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Press release

techUK and WWF unveil new 'Crops to Code' report to drive sustainable and transparent agricultural trade

- *The report highlights the transformative potential of digital trade technologies to foster a more sustainable and resilient global trade system*

LONDON, 27 June 2024: techUK and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have joined forces to publish a new report highlighting the vital role of data and technology in promoting sustainable trade practices and responsible supply chains globally.

In the face of biodiversity loss, population growth, and the escalating climate crisis, transitioning to sustainable trade practices is an urgent necessity. The report, "Crops to Code: The Role of Data in Fostering Sustainable Agricultural Trade and Responsible Supply Chains", underscores the need for efficient, data-driven, and sustainable trade practices to combat these challenges effectively.

techUK and WWF have explored the supply journey from production to distribution to end consumer and how technology innovations, including cloud and AI, can revolutionise agricultural practices and supply chains. Further examples include:

- **Connected Devices and Geospatial Technology**: The use of drones, smart sensors, and GPS enables precise real-time monitoring of land use, crop health, and environmental conditions, optimising water, fertiliser, and pesticide use while reducing deforestation.
- **Mobile Applications for Smallholder Producers**: Apps like India's Cotton Doc and Brazil's To No Mapa which allow producers to record and share data on production methods, environmental impact, and transportation, enhancing supply chain transparency and traceability.
- **Earth Observation (EO) Technology**: Tools like Agtelligence provide actionable insights into environmental indicators, aiding in sustainable land management and agricultural resilience.

Technological innovations extend to processing and packaging stages. Industrial robotics and automation enhance precision and quality control, reducing food waste and improving worker safety. Additionally, the adoption of biodegradable and reusable packaging materials and the integration of QR codes enhance visibility and traceability within the supply chain.

The report emphasises the importance of data monitoring at the production level to ensure supply chain visibility and sustainability. By leveraging mobile technology and digital platforms, producers can reliably verify the origin and production methods of goods, promoting eco-friendly practices and accountability across the supply chain.

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Additionally, techUK and WWF have provided strategic recommendations to the UK Government to scale up technological innovations, foster international cooperation, and ensure accessible benefits for businesses of all sizes. Key recommendations include:

- Establishing core environmental standards for imported agri-food
- Pursuing data interoperability within global supply chains
- Investing in training programs to help businesses adapt to trade innovations
- Enhancing domestic investment in technology to boost sustainable trade.

Weronika Dorociak, Programme Manager for Sustainability, said:
"International trade is crucial to the global economy, fostering job creation, economic growth, and the exchange of diverse goods and services. As we continue to face challenges such as the climate and biodiversity crisis, it is important that we reduce the environmental impact and administrative burden associated with trade and regulatory compliance.

"Through this report in collaboration with WWF, we aim to spotlight technological advancements that can accelerate our shift towards sustainable and efficient trade practices."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

The full report can be downloaded here.

techUK Climate Action website hub

About techUK

techUK is the technology trade association that brings together people, companies and organisations to realise the positive outcomes of what digital technology can achieve.

With over 1000 members (the majority of which are SMEs) across the UK, techUK creates a network for innovation and collaboration across business, government and stakeholders to provide a better future for people, society, the economy and the planet.

By providing expertise and insight, we support members, partners and stakeholders as they prepare the UK for what comes next in a constantly changing world.