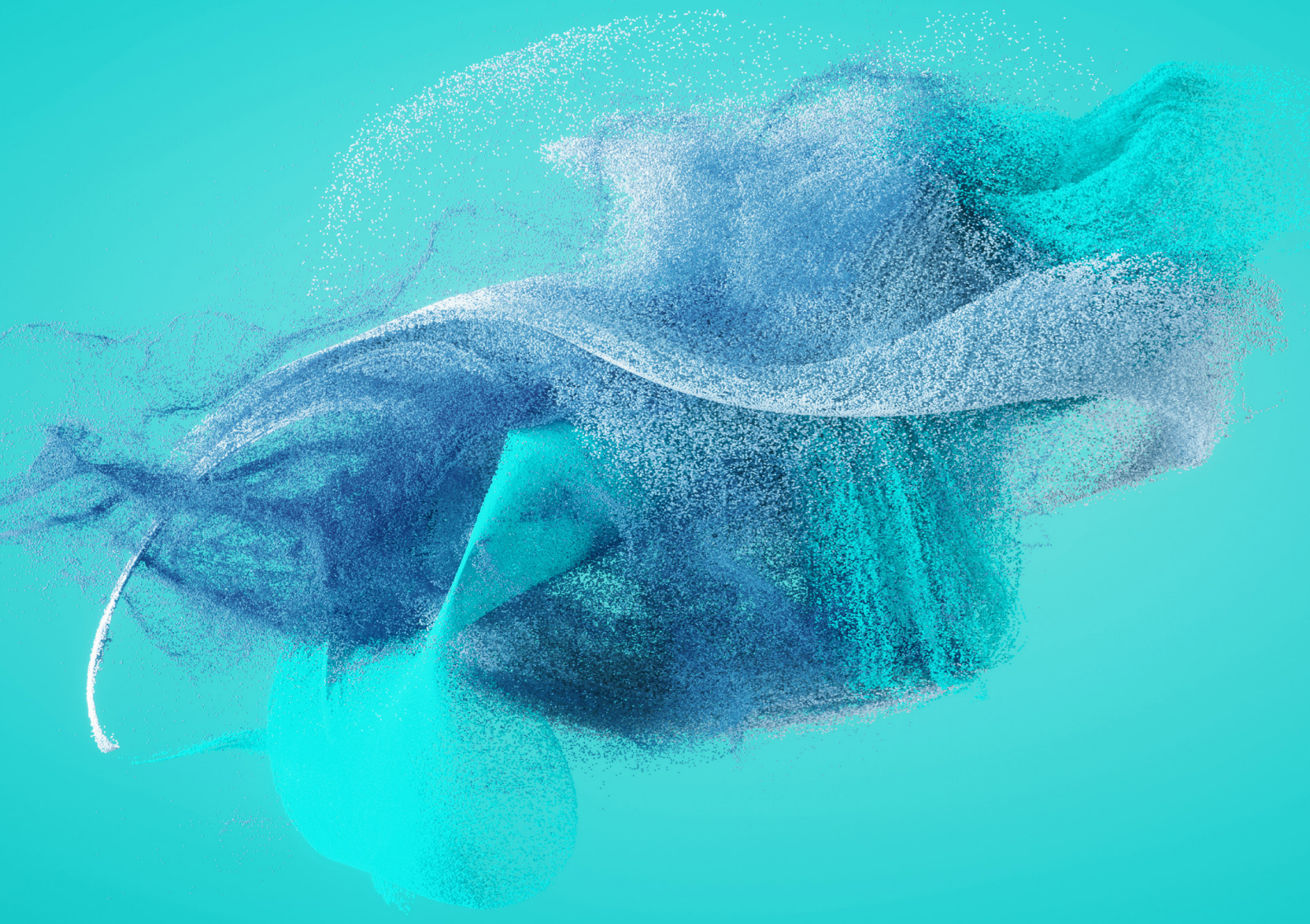
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Industry report 2026



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All contributors were consulted independently and views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of all.

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Foreword

By Adam Gough, **Portfolio Director at Easyfairs**

Scientific progress has never happened in isolation. Behind every breakthrough is a network of researchers, technicians, technology providers and industry partners, each contributing different expertise towards a shared goal. Yet, as the challenges facing UK laboratories become increasingly complex, collaboration is no longer simply beneficial. It is essential to the future of scientific innovation.

This importance is increasingly reflected at a national level. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is allocating a £38.6 billion budget over four years through a new funding model, while the Government's Life Sciences Sector Plan sets ambitions to support 66,000 additional jobs by 2035. These developments present significant opportunities for UK science, but realising their potential will require closer connections between research institutions, industry, policymakers and the wider laboratory workforce.

It is a point reinforced by Steve Yemm MP when we met with him at Westminster earlier this year to discuss the future of the laboratory sector.

"The UK has world-class scientific capability, but we need to make sure investment and opportunity are spread more widely," Yemm told us. "Events like Lab Innovations have an important role to play by bringing scientists, businesses and institutions together, giving the sector a forum to share challenges, build connections and identify where collaboration can make a difference."

His comments highlight an important consideration. Scientific excellence exists across the UK, but ensuring that expertise, investment and opportunity reach beyond established research centres will require a more connected scientific community.

Within laboratories themselves, the need for collaboration is equally pressing. Artificial intelligence and automation are creating opportunities to accelerate research, while growing demands for quality, traceability and regulatory compliance are reshaping scientific processes. At the same time, organisations must address evolving skills requirements and the need to reduce the environmental impact of laboratory operations.

Although these challenges are often considered separately, they are closely connected. Introducing new technologies requires investment in people and skills. Improving data connectivity depends on shared standards and cooperation between organisations. Translating scientific discoveries into commercially viable solutions demands collaboration that extends far beyond the laboratory itself.

Sustainability presents another shared responsibility. From reducing energy consumption and laboratory waste to developing innovations that address wider environmental challenges, meaningful progress requires organisations to exchange knowledge, challenge established practices and work towards common objectives.

This report brings together perspectives from experts across the laboratory community to explore how collaboration can help address these interconnected priorities. Through discussions spanning AI and automation, applied innovation, quality and compliance, and skills development, it examines the opportunities available when scientific expertise is shared rather than confined to individual disciplines or institutions.

The message is clear. The future of UK laboratory science will depend not only on the technologies we develop, but on our ability to bring together the people, knowledge and resources needed to use them effectively.

I hope you enjoy reading our latest report, and hope to see you on the Lab Innovations show floor soon.

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Technical skills as strategic capability for UK labs



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Technical skills as strategic capability for UK labs

Written by Dr Sara Bacon, Centre Manager at the National Technician Development Centre



Dr Sara Bacon

Centre Manager, **National Technician Development Centre**

Dr Sara Bacon is the Centre Manager at the National Technician Development Centre, where she leads the provision of technical services and expertise to universities and research institutions. In previous roles, Sara has supported event and lab management of outreach activities in higher education.

When we talk about the future of laboratory skills, the conversation often starts with recruitment. How do we attract the next generation of scientists and technicians? How do we encourage more people into technical careers?

These questions are important, but they only represent part of the challenge. Through the National Technician Development Centre's (NTDC) work, I see another issue that labs need to consider: how do we retain and develop the expertise that already exists within our organisations?

Technicians hold a huge amount of practical knowledge built through years of experience. They understand equipment, processes and the needs of the teams around them. Historically, this expertise has been under-recognised or not fully visible. This makes it harder for organisations to plan for future skills needs or identify where capabilities may be at risk of slipping away.

The next stage of the technician conversation is therefore not only about bringing new people into laboratories. It is also about recognising technical expertise as a strategic capability and creating the conditions for it to grow.

Making technical expertise visible before it disappears

Incomplete pictures of the technical workforce's skills is a common problem for scientific organisations.

Through the NTDC's Technician Survey, we have worked with 35 national and international institutions, gathering more than 6,000 responses and creating a dataset containing over 4,500 skills that technical staff currently have or have used in previous roles. This helps institutions understand where expertise exists, where potential skills gaps may emerge and where there may be risks associated with, for example, future retirements.

This visibility is essential because the degradation of technical knowledge is not always immediately obvious. We regularly hear examples of institutions losing experienced technicians through retirement or staff changes, with significant associated knowledge loss becoming apparent too late. In such cases, there has not been enough opportunity for that expertise to be transferred through shadowing, apprenticeships or secondments before people move on.

That lack of workforce planning compounds when we consider the shrinking number of opportunities for younger technicians to move into senior roles. Denied the chance for meaningful progression, attrition of these earlier-stage personnel contributes to concerns for the country's technical workforce of the future.

A key part of building resilient laboratory teams is therefore understanding where expertise sits today, rather than waiting until a capability has already been lost.

Moving from support role to strategic capability

The perception of technicians has changed significantly over recent years. Traditionally, technical professionals were often viewed primarily as providing support around laboratory activity. Today, there is much greater recognition of the contribution they make to research, teaching and knowledge exchange.

One example of this change is the increased recognition of technical contributions to research. Fair attribution, including technicians being named on research papers, is becoming more common as organisations such as the Universities of Leeds and College London (UCL) recognise that successful research depends on collaborative teams rather than individual roles working in isolation.

The Technician Commitment has been an important part of this cultural shift. By encouraging institutions to make commitments around visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability, and requiring senior-level ownership through institutional action plans, it has helped bring technician development into leadership discussions. More than 140 universities are now involved, although signing up is only the beginning. The impact comes when organisations turn commitments into practical action.

The institutions making the greatest progress are often those that provide dedicated time and resources to support change. Creating a culture where technical professionals are valued requires more than a statement of intent.

Creating clearer routes for technical careers

Indeed, recognition needs to be matched by opportunity. One of the challenges facing technical professionals has been the lack of clearly defined career pathways compared with other roles within universities and research organisations.

Clear progression routes help individuals understand how they can develop, what skills they need to gain and what future opportunities are available. They also help organisations demonstrate that technical careers are valued, supporting both recruitment and retention.

The NTDC supports institutions in developing technical career frameworks that reflect their own needs and structures. There is no single model that will work everywhere, but shared approaches can help organisations build pathways that allow technical professionals to progress.

> **“The next stage of the technician conversation is therefore not only about bringing new people into laboratories. It is also about recognising technical expertise as a strategic capability and creating the conditions for it to grow.**

Several institutions have already made significant progress in this area, including Liverpool, Warwick, Manchester Metropolitan and Queen Mary University of London, creating examples that others can learn from.

Preparing technicians for changing laboratory environments

Technical professionals increasingly need a broad range of skills alongside their specialist expertise. As some universities move towards more centralised technical services, technicians may support a wider variety of activities and work beyond the area in which they originally trained. This places greater emphasis on adaptability and transferable skills.

Skills such as project management, time management, communication and the ability to train others are becoming increasingly important. Technicians are often responsible for supporting colleagues, students and researchers in using equipment effectively, meaning their role extends beyond operating technology themselves.

As new technologies enter laboratories, including advances in automation and AI-enabled tools, the ability to adapt and transfer knowledge will be just as important as technical expertise.

Making development part of everyday laboratory culture

The long-term ambition should be for technician development to become a normal part of how organisations operate, rather than something that requires a separate initiative.

A successful laboratory workforce is one where technical professionals feel valued, visible, recognised and able to develop. This benefits individuals, but it also benefits organisations by strengthening research, teaching and knowledge exchange.

The skills challenge facing laboratories is therefore not only about finding the next generation of technical professionals. It is about making better use of the expertise already within our organisations.

By understanding existing capabilities, supporting progression and creating opportunities for continuous development, laboratories can help ensure that technical knowledge remains a foundation for future scientific innovation.



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Quality enables confidence in innovation

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Quality enables confidence in innovation

Written by Amal Lavender,
Head of Assurance at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL)



Amal Lavender

Head of Assurance
National Physical Laboratory (NPL)

Amal Lavender is Head of Assurance at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), where she leads quality management, internal audit, risk management and corporate standards.

Quality and compliance are essential to trustworthy science, but the systems designed to uphold them can become increasingly complex and burdensome over time. Where quality requirements sit outside everyday scientific workflows, lab personnel can miss opportunities to build appropriate controls into processes from the outset.

Over time, quality management systems can accumulate documentation, approvals and local workarounds that consume resources without necessarily improving scientific outcomes. Laboratories may measure compliance through the number of completed audits or training records, rather than whether errors have decreased or results have become more reliable.

The opportunity for improvement lies in making assurance an integral part of scientific decision-making, supported by evidence that is accessible when and where it is needed.

Assurance by design

Effective assurance begins by understanding the purpose of a scientific result. What decision will it inform, what are the consequences of an incorrect result and what level of confidence is required?

These questions should shape experimental design and method development. Scientists and quality professionals can then identify potential sources of uncertainty, establish suitable controls and determine what evidence must be retained to demonstrate that a result is fit for its intended use.

This requires a collaborative approach. Scientists bring their understanding of the measurement or experiment, while assurance professionals contribute expertise in risk management, standards and the effectiveness of existing controls.

Importantly, the objective is not to impose identical requirements on every laboratory activity. Assurance should be proportionate to the risk, while maintaining the scientific rigour necessary for the application.

The UK's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) supports this approach by providing a common framework through which measurements and technical assessments can be understood and trusted beyond the laboratory that produced them.

Its components include metrology, standardisation, accreditation, conformity assessment and market surveillance. Within this system, NPL develops and maintains the UK's primary measurement standards, BSI supports the development of recognised technical standards and UKAS independently assesses the competence and impartiality of laboratories and other conformity-assessment bodies.

Individual laboratories put this infrastructure into practice through calibrated equipment, validated methods, trained personnel and measurement traceability. By maintaining an unbroken, documented chain of calibrations to recognised references, with each contributing to measurement uncertainty, laboratories can demonstrate the basis on which their results are considered reliable.

Independent assessment provides further confidence that the laboratory operates competently and meets applicable requirements.

However, much of the evidence supporting this confidence still exists in documents that scientists must retrieve, interpret and transfer between systems.

Making traceability digital

The emerging concept of a digital NQI could change how laboratories access and use quality information.

Rather than simply converting certificates and other records into PDFs, the aim is to represent measurement information, standards and accreditation details in secure, standardised, machine-readable formats.

Digital calibration certificates are one practical example. A conventional certificate may contain the relevant measurement results, uncertainties and calibration conditions, but transferring that information into laboratory software often requires manual interpretation or transcription.

A machine-readable certificate could allow compatible systems to retrieve this information directly, reducing transcription errors while preserving the data's meaning and traceability.

Consider an instrument connected to a laboratory information management system (LIMS). Rather than locating a separate certificate, a scientist could access the instrument's calibration status, applicable measurement range, uncertainty information and operating restrictions within the workflow.

When the instrument produces a result, the system could associate it with the method, software version and calibration information applicable at that time. If a certificate subsequently expired or became invalid, the system could identify potentially affected work for review.

Developments are already underway. A joint NPL and National Composites Centre study has examined the generation and secure delivery of digitally signed, machine-readable calibration certificates, including the challenges of integrating them into provider and user workflows.

However, achieving these capabilities across laboratories will require interoperable systems and agreed approaches to representing measurement information. A digital certificate is only useful if receiving systems can correctly interpret its contents and establish its authenticity.

Confidence beyond compliance

Greater automation also introduces questions about how laboratories interpret quality information.

An instrument displaying a valid calibration status is not necessarily suitable for every measurement. Its uncertainty may be unacceptable for a particular application, or its calibrated range may not cover the conditions being investigated.

Similarly, automated checks cannot independently establish that a method is scientifically appropriate or that a result has been interpreted correctly.

Digital assurance therefore requires more than exchanging information between systems. Laboratories must preserve the context needed to evaluate results, maintain appropriate version control and protect records against unauthorised changes.

There is also a risk of losing practical understanding. If digital systems perform quality checks invisibly, early-career scientists may have fewer opportunities to learn why those controls exist or recognise when an apparently satisfactory result deserves further investigation.

The same applies to quality professionals. Automating routine checks could allow assurance teams to spend less time assembling evidence and more time investigating systemic risks, examining recurring problems and improving processes.

However, digitisation should not simply reproduce existing bureaucracy in software. Before automating a requirement, laboratories should establish what risk it addresses, what decision it supports and whether the control genuinely contributes to confidence in the result.

Ultimately, quality and compliance should become less distinguishable from everyday scientific practice. By designing proportionate assurance into laboratory workflows and making trusted measurement information more accessible, laboratories can reduce unnecessary administration while strengthening confidence in their results.

The objective is not to automate responsibility for quality, but to strengthen collaboration between quality and technical activities to make it easier for scientists to demonstrate why their work can be trusted.

> **"Quality and compliance are essential to trustworthy science, but the systems designed to uphold them can become increasingly complex and burdensome over time.**



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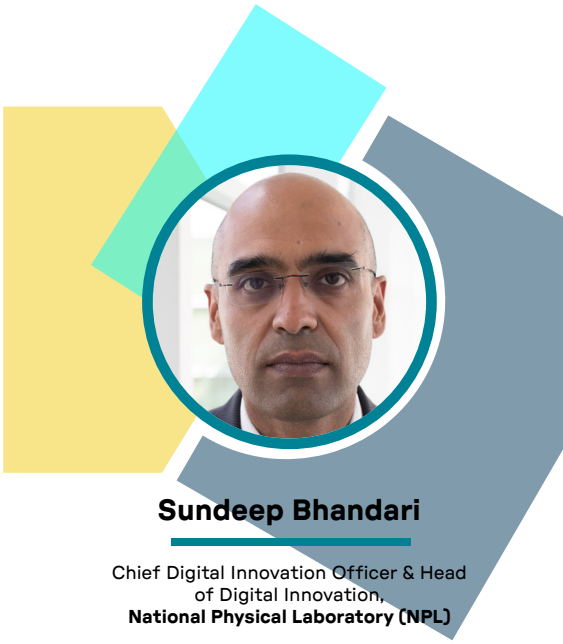
Automation to autonomy — AI in laboratory science

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Automation to autonomy — AI in laboratory science

Written by Sundeep Bhandari,
Chief Digital Innovation Officer & Head of Digital Innovation at NPL



Sundeep Bhandari

Chief Digital Innovation Officer & Head of Digital Innovation,
National Physical Laboratory (NPL)

Sundeep Bhandari is Chief Digital Innovation Officer at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL). With a background in molecular biology and scientific instrumentation, he leads and brings together programmes spanning AI, data, scientific computing and digital metrology.

As artificial intelligence trends towards ubiquity, laboratories have greater opportunities to extract value from scientific data and automate complex workflows. However, AI cannot compensate for poorly connected instruments or fragmented data. In some cases, it may simply accelerate existing inefficiencies.

The challenge is not merely to introduce more intelligent technologies, but to establish where they can deliver measurable scientific value and how far laboratories can safely delegate experimental decisions.

Connecting scientific workflows

While some laboratories already automate sample handling, instrument control and data processing, connecting these activities with scheduling, quality review and reporting has the potential to reduce manual intervention between systems.

At NPL, this approach is informing the development of digital-first measurement services. One example involves calibration services supporting radiation dosimetry in NHS hospitals, where previously separate stages of the process are becoming digitally connected.

By standardising data and improving the transfer of information between stages, active turnaround times can fall from approximately one working week to between half a day and two days, depending on the work involved. Customers can also access their results and certificates securely online.

Scientific judgement and quality controls remain unchanged; the improvements come from reducing administrative handling.

Connected workflows can also create opportunities beyond operational efficiency. For commercial laboratories, manufacturers and suppliers, making better use of securely collected data could support new digital services for customers, such as identifying trends that predict equipment problems.

AI that interprets scientific data

Applications already being explored include analysing images and signals, identifying anomalies and interrogating complex scientific datasets. Rather than simply accelerating established procedures, AI can help researchers identify patterns and determine which observations warrant further investigation.

In quantum metrology, for example, NPL has used active learning to reduce the number of measurements needed to identify the conditions under which a device operates reliably. By analysing previous results and identifying which experimental settings are most useful to test next, these methods can help researchers characterise increasingly complex devices without systematically measuring every possible combination of parameters.

Scientific organisations hold extensive collections of calibration histories, instrument metadata, research documentation and previous results, but this information can be difficult to retrieve and reuse.

NPL is trialling an AI-enabled data-management platform to improve access to such information. A pilot involving a legacy gas and particle metrology archive examined several thousand files or references, identifying relevant material and its location.

The exercise also highlighted an important limitation. Identical filenames may relate to different experiments, while essential scientific context can be contained within folder structures or older documents. Making information searchable does not necessarily make it scientifically interpretable.

> **Over the next three to five years, laboratory professionals are more likely to encounter increasingly capable assistance than fully autonomous laboratories.**

Before AI can reliably inform scientific decisions, laboratories must understand how their data was generated, which version is authoritative and whether it remains traceable to the relevant instruments, methods and processing steps.

FAIR principles — making data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable — provide a useful foundation. Nevertheless, data readiness depends on its intended application. A readily accessible dataset may still be unsuitable if it lacks provenance or fails to represent the conditions under investigation.

Computational infrastructure matters too. NPL is developing a secure AI experimentation environment alongside its Minerva high-performance computing cluster, allowing researchers to explore demanding applications while maintaining appropriate controls over scientific data and models.

From recommendation to experimental control

As AI technologies become more capable, it becomes increasingly important to draw a distinction between systems that assist scientists and recommend actions, and those that perform those actions themselves.

An AI model might identify an anomalous measurement or suggest the next experimental condition worth investigating. Allowing it to implement that recommendation introduces additional requirements.

Before delegating control, laboratories need evidence that an AI-assisted method performs reliably when tested using established reference data. Validation must consider repeatability and measurement uncertainty, and identify the conditions under which performance deteriorates. Maintaining traceability across datasets, model versions and software configurations becomes increasingly important.

One potential intermediate stage is bounded action, where an AI-enabled system can alter experimental conditions only within limits established by a named, responsible scientist.

Consider the characterisation of a quantum-dot single-electron pump. Identifying an appropriate operating region involves investigating combinations of gate voltages, radio-frequency conditions, magnetic fields and temperature.

An active learning system might recommend the next set of experimental conditions, but a system under bounded action might also adjust one gate voltage within a predefined interval, take a measurement, and stop if an agreed threshold were crossed.

The scientist would specify the permitted variables, operating ranges and number of iterations, with every action logged and reversible.

Such closed-loop experimentation remains a development direction rather than routine laboratory practice. However, it illustrates how laboratories could increase machine autonomy without relinquishing control over experimental boundaries.

The scientist's changing role

Over the next three to five years, laboratory professionals are more likely to encounter increasingly capable assistance than fully autonomous laboratories. AI may help identify anomalous results, propose measurements and retrieve scientific knowledge, but scientists will remain responsible for interpreting outputs and determining whether conclusions are justified.

This also changes the skills laboratories must protect. Routine work often helps early-career scientists recognise instrument behaviour and implausible results. Automating those experiences away risks weakening the practical judgement needed to challenge intelligent systems.

The most effective approach is to select a meaningful problem, establish the necessary foundations, experiment in controlled conditions and evaluate the results before expanding deployment. Greater autonomy should follow demonstrated scientific value and earned confidence, rather than technological ambition alone.

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Applied innovations: scientific success is only the beginning

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Applied innovations: scientific success is only the beginning

Written by Dr Elliott Atkins, Project Manager at Tropic



Dr Elliott Atkins

Project Manager,
Tropic

Dr Elliott Atkins is a Project Manager and former Banana researcher at Tropic, a biotechnology company developing improved tropical crops using precision gene-editing technology. He supports the delivery of the company's Banana product development programmes and the platforms that enable them, including Achiever LIMS.

A successful laboratory experiment does not necessarily equate to a technology ready for commercial application. Researchers must establish that an intended change produces a useful, reproducible result and that its benefits can be demonstrated under the conditions in which it will ultimately be used.

At gene-editing company Tropic, this process begins with understanding the challenges facing growers and the wider food supply chain. One example is the bruising and browning of bananas, which can lead to fruit being rejected before sale or discarded by consumers. Addressing this problem involves a development process extending from molecular research to field validation and commercial deployment.

From genetic target to measurable trait

The Cavendish banana, which dominates international commercial production, presents a particular challenge. The variety is sterile and propagated vegetatively, limiting opportunities to introduce desirable characteristics through traditional breeding programmes.

Targeted gene-editing provides an alternative. Tropic uses gene-editing technology to modify a plant's existing DNA without introducing foreign genetic material into the resulting variety. Techniques such as CRISPR-Cas allow researchers to target specific genomic locations, where changes arising during DNA repair can disrupt the function of selected genes.

For Tropic's reduced-browning banana, the target was polyphenol oxidase (PPO) production, an enzyme involved in the browning (and oxidation) reaction that occurs when fruit tissue is damaged and exposed to oxygen. By editing genes responsible for PPO generation, researchers sought to reduce the visible effects of bruising and cutting.

However, producing a genetic change is only the first stage of demonstrating that the approach works. Candidate plants undergo molecular characterisation, including DNA sequencing, to verify that the intended edits are present and that no foreign DNA was introduced.

Researchers must then establish whether those edits produce the desired phenotype. For reduced-browning, this involves assessing fruit after slicing or controlled bruising, including under different temperature and humidity levels. Such testing provides evidence of how the altered biological mechanism affects a characteristic relevant to growers and consumers.

The distinction is important. Molecular analysis can confirm that a target has been modified, but it cannot establish whether geneticists have achieved their intended improvement to a sufficient degree.

Maintaining traceability as research scales

As development programmes expand, maintaining reliable connections between biological material and the experimental evidence it yields becomes increasingly challenging.

Tropic has grown from approximately six employees to 150 over the past decade, with research spanning banana and rice crops. Since introducing Achiever LIMS from Interactive Software in December 2024, the company has generated almost one million sample records across its activities.

Previously, data was held in numerous spreadsheets, making it difficult to consolidate information as projects and sample volumes increased.

The laboratory information management system (LIMS) now provides a connected facility for recording experimental information, with built-in quality-control checks and automatic capture of details such as the identity of the person entering data.

During plant development, for traceability it is essential to have a number of different datapoints about a plant centrally connected. Researchers need to connect a plant with its predecessors, associated genotyping results and subsequent assessments, maintaining a clear development history as material moves between teams.

This continuity supports scientific interpretation while providing evidence for regulatory submissions and confidence in the biological material supplied to partners.

Testing beyond the laboratory

The nature of the desired trait also determines when researchers can obtain meaningful evidence of successful genetic engineering. In Tropic's reduced-browning programme, this means growing candidate plants until they produce fruit, making field trials a necessary part of the development process.

These trials allow plants to develop under conditions representative of commercial cultivation. The resulting fruit can then be assessed, while growers gain evidence of how the variety performs in its intended environment.

Other traits use different experimental approaches. For disease resistance, researchers can expose developing plants to disease pressure and assess their response without necessarily waiting for fruit production.

This difference impacts development programme design. The biological characteristics of the trait determine which experiments can provide meaningful evidence and when researchers can evaluate promising candidates.

For Tropic, trials across different geographical locations also contribute to understanding how candidate varieties perform beyond controlled laboratory conditions.

> **"A successful laboratory experiment does not necessarily equate to a technology ready for commercial application.**

From scientific success to commercial viability

With a useful trait established, companies can then turn their attention towards commercialisation. Researchers must then navigate regulatory requirements and demonstrate that an innovation can be supplied at the scale its intended market requires.

Tropic's reduced-browning banana has been determined as non-GMO in many countries, including the Philippines, Honduras, USA, Japan and Brazil, followed by confirmation of its precision-bred status from Defra in England in 2026. The English determination represents an important regulatory milestone, although further Food Standards Agency authorisation is required before the fruit can be marketed for consumption in Tropic's home country.

Commercial development also involves producing sufficient planting material for growers, including those wishing to undertake their own evaluations. Beyond cultivation, adoption depends on demand throughout the supply chain. A variety may perform successfully in field trials, but growers must have confidence that distributors and retailers will purchase the resulting fruit.

Looking ahead, precision breeding offers opportunities beyond reducing food waste. Tropic is developing disease-resistant banana varieties and pursuing increased rice yields that don't require additional agricultural land. Longer-term possibilities include combining desirable characteristics within a single crop.

Across these applications, the central challenge remains consistent: translating a scientifically successful intervention into a product that performs reliably and addresses a demonstrable need beyond the laboratory.

Conclusion

By Adam Gough, **Portfolio Director at Easyfairs**

The challenges facing UK laboratories are diverse, but the perspectives explored throughout this report point towards a common conclusion. The next phase of scientific progress will depend as much on how effectively organisations collaborate as on the innovations they develop.

Across AI and automation, the opportunities are considerable. Connected systems and intelligent technologies could transform how laboratories manage data, conduct experiments and make decisions. Yet realising these benefits requires cooperation between scientists, technology developers and quality professionals to ensure new capabilities are reliable, interoperable and appropriate for their intended applications.

The same principle applies to scientific assurance. As laboratories become increasingly digital, maintaining confidence in results requires shared standards, accessible information and closer integration between technical and quality functions. Collaboration must be embedded into everyday processes rather than treated as an additional consideration.

Perhaps most importantly, technological progress must be matched by investment in people. Recognising existing technical expertise, creating clearer career pathways and supporting continuous development are essential to building a resilient laboratory workforce. Knowledge sharing between generations, disciplines and institutions will be particularly important as scientific roles continue to evolve.

However, collaboration must also extend beyond individual organisations and disciplines. As the UK Government seeks to strengthen the country's scientific capabilities, there is an opportunity to build stronger regional networks that connect universities, research institutions, businesses and technology providers. Ensuring that investment, expertise and opportunities reach laboratories across the country will be essential to unlocking the sector's full potential.

This also requires meaningful dialogue between policymakers and the people working within laboratories every day. Government ambitions for scientific growth, technological adoption and workforce development must be informed by an understanding of the practical challenges facing the sector. Equally, laboratories have a responsibility to share their experiences, contribute to industry discussions and identify opportunities to work together.

For the UK laboratory community, the challenge now is to turn these conversations into action. Whether through shared approaches to skills development, more connected research infrastructure or partnerships that bring scientific discoveries to market, progress will depend on organisations looking beyond their immediate priorities towards what they can achieve collectively.

The UK has the scientific expertise, institutions and ambition to remain at the forefront of innovation. Ensuring that potential translates into lasting progress will depend on how successfully we connect them.

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