambitious partnerships and co-investment opportunities across the global agrifood sector.

Named Sustainable University of the Year in 2025, Reading has a proud and enduring commitment to sustainability. We are globally recognised for our climate science, and we embed

sustainable practices in everything we do. Agrifood Futures will build on this record, ensuring that sustainability is at the heart of our research and innovation, contributing to a resilient global food system.

This is a defining moment to join the University of Reading. As we approach our centenary year in 2026, successful candidates will have the opportunity to shape the future of agrifood research, helping to create a world in which every person has access to a healthy, sustainable diet.



**Professor Parveen Yaqoob OBE**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research  
and Innovation)

# The University of Reading

**Granted our Royal Charter in 1926, over the decades the University of Reading has been led by innovators and pioneers, pushing academic boundaries and leading social change.**

Today, the University is ranked in the top 200 universities worldwide by QS and Times Higher Education, and the top 50 within the UK. Home to over 23,000 students, the University of Reading is proud to welcome staff and students from all over the world.

We strive to create a stronger, better University, building on our past to create an exceptional future. The University

Strategy is focused around the principles of – Community, Excellence, Sustainability and Engagement. These principles support us to act as a community engaged with the world around us and to deliver our shared purpose of sustainable excellence in all of our activities.

With an outstanding reputation for high-quality education and research, we have campuses in the UK, Malaysia and South Africa (Henley Business School). The University of Reading is truly international and holds a global reputation for providing a diverse and stimulating academic environment.





**£1bn**  
contributor to  
the UK economy<sup>1</sup>



**15<sup>th</sup>**  
in the UK for supporting  
UN global goals<sup>4</sup>



**Sustainable  
university**  
of the year  
**2025<sup>2</sup>**



**27,465**  
students from around  
**160 countries<sup>5</sup>**



**26<sup>th</sup>**  
in the UK<sup>3</sup>



TEF  
**silver  
award**  
for teaching excellence<sup>6</sup>

1 The Economic Impact of the University of Reading, Hatch Urban Solutions, commissioned by the University of Reading

2 The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025

3 Ranked out of 107 participating UK institutions in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025

4 Ranked out of 57 participating UK institutions according to the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023, based on work towards United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

5 HESA 2021/22 Student Record and Aggregate Offshore Record, figures recorded to the nearest 5

6 Teaching Excellence Framework 2023



# Agrifood Futures

**Agrifood Futures is a new, ambitious research strategy. It will be a major driver of change in the way we produce, consume and think about food as we move towards 2050. It builds on the University of Reading's reputation for research excellence in agriculture and food and our work with global partners.**

Already ranked in the QS global top 20 for Agriculture and Forestry, and named Sustainable University of the Year in 2025, Reading is building from a position of established excellence. The Agrifood Futures (AFF) initiative takes this further, aligning with government and global priorities around food system resilience, sustainability, climate impact and human health. The Strategy comprises three interconnected Priority Research Areas, each shaped to deliver long-term, challenge-led programmes of research and innovation:

1. A resilient food system for everyone
2. Farming systems that work with nature and our climate
3. Food that nourishes people and the planet

This next phase of implementation represents a significant step-change. At the heart of the strategy is a commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, global partnership and systems transformation. New nationally significant infrastructure is planned, including a state-of-the-art innovation farm, advanced food processing facilities, and a participatory research platform focused on nutrition and consumer behaviour. These investments are designed not only to support world-class research but to act as magnets for further external partnership and co-funding.

Recruiting a world-class leadership team is the next vital milestone. Reading is looking for international experts with global reputations and the ability to bring networks, funding, and influence. These leaders will play a direct role in the academic and strategic design of new facilities, the shaping of an interdisciplinary research culture across the University, and in ensuring Reading's voice is heard within national and global agrifood spaces.

More information about AFF can be found [here](#).

# Agrifood Futures



# The role – Head of Strategic Partnerships and Investment, Agrifood Futures

## **Purpose**

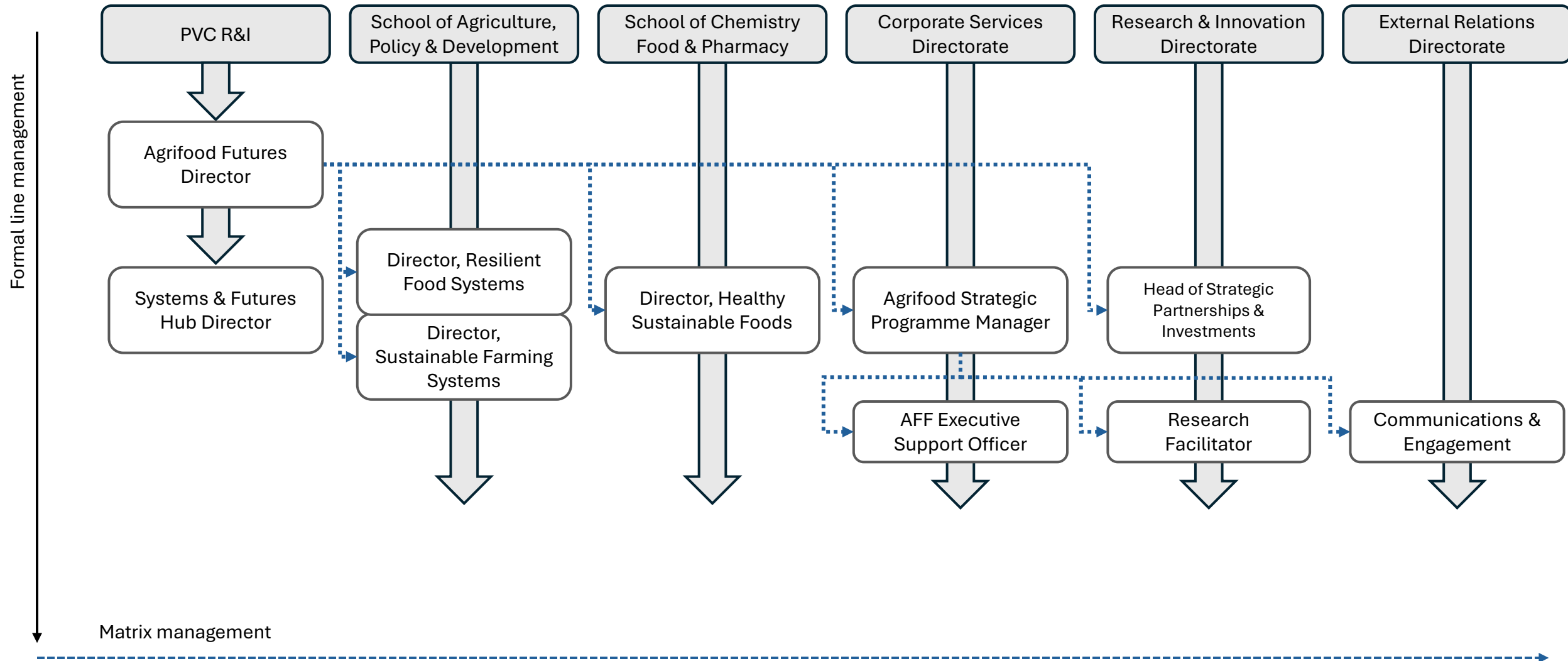
This key role will lead the development of strategic high-value partnerships and secure major co-investments to deliver the University of Reading's AFF strategy and place it as a global leader in agrifood research and innovation.

## **Team Structure**

This post will be part of a wider AFF team that also includes the AFF Director, three Professorial Director roles (all to be appointed), the Systems and Futures Hub Director (part time), the Agrifood Strategic Programme Manager (job share), a research facilitation post (to be appointed), a communications and engagement post (to be appointed) and an executive support post (to be appointed).

The role formally sits within the Knowledge Exchange & External Partnerships team (KEEP) which is headed by the Director of Knowledge Exchange, Commercialisation and Partnerships, and leads for the University on collaborative research and innovation with non-academic organisations. The main types of activities undertaken by the KEEP teams include: partnership building, collaborative and contract research, consultancy and commercialisation (e.g. licensing and spin-outs). KEEP itself sits within the wider Research Engagement and Innovation Office (REIO) that oversees and enables the full range of the University's research and innovation activities.





### **Main duties and responsibilities:**

- Lead the development of a high-impact ecosystem of strategic external partnerships in collaboration with the AFF Director, the Director of Knowledge Exchange, Commercialisation & Partnerships, the three Professorial Directors. This ecosystem will be central to delivering the bold UK and global ambitions of the AFF programme and elevating the University of Reading's standing as a key national and international authority in the sector.
- Forge, cultivate and realise the potential of transformative strategic partnerships with major stakeholders in the agrifood sector, particularly with industry, government and research organisations.
- Secure large-scale joint investments with external partners to support flagship AFF Enabling Investment projects, as well as other high-value emerging opportunities.
- Map and strategically integrate existing external relationships across the University, drawing on networks within Schools, Directorates, the AFF Leadership team, University leadership and the post-holder's own extensive network to consolidate and scale the University's partnership portfolio.
- Provide strategic oversight and coordination at the intersection of these relationships, enabling rapid upscaling, deepening of engagement, and alignment of delivery on institutional priorities.
- Co-lead the development of a robust pipeline of ambitious research and innovation projects in collaboration with external partners, enhancing the University's impact and competitiveness at national and international levels.
- Identify and respond to the evolving research, innovation, workforce and commercialisation needs of the agrifood sector, positioning the University as a proactive, valued partner that generates and captures sector-wide value.
- Actively position the University as a leading contributor to key national and international agrifood strategies, such as the UK Government's Industrial Strategy and sector plans and the EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food.
- Collaborate proactively with academic and professional service teams to embed these strategic objectives across the University's operations and partnerships.

**Supervision received**

The post will be line managed by the Director of Knowledge Exchange, Commercialisation and Partnerships. They will also be accountable to the AFF Director within a matrix management structure.

**Contact**

The postholder will work closely in a matrix management structure with the AFF Leadership Team (AFF Director, AFF Professorial Directors, Systems and Futures Hub Director) and the Agrifood Strategic Programme Manager.

The postholder will work with other members of KEEP as well as other teams within the Research Engagement and Innovation Office (REIO) such as Research Development and Research Contracts. They will work closely with academic and Professional Services colleagues in relevant Schools/ Departments and Professional Services functions.

They will be expected to have extensive external engagement via a network of external professional contacts for the purposes of understanding and sharing best practice and external intelligence gathering. It is expected that this network will be extended over the course of this appointment. This should include industry, funding agencies, government bodies, NGOs and charitable organisations.



# Person specification

## Skills and personal qualities:

- Ability to compellingly articulate the vision, ambition and impact of complex, multi-dimensional initiatives to diverse stakeholder groups, securing a high level of engagement and commitment.
- Proven ability to initiate, lead and conclude high-value negotiations with authority, ensuring alignment of interests and mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Skilled in cultivating collaborative communities and fostering a shared sense of purpose across varied stakeholder groups, including academia, industry, government and international partners.
- Strong situational awareness and political sensitivity when navigating the dynamics of different sectors, disciplines, and global contexts.
- Capable of setting ambitious medium and long term objectives and designing effective strategies, frameworks and partnerships to achieve them.
- Adept at building and sustaining consensus among diverse stakeholders, maintaining strategic focus while accommodating differing perspectives.
- Confident working with others to address complex or sensitive issues, make difficult decisions and deliver resilient, long-term solutions.
- Excellent interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to adapt messaging for different audiences.
- Strong team player and ability to motivate others.
- Able to take ownership of tasks and act independently in light of shifting priorities.
- Able to view the bigger picture, while maintaining attention to detail.
- Highly motivated and committed.
- Ability to travel nationally and internationally as required.



# Person specification

## **Knowledge and experience:**

- Graduate degree or equivalent.
- Post-graduate degree or equivalent desirable.
- Extensive knowledge of the agrifood, agritech, farming and food systems sectors, including emerging trends, technologies and dynamics across the value chain.
- Strong track record of working with or within agrifood-related companies at or closely with senior levels.
- Strong understanding of key business drivers, market forces, regulatory trends and technological disruptors that shape investment decisions across the sector.
- Expert knowledge of the priorities of major UK and international funding bodies, including UKRI, government departments, international agencies and philanthropic organisation, with the ability to identify, shape and secure large-scale co-investment opportunities.
- Well-established personal and professional networks across key stakeholder groups in the agrifood, agritech, research, policy and investment ecosystems.
- Demonstrated success in initiating, building and sustaining major, high-impact strategic partnerships with organisations across sectors and geographies.
- Proven track record of securing significant (seven figure) co-investment from external partners to support ambitious research, innovation and infrastructure initiatives.
- Track record of a lead role in the design, development and successful funding of large research and innovation programmes in complex, multi-institutional consortia.
- Experience of working closely with government departments, public sector agencies and policy influencers to align initiatives with national and regional priorities.
- Demonstrated ability to operate effectively at both national and international levels, engaging with senior leaders in major corporates, academic institutions, multilateral organisations and funding bodies.
- Experience in the agrifood, farming and food sectors is desirable.
- Experience of working in a Higher Education environment is desirable.



# Terms of appointment

This is a permanent, full time role. Some out-of-hours work and travel are likely to be required.

This document outlines the duties required for the time being of the post to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list and the line manager may vary duties from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.

- **Location:** Reading
- **Salary:** Competitive
- **Pension:** USS (the Universities Superannuation Scheme) with employer contribution of 14.5%
- **Annual leave:** 26 days per year plus public holidays and additional days (normally 6 in total) when the University is closed around Easter and Christmas.

For further benefits details, please visit:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/working-life/employee-benefits/benefits-grades-6-and-above>

Information on relocation assistance can be found here:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment/relocation-assistance>

## Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.



# How to apply

**Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the University of Reading on this appointment.**

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at [www.saxbam.com/appointments](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using code **IBVXE**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring\* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Friday 17 October 2025**.

\* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

## **GDPR personal data notice**

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.



# University of Reading

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