



Rural Economy and Land Use Programme

Harnessing the social and natural sciences for sustainable rural development

RELU NEWS

April-June 2006

Farmed fish for ethnic food

Raising tropical fish in converted farm buildings has caught the imagination of The Ethnic Food Action Group in Bradford who invited RELU researchers from Stirling to present to their Good Food Up North meeting. Local businesses, social enterprises, food networks and community groups heard about how the project is developing sustainable fish culture systems that can be integrated within livestock or crop farms. See:

<http://www.aqua.stir.ac.uk/Systems/tilapiaProject.htm>

What if we all ate a healthy diet?

RELU researchers at Reading have calculated what would happen if everyone ate a healthy diet. Foods whose consumption would increase include fruit and vegetables, bread and fish, all up 40-50%. Biggest losers would be cheese (down 75%), confectionery, sugar and soft drinks (all down 30-35%). Meat and milk consumption would fall by around 15%, fats (vegetable oils, butter and margarine) by about 20%. Some of the biggest adjustments would be required of Scottish and Northern Irish consumers where fresh vegetable intake would virtually double while cut-backs in soft drinks, confectionery, sugar and cheese would be sharper than in England or Wales. The team are going on to examine the possible consequences for the UK countryside. See:

<http://www.relu.rdg.ac.uk/>

<http://www.extra.rdg.ac.uk/news/details.asp?ID=682>

Defra co-funds biomass project

Defra has agreed to inject an additional £374,000 into a RELU project based at Rothamsted which is seeking a holistic assessment of growing energy crops. The team will be able to do additional research into the impacts of energy crops on biodiversity, besides the other planned work on social, economic and environmental impacts:

http://www2.defra.gov.uk/research/Project_Data/More.asp?I=IF0104&M=KWS&V=Cro

[ps](#)

<http://www.relu-biomass.org.uk/>

RELU team advises multinational agri-business company

Syngenta plc invited RELU researchers from Warwick to present their work on “Biological alternatives to chemical pesticides”. Syngenta is a worldwide agribusiness employing more than 19,000 people in over 90 countries. The research is examining regulatory obstacles to novel biopesticides:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/biopesticides/>

The future of bio-pesticides

RELU researchers are convening a one day workshop on 'Biopesticides: the Way Ahead' at the Royal Agricultural Society of England on 18 October 2006. The event is sponsored by the American bio science company AgraQuest. For further details see:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/biopesticides/events/>

International study of degradation hotspots uses RELU-tested methodology

The methodological framework developed by the Leeds based RELU study “Sustainable Uplands” is to be rolled out through a 7 million Euro EU-funded project covering Africa, southern Europe, USA, Australia, China and South America. The project “Desertification Mitigation and Remediation of Land” aims to establish alternative land strategies, based on close collaboration between scientists and stakeholders, for degradation hotspots around the world. See:

<http://www.env.leeds.ac.uk/~mreed/DESIRE.html>

<http://www.env.leeds.ac.uk/~mreed/sustainableuplands/>

Looking for an interdisciplinary research career? – scientists and social scientists apply here

The ESRC has introduced an early career research fellowship scheme to foster the development of interdisciplinary research careers and capacity in selected priority areas, including RELU. The deadline for applications is 5th September 2006. See:

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/fellowships.htm>

Out in the real world

RELU has launched its work shadowing scheme which introduces researchers to the contexts in which their research may be used. Placements are being undertaken in commercial organisations, voluntary bodies and public agencies, including Defra,

Environment Agency, East Anglia Food Link, Food Standards Agency, Freshwater Fishfarms Ltd, and Health Protection Agency.

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

Sustainable food chains and rural development

A major workshop to consider the implications for rural and regional development of RELU's Sustainable Food Chain research was hosted by Advantage West Midlands. The event brought together rural and regional development agencies from across the UK.

Presentations can be seen at:

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/AWM%20Workshop%2011%20May06/agenda%20page%201.htm>

RELU exposed

RELU has published its first major collection of papers. The special issue of Journal of Agricultural Economics considers the opportunities presented by an interdisciplinary approach and explores the range of methodological and conceptual challenges presented by the programme. RELU mailbase members have exclusive access to the publication.

For details see:

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/JAE%20Special%20Issue.htm>

RELU and Science Week – read all about it?

RELU has published a briefing paper which captures the discussions at the RELU Debates which formed part of the ESRC's Social Science Week and the British Association's National Science Week 2006. The report focuses on 4 major issues: Are energy crops running out of steam? Were any lessons learned from Foot and Mouth? Farming's no place for wildlife? and Food miles - should we be buying food from abroad? The briefing document can be downloaded at:

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings.htm>

RELU People

Les Firbank, a member of the RELU's Strategic Advisory Committee, has been appointed as Head of IGER's Soil, Environmental and Ecological Sciences Department and North Wyke Research Station. He takes up the position in September.

Jo Daymond has departed from her position of RELU Communications Manager to set-up in Germany with her husband, daughter and new baby, Sarah.

RELU project leader David MacDonald has been appointed to the Board of Natural England, the new Integrated Agency.