

RELU goes East

RELU Director Philip Lowe and project leaders Angela Karp and Jon Finch were part of the UK delegation to China in November, sponsored by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), to discuss the scope for research collaboration and exchange with Chinese scientists on appropriate science and technology for sustainable rural development. The UK delegation was led by Sir Gordon Conway, DFID's Chief Scientist, and included senior scientists from Rothamsted, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UK academia and NGO's active in the sustainable development field. The meeting was held in Yangling, Shaanxi Province, and on the Chinese side included top officials and scientists from MOST, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the China Agricultural University, Beijing and provincial departments and universities concerned with rural research development and extension. Topics covered ranged through rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation; resource degradation; the promotion of soil and water conservation; the contributions of nutrient management, crop breeding and bio-control to sustainable farming systems; and the prospects for bio-mass crops. Running through the discussions was a strong emphasis that appropriate technological support must be accompanied by appropriate policy changes and institutional reforms to build up the capacity of farmers and rural communities to manage for themselves the big changes that confront them. In this respect, considerable interest was expressed in learning from how research in the UK under the RELU programme is helping understand the socio-economic contexts in which environmental constraints and technological options are understood and acted upon. We would like to hear from any particular projects keen to host a short visit from interested Chinese scientists.