

Relu news



Issue date: January 2008

Contents

- 1 FSA Chair highlights value of research**
- 2 Have your say in the Great Land Use Debate**
- 3 Biopesticides project reports**
- 4 ESRC funds extension of flooding research**
- 5 Farm modelling benefits from US Exchange Fellow**
- 6 Report on "Social Research in Defra" praises Relu projects**
- 7 Can carbon markets fund uplands restoration?**
- 8 Flooding project gets deeply involved with residents**
- 9 Community support for water monitoring station**
- 10 Jurors reckon up the risks of livestock pollution**
- 11 Time is of the essence in choice experiments**
- 12 Talking about food**
- 13 Data Support workshop can help you archive your "people" data**
- 14 Funding available for work shadowing and visiting fellowships**
- 15 Latest briefing paper explains "What is relu?"**
- 16 Director goes West**
- 17 Relu people**

1 FSA chair highlights value of research

Seven first wave Relu projects on aspects of the food chain presented their findings at *Unlocking Change in the Food Chain*, which took place at Congress House in November. The conference was attended by policy makers, academics and the private and voluntary sectors. Food Standards Agency Chair Dame Deirdre Hutton, who chaired the morning session, described the Relu programme as "far-sighted" and "broadly-based" and said: "Research like this is incredibly important to the Food Standards Agency as an evidence-based organisation." To read her speech, see more information about the presentations and view the Sound Bites video from the conference go to <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Eventsandmeetings.htm>

2 Have your say in the Great Land Use Debate

What is our rural land for and what do we expect from it? Should farmers be diversifying into energy crops or concentrating on feeding the nation? And is it reasonable to expect them to be competitive food businesses as well as managers and guardians of wildlife and landscapes? When floods overwhelm urban areas should that just be a problem for the individuals and businesses affected? Or should country dwellers be prepared to sacrifice rural land for flood storage? Everyone seems to want something different, but can rural land fulfil all of these expectations? What is our long term vision for land use in the UK and do we need an extension of the planning system from town into countryside in order to realise it? Relu is inviting you to contribute to a unique on-line debate during National Science and Engineering Week/Festival of Social Science 2008. The Programme's land use policy analysts will be posing some key questions and drawing in opinion from a wide range of contributors. Visit www.relu.ac.uk from 7-14 March 2008 to have your say.

See http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/Philip_Lowe_final_land_strategy_article.doc to read Philip Lowe's article on land use in the UK in the current ESRC publication Britain in 2008.

3 Biopesticides project reports

The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides project concluded its work with a one day conference at Warwick HRI. Over seventy growers, regulators, manufacturers, consultants and scientists attended. Papers included a contribution from the Pesticides Safety Directorate and an outline of the Genoeg scheme for promoting biopesticides in the Netherlands. The project continues to inform policy and practice on biopesticides. Project leader Wyn Grant is now a member of the Availability Action Plan implementation group for the National Pesticides Strategy and the project also recently fed into a Defra stakeholders workshop in November on the future structure of PSD. A Policy and Practice Note on the project, the first in a series that will cover all the Relu projects, can now be downloaded from http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy_and_practice_notes/1_November_2007_Wyn_Grant.pdf or email relu@ncl.ac.uk to obtain a hard copy.

4 ESRC funds extension of flooding research

ESRC has funded an extension to the Relu *Integrated Floodplain Management Project* being carried out at Cranfield and the Open universities, to explore options for sustainable land and water management on floodplains in England and Wales. Recent extreme flood events have drawn attention to the contribution that rural floodplains make to the overall management of flood risk. Large areas of farm land were flooded, helping to attenuate the risk to urban areas. However, there are concerns, that rural interests might be inadequately represented and valued in future strategies for flood risk management, especially where rural land is deemed "expensive" to defend against flooding or is purposely sacrificed to provide flood storage services. This new work seeks to account for rural flood impacts at different scales – households, farm and other rural businesses and the rural community, recognizing the particular needs and vulnerabilities of rural communities and economies. Other collaborating sponsors are the Environment Agency and the Commission for Rural Communities. Contact : j.morris@cranfield.ac.uk
<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Morris.htm>

5 Farm modelling benefits from US Exchange Fellow

Relu Exchange Fellow, Professor Jim Shortle (Distinguished Professor of Agricultural and Environmental Economics and Director of the Environment and Natural Resources Institute at Penn State University) has met with six of the Programme's projects to discuss approaches being taken to farm production modelling. See http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Farm_Production_Modelling.doc for more details about his visit.

6 Report on "Social Research in Defra" praises Relu projects

Defra's Science Advisory Council has just issued a major report on

"Social Research in Defra" which recognises the Relu programme as a model for integrating social and natural science research. It refers specifically to two Relu projects: *Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive* and *The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides*.

[http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/documents/papers/2007/SAC\(07\)33.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/documents/papers/2007/SAC(07)33.pdf)

7 Can carbon markets fund uplands restoration?

Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change is inviting a range of organisations involved in exploiting emerging carbon markets to finance environmental initiatives, to a workshop on 24 January at the University of Leeds. The workshop will provide an opportunity to explore how organisations who are working in fields such as hydrological and ecological restoration of upland peat landscapes, woodlands creation and management, and the improvement and extension of wetlands habitats, can cooperate more efficiently and effectively to achieve common goals. Contact M.S.Reed@leeds.ac.uk for more information. Read what the Daily Telegraph had to say about this work at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2007/12/15/eapeat115.xml>

8 Flooding project gets deeply involved with residents

The *Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies* Project Team has held two of six planned meetings with residents of Pickering and the surrounding area in North Yorkshire. The Ryedale flood research group is the first of the project's experimental competency groups, designed to bring together diverse knowledge and experience in this controversial field of environmental science and management, in order to develop new forms of collective competence. For more information, contact the project administrator gillian.willis@ouce.ox.ac.uk or go to the project website <http://knowledge-controversies.ouce.ox.ac.uk/>

9 Community support for water monitoring station

The Relu project *Understanding and Acting in Loweswater: a Community Approach to Catchment Management* has installed a telemetric weather and water monitoring station on Loweswater. Some initial concerns about the aesthetics of the station actually led to a very useful survey of local residents, who responded by supporting the proposal and, in some cases, even offering help and continued contact. Planning permission for the buoy has now been granted and it will be used to monitor the ecology and weather and transmit data to a website www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/loweswater where information may be accessed. Contact c.waterton@lancaster.ac.uk.

10 Jurors reckon up the risk of livestock pollution

Members of the Devon public took part in a "citizens' jury" in mid-November to examine the issue of microbial watercourse pollution and what more might be done to mitigate the impact of livestock farming. The two-day process, which was part of *The Sustainable and Safe Recycling of Livestock Waste* project, involved a staggered programme of debate, presentation and field walking, in which expert witnesses were cross-examined by the jury regarding the practical, ethical and financial dimensions of microbial risk management. Among the testimonies heard was evidence from Defra's Water Quality Division, the Health Protection Agency, shell fisheries, South West Water, the National Farmers' Union and the Environment Agency. The jury concluded that measures should concentrate on the provision of advice and training, linked to financial assistance for low cost solutions in step with existing patterns of farming. The full verdict will be published shortly and is available from the jury facilitator, email

R.D.Fish@exeter.ac.uk

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Chadwick.htm>

11 Time is of the essence in choice experiments

Researchers on the *Sustainability of Hill Farming* project are carrying out choice experiments to identify public preferences for different kinds of landscapes. A unique element of this research is the analysis of the relationship between how people anticipate and experience the utility of environmental goods. Participants completed a valuation exercise on three occasions: prior to a visit to the Peak District National Park, during the visit and upon return from the National Park. A further set of workshops will be run in early 2008, in which the team will investigate the influence of

time on utility, in addition to investigating the impact of additional information about both the existing and historical landscape in the National Park. For more information contact dugald.tinch@stir.ac.uk or visit www.biome.group.shef.ac.uk/RELU/index2.htm

12 Talking about food

The Cabinet Office's Strategy Unit has published a discussion paper: "Food, an Analysis of the Issues". The Relu Director's Office and several of the Relu food chain projects have already contributed to this consultation and the Strategy Unit is inviting further feedback and comment. See http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/food_policy.aspx

13 Data support workshop can help you archive your "people" data

Most Relu research projects involve obtaining information from participants (through interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, etc). How do you deal with the legal and ethical aspects of obtaining informed consent from participants, handling confidential information and anonymising research data? This is important both for your primary research and for future re-use of data by other researchers. All Relu research data will need to be made available for archiving and sharing with other researchers upon project completion. The UK Data Archive, together with the Relu Data Support Service, is holding two parallel half-day workshops on 11 March 2008, in Leeds and Essex. The workshop will provide theoretical information and practical exercises on dealing with confidential research information and personal data, developing consent agreements for obtaining informed consent from participants and appropriate anonymisation techniques to enable use and sharing of data. More information at: <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/relu/reluevents.asp> or contact DSS-RELU@essex.ac.uk.

14 Funding available for work shadows and visiting fellowships

Funding is now available for a further round of Relu Work Shadowing and Visiting Fellowships. **Work Shadowing** aims to introduce RELU research staff to the action-contexts in which their research may be used. These contexts may be commercial organisations, voluntary bodies or public agencies. Recent work shadow hosts have included the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Clinton Devon Estates, the Environment Agency and the National Federation of Anglers. **Visiting Fellowships** complement the work shadowing scheme. They aim to allow policy makers and practitioners from the commercial, voluntary or public sector to visit a Relu research team or cluster of teams with a view to exploring the implications of the research for their work. Visiting Fellows in 2007 included representatives from Syngenta, the Pesticides Safety Directorate, and the Assynt Foundation. For more details see <http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/workshadowing.htm> and [http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/Visiting Fellowship.htm](http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/Visiting_Fellowship.htm) It's easy to apply for either of these schemes - we just need a simple one-page application emailed to relu@ncl.ac.uk before 31 March 2008. The funding limit is £2,000 per placement.

15 Latest briefing paper explains "What is relu"?

Briefing paper 7, providing an update on all the Relu projects, is now available at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings/BRIF7.pdf>. Or email relu@ncl.ac.uk to obtain a hard copy.

16 Director goes west

Philip Lowe visited Washington in November 2007. He attended the opening of RCUK's American Office at a ceremony in the British embassy and held bilateral talks with the National Science Foundation on potential links between the Relu Programme and parallel US research programmes. The American science community has its own version of Relu - called the Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems. It is interdisciplinary and involves a pooling of resources and research funding decisions between three NSF directorates (covering biological, geo and social sciences). It is seen as a trailblazing programme in integrating natural and human sciences expertise. Indeed, it is the only standing inter-directorate programme within the NSF. The parallels with Relu are striking, and there is strong interest in seeing what the two programmes could learn from each other, as the basis for encouraging international research

collaboration on how social and natural systems are likely to cope with global environmental change.

17 Relu people

- Professor Andrew Watkinson of the University of East Anglia and the Relu project *Management Options for Sustainable Agriculture*, is the new Director of the Tyndall Centre, the national UK centre for interdisciplinary research on climate change.
- James Curran, Chair of the Relu People and the Rural Environment Forum, was made an MBE in October.

Rural Economy and Land Use Programme
Centre for Rural Economy
School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
University of Newcastle
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
Tel. 0191 222 6903
Fax: 0191 222 5411
E-mail: relu@ncl.ac.uk