



Introducing the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme

“Harnessing the social and natural sciences for sustainable rural development.”

Professor Philip Lowe
Programme Director

Rural Economy
and
Land Use
Programme





Key Drivers

Rural Change

- Economy and demographics
- Rural diversification
- Climate change and biodiversity

Agricultural Change

- Worldwide food demand
- EU enlargement and CAP reform
- Divergence between Europe and other areas over GM

Food System Change

- Dominance of supermarkets
- Growth of food service sector
- Nutrition and health





RELU – Key Public Challenges

Rural areas have encountered change and upheaval in recent years. Key public challenges include:

- Restoring trust in food chains
- Tackling animal disease in a socially acceptable manner
- Sustaining agriculture in a liberalised economy
- Promoting robust rural economies
- Mitigating threats from climate change and invasive species
- Reducing stress on water catchments



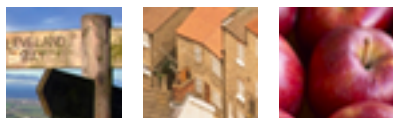


RELU – Key Public Challenges

No one could doubt the importance of these challenges

Allocation of an initial £20 million to the programme

However, this is no ordinary research programme



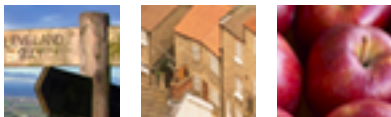


RELU – Key Public Challenges

Sensitivity to criticisms of past programmes

Widespread public alienation with science and technology:

- Out-of-touch basic science (e.g. GM)
- Impartiality of applied science (e.g. BSE)
- A house divided (e.g. Foot and Mouth)
- Are scientists asking the right questions?





RELU – Key Public Challenges

RELU is responding to two fundamental demands:

- For joined-up science
- For socially accountable science

Basic premises of RELU are:

- Major challenges cut across disciplinary boundaries
- Inclusive stakeholder engagement is crucial





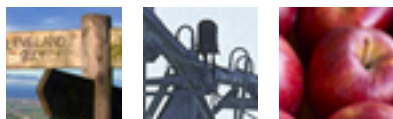
Joined-up and Socially Accountable Science

“Interdisciplinarity requires changes in institutional structures, in funding and training mechanisms, and most importantly to the cultural environment in which research is carried out.”

(Research Councils UK)

“A serious restructuring of decision-making and a radical redistribution of research resources are both preconditions of a just research system.”

(Food Ethics Council)





Joined-up Science

Interdisciplinarity is required in order to:

- Avoid partial framings of research questions
- Gain integrated perspectives on problems
- Understand complex processes and issues
- Contextualise technological and environmental constraints

The Government's Science and Innovation Investment Framework anticipates that:

“Over the next decade many of the grand challenges in research will occupy the interfaces between separate research disciplines developed in the 19th and 20th centuries.”



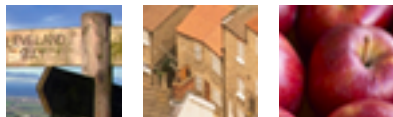


Joined-up Science for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development calls for integrated perspectives, drawing upon understandings of social and natural processes

Holistic solutions should creatively combine adaptations in socio-technical, ecological and biological systems

But... a holistic approach is hampered by narrow disciplinary perspectives and logics





Joined-up Science in RELU

The Programme aims to:

“Conduct integrative, interdisciplinary research to advance understanding of the social, economic, environmental and technological challenges faced by rural areas.”

And to:

“Expand capabilities for interdisciplinary research on rural issues.”





Joined-up Science in RELU

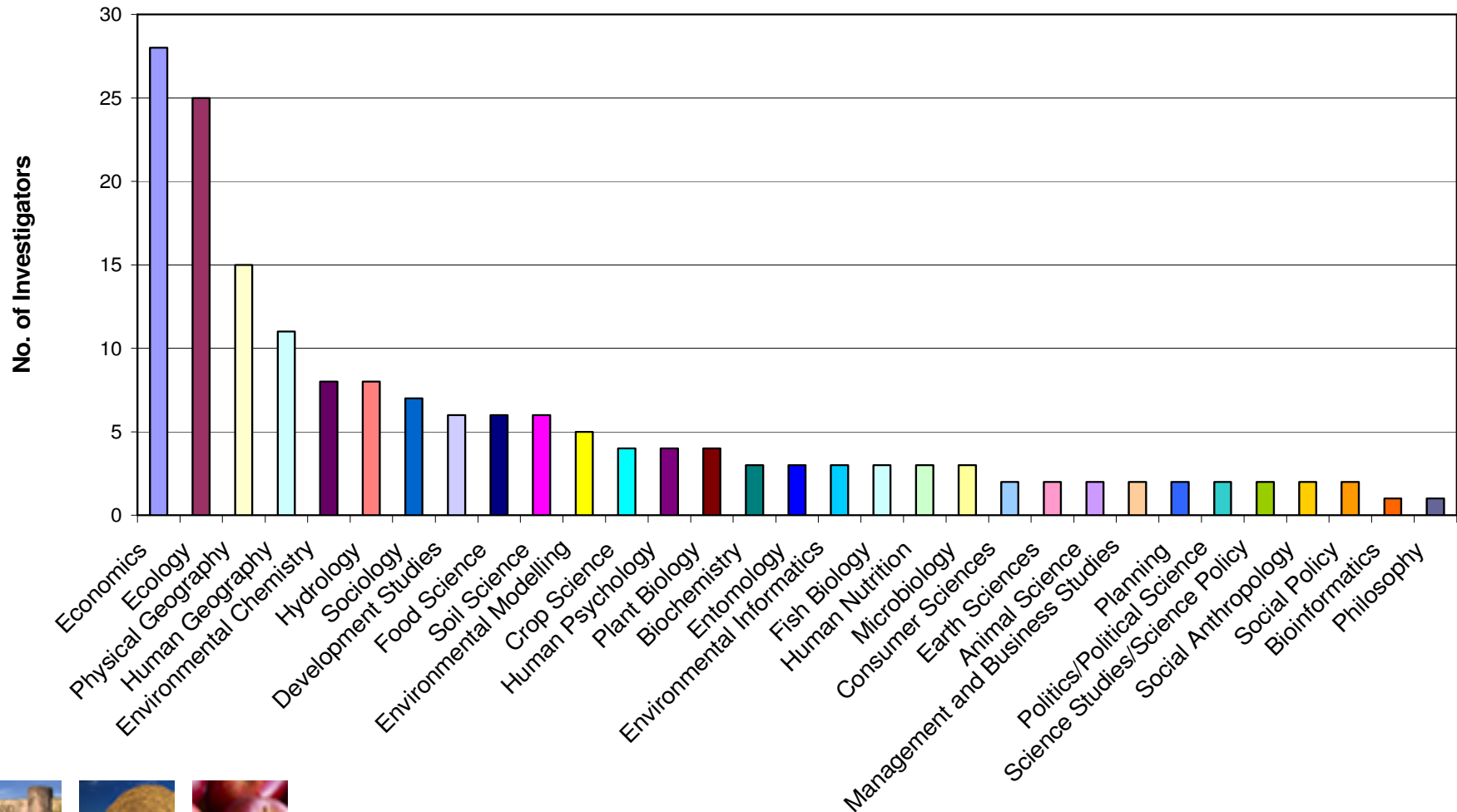
‘Root-and-Branch’ interdisciplinarity:

- Programme setting
- Programme management and direction
- Project design and management
- Individual development and training





Joined-up Science in RELU





Joined-up Science in RELU

‘Root-and-Branch’ interdisciplinarity:

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Socially Accountable Science

The demand here is for stakeholder engagement in scientific research to be broadened

“We are all stakeholders in science”

(Food Ethics Council)

And to be pushed upstream, where framing decisions and major priorities are set

“The task is to make visible the invisible, to expose to public scrutiny the assumptions, values and visions that drive science.”

(Demos, ‘See-through Science’)





Socially Accountable Science

The promise is that this should:

- Ensure more socially responsive research
- Yield more robust science
- Lead to more relevant results commanding greater social receptiveness





Socially Accountable Science in RELU

The RELU programme is committed to:

“enhancing the impact of research on rural policy and practice by engaging stakeholders in all stages of RELU.”

Through continuous engagement with a wide range of public, private and voluntary organisations and representative figures





Socially Accountable Science in RELU

Programme setting:

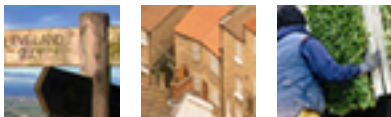
- Consultations
- Discussions with stakeholders

Programme Management:

- Strategic Advisory Committee
- Food Chain Forum / People and the Rural Environment Forum
- Stakeholder Engagement Plans

Project level:

- Range of groups / styles of engagement

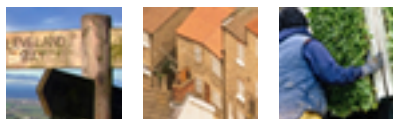




Socially Accountable Science in RELU

Improving water quality in Loweswater:

- Project challenges the perceived division of 'Science' and 'Society':
 - By pursuing effective dialogue between farmers, advisors, regulators and academics.
 - To understand the social, economic, cultural factors involved in environmental degradation, together with the physical processes.





The Shape of RELU

Four themes:

- Sustainable Food Chains
- Integration of Land and Water Use
- Environmental Basis of Rural Development
- Economic and Social Interactions with the Rural Environment

Three Calls:

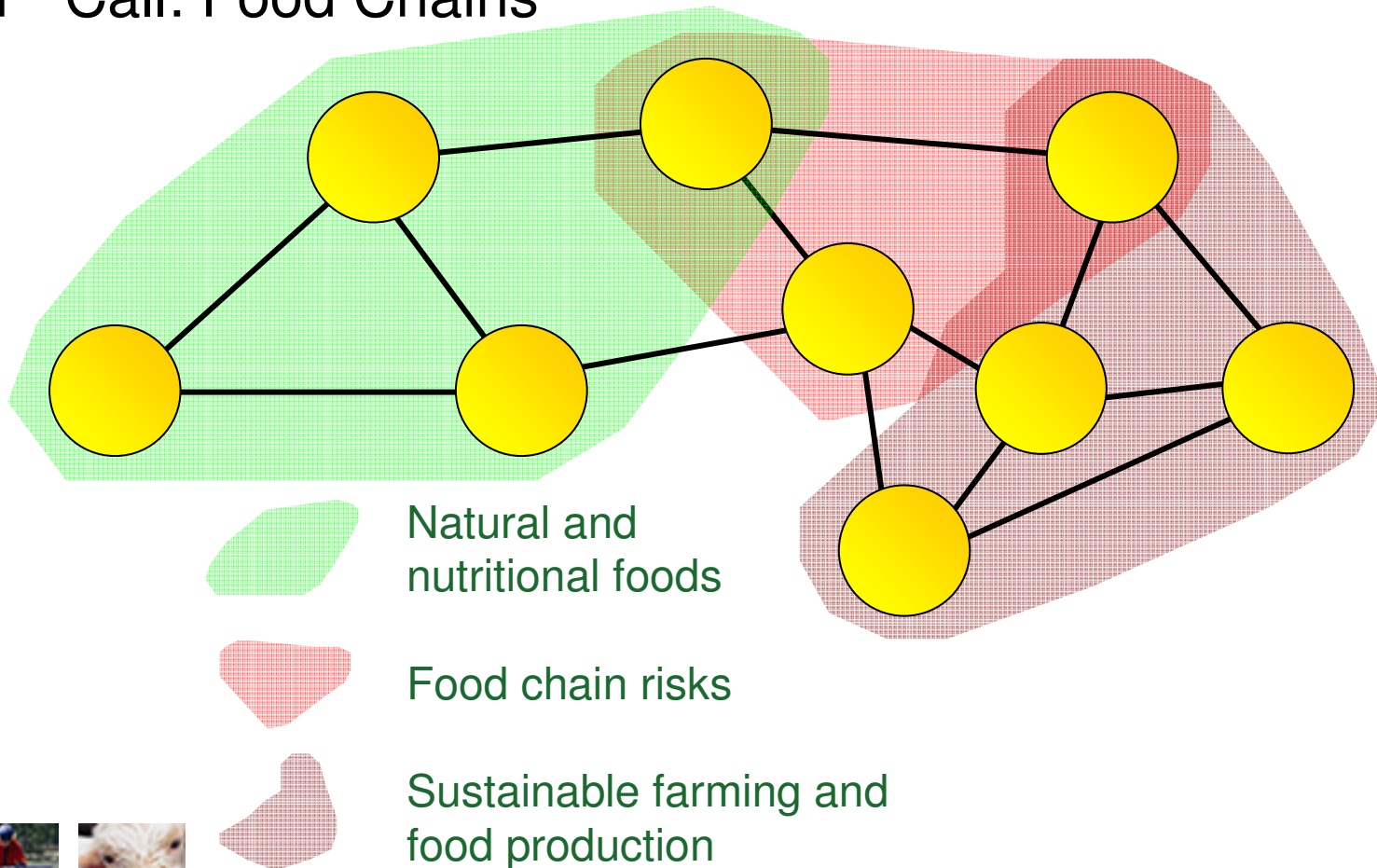
- 1st Call: Completed
- 2nd Call: In progress
- 3rd Call: June/July





The Shape of RELU

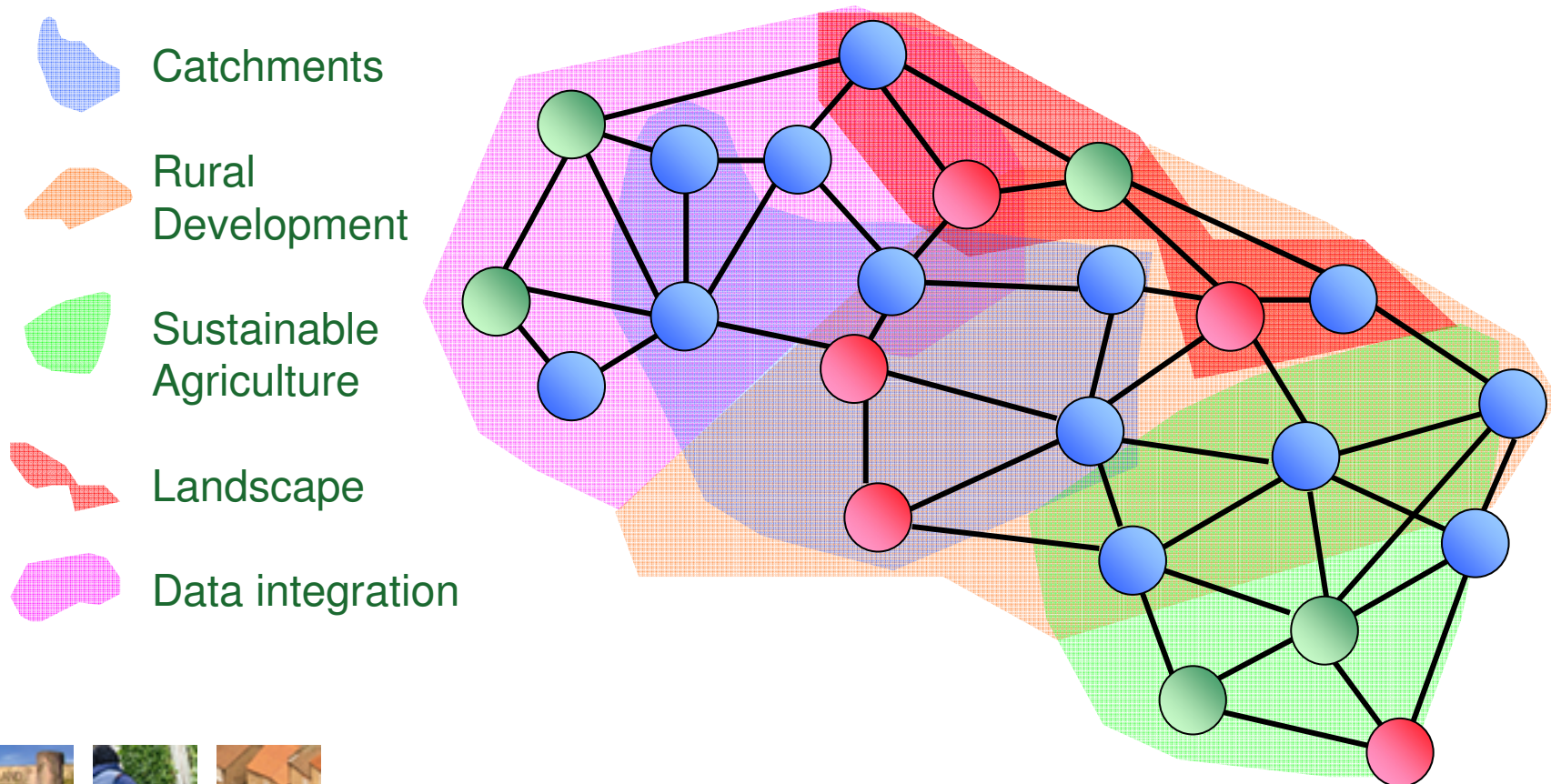
1st Call: Food Chains





The Shape of RELU

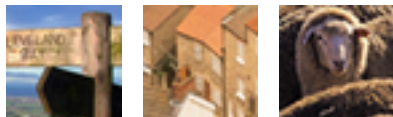
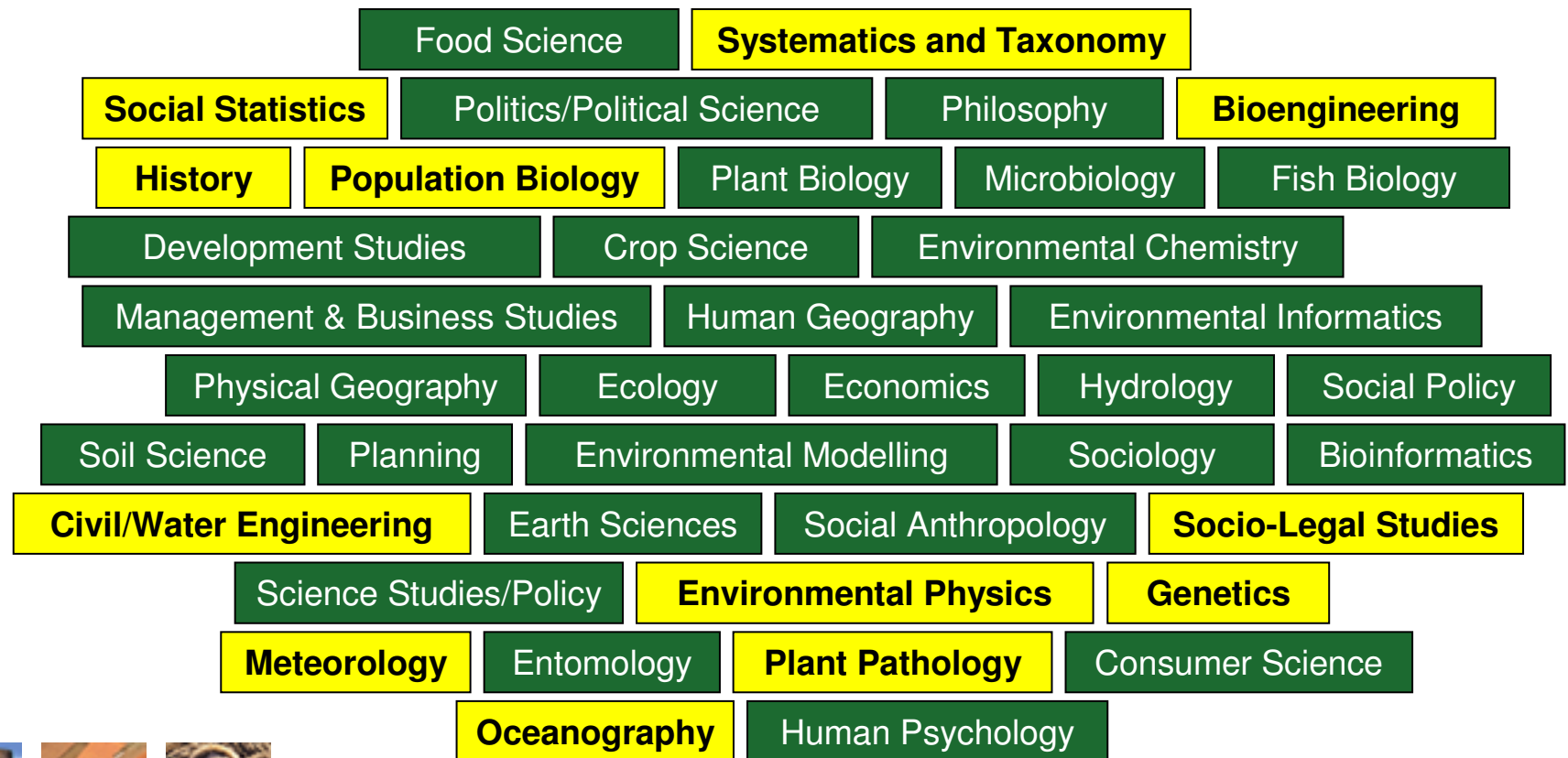
1st Call: People and the Rural Environment





The Shape of RELU

1st and 2nd Call Disciplines



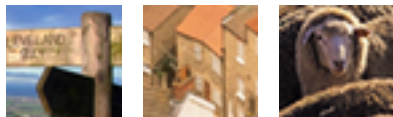


The Shape of RELU

3rd Call: June/July

A number of gaps evident to date:

- Animal and plant disease management
- Sustainable technologies and rural economies
- Impacts and implications of CAP reform
- Sustainable rural planning
- The relationship between a healthy environment and public health





Launching the Research

Continuing to pursue our mission on:

- Joined-up science
- Socially accountable science

Now is your chance to:

- Inform, influence and inflect
- Ensure that the research is properly contextualised
- Influence the 3rd Call

Next two days:

- Internal connections and capacity building
- Understanding more about the public challenges

