THE SUCCESS OF HUMANITY is defined in large part by its ability to mould and shape the environment to suit its needs. It is crucial to remember, however, that we are reliant on the productivity of the valuable resources that the natural world provides us. As we have begun to fully appreciate the sheer complexity of the network of interactions that makes up our world, scientific developments have presented us with solutions that enable us to exist in harmony with the planet’s ecosystems. Enhancing our understanding of the systems that support us, and also those that can do us harm, will ultimately benefit everyone.

This is a particularly pertinent issue in agriculture. In our efforts to feed the burgeoning global population, we are still cultivating the same crops and livestock that fed our ancestors when they first developed farming practices millennia ago. The scale of these ventures has of course expanded dramatically, driven by massive technological advances and industrialisation; but for all this human ingenuity, agricultural systems are still based upon the important services provided by the environment.

In this issue, interviews with Elwyn Grainger-Jones from the UN’s International Fund for Agricultural Development and the EC’s Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Cioloş, demonstrate the importance of these vital interactions for global food security in an uncertain future.

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Enjoy the issue.

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