



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

It was with great sadness that I learnt of the cancellation of the 29th Commonwealth Agricultural Conference as a result of the global Coronavirus crisis. I know all those coming to Norfolk in July for this excellent event were very much looking forward to it.

As well as being an exciting conference that examines the key issues facing agriculture across the Commonwealth in 2020, the event brings together many people involved in our associations and Show societies – both young and old. The rich interaction between delegates is one of the hallmarks of the Commonwealth conference and I know that many friendships have been formed through the work of the RASC. I would like to thank Sir Nicholas Bacon and the team in Norfolk for their hard work on behalf of the RASC.

We will miss welcoming visitors to the UK and sharing special visits including to Sandringham, the Holkham Estate and some of the leading agricultural research institutes in the country. But as difficult as it was, this was the correct decision that your Chairman and his Trustees took, for the good of everyone.

Globally, the effects of the pandemic have reached far and wide throughout the Commonwealth family. Many agricultural shows and fairs – the great annual celebrations of those involved in food and farming - have been affected. Cancellations include The Royal Easter Show in Sydney, The Royal Natal Show in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, National Fielddays in Hamilton, New Zealand and the Calgary Stampede in Canada. To this, you can add almost all the Agricultural and County shows held here in the UK during the summer. The financial impact to our member associations is profound. The loss of income will severely impact their ability to carry out charitable work supporting agriculture as well as many other organisations and educating the public.

But we must be positive – agriculture of course feeds the world and our members are at the heart of this – the RASC has a real role to play in creating a network to ensure a bright future for all. We look forward to the next Commonwealth Agriculture Conference in South Africa in 2022.

In the meantime, I thank you for your continued support and send you and your families our best wishes for a safe and happy future.