

Relu news



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1 **Unlocking Change in the Food Chain in November**

On 7 November 2007 RELU will be mounting a major conference at Congress House in central London, where seven RELU projects will be reporting important results and implications of their research on sustainable food chains. Booking for this event will open in August and details will be circulated and made available on the RELU website. If you want to register your interest now and ensure you receive early information email RELU@vistaevents.co.uk.

2 **Edinburgh event addresses strategic land use**

Speakers at "Research on Rural Resource Management and the Rural Economy: Addressing the Local and Regional Dimensions", in May, explored a range of RELU research on integrated land and water use, sustainable farming for the environment and human health and the collaborative management of rural resources, all within the overall theme of strategies for sustainable land use and the implications for rural planning. The event was held in Edinburgh, in collaboration with the Local Authority Research Council Initiative and the Northern Rural

Network, to explore the local and regional dimensions of the programme, and attracted delegates from local and national government and professional organisations. The day also launched the new RELU visiting fellowship scheme, designed to enable staff from such bodies to spend time with researchers. Reports may be found at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/LARCI/Agenda.htm> and details of the visiting fellowship scheme at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Visiting%20Fellowship.htm>

3 Natural England expert on visiting fellowship

One of the first people from an external organisation to take up a RELU visiting fellowship will be Rosie Simpson, Principal Specialist in Natural England's Agriculture and Land Management Policy Team. She will be visiting five RELU research projects. Find out more about the visiting fellowship scheme at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Visiting%20Fellowship.htm>

4 Citizens' jury on livestock waste

Researchers working on the RELU project 'Sustainable and safe recycling of livestock waste' are to elicit public assessments of the risks associated with livestock farming for water quality through a citizens' jury. Defra has provided £20K to support this exercise under its Water Quality Programme. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Chadwick.htm>

5 Social and environmental inequalities in rural areas

Researchers are aiming to identify patterns of social and environmental inequality in a new project that will develop a dataset on Social and Environmental Conditions in Rural Areas (SECRA). They will be considering how methods for measuring inequality differ in the natural and social sciences and exploring ways of resolving such differences and finding a common approach. The team will be involving local residents in the research and using mapping techniques to examine perceptions of local inequity and justice. Working closely with advisory partners from the Commission for Rural Communities and the Environment Agency, they will then be considering what their findings mean for policies to achieve sustainable rural development. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Huby.htm>

6 Lessons from Dutch elm disease in assessing threat from sudden oak death

A new RELU project will explore the extent to which previous experience in the UK of a major tree disease pandemic, Dutch elm disease, can provide useful information for how we might deal with the more recent threat of sudden oak death. This forest disease has reached epidemic proportions in California and has recently been seen in this country. The project will draw on archival research and interviews with people directly involved in the original Dutch elm disease outbreak to reconstruct the progress of the epidemic across the UK and subsequent unsuccessful attempts to deal with it. It will then use modelling and reconstructive photographic techniques to compare this trajectory with the possible spread of sudden oak death under a number of alternative management scenarios, and aims to find out what approach the public would favour in responding to the problem. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Potter.htm>

7 RELU at the BA Festival of Science 2007

- From Tuesday 11 September to Thursday 18 September, from 10 am to 6 pm each day, RELU researchers will be helping the public to visualise "The English countryside with energy crops: how different will it be?" at the British Association for the Advancement of Science's Festival of Science 2007 in York. For further information visit <http://www.the-ba.net/the-ba/Events/FestivalofScience/index.html> Or contact Dr Elspeth Bartlet elspeth.bartlet@bbsrc.ac.uk
- A training event for RELU junior research staff is being held as part of the Festival, which will include interdisciplinary masterclass sessions on Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 September.
- RELU researcher Wyn Grant is convening a workshop 'Working Together Across Disciplines: Challenges for the Natural and Social Sciences', from 11.30 am to 1.30 pm on Thursday 13 September. This will bring together a number of leading researchers from across the RELU programme.
- RELU Director Philip Lowe will be giving an address: "Strategic challenges for rural land use" as President of the Food and Agricultural Section of the Festival at 4 pm on Wednesday 12 September, introducing a short series of lectures entitled "Farms as Factories: New opportunities for the development of non-food crops".

8 Government urged to reconsider future of Pesticides Safety Directorate

Biopesticide researchers working on a RELU project based at Warwick University, have urged the government to reconsider its proposals for the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD). A recent informal consultation exercise by Defra recommends either a merger with Central Science Laboratories and two smaller agencies to form a Regulatory Science Agency (RSA) or a merger into the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The researchers fear that either option would not be good news for the development of a new generation of biopesticides, and they favour retaining the present regulatory arrangements. Of the alternatives put forward, however, they regard the RSA option as preferable to a merger of PSD with the HSE, which, they say in their response to the consultation: "would present a challenge to PSD's distinctive expertise and working ethos and might disrupt the momentum achieved in the Biopesticides Scheme".

More information about the RELU project may be found at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Grant.htm> or <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/biopesticides/>

9 Civic science tackles hot topics

RELU researchers and stakeholders demonstrated the programme's potential for transcending scientific divides and making issues accessible in the best tradition of civic science, when they explored some important arguments in three debates during Social Science/National Science and Engineering Week 2007: "Consumers cannot be left to themselves to decide what to eat"; "The environment would be fine if only scientists were in charge" and "Farmers should be responsible for controlling livestock diseases". Now the debates have been published as RELU Briefing Paper 5: "Power and Responsibility – Who decides? You decide!" To obtain a copy, email relu@ncl.ac.uk. Or download at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings/Brif%205%20Power%20and%20Responsibility.pdf>

10 Pioneering new approaches to knowledge transfer

RELU is pioneering fresh approaches to knowledge transfer, built upon a philosophy of knowledge exchange and a sophisticated understanding of innovation as a combined socio-technical process. The newly-published Briefing Paper 6: "Common knowledge? An exploration of knowledge transfer" looks at the issues and challenges that researchers face in ensuring that their findings reach the audiences that can make best use of them. It also explains some of the techniques that RELU has adopted and the advantages that such an interdisciplinary programme may draw on, when planning and executing knowledge transfer activities. To obtain a copy email relu@ncl.ac.uk. Or download at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings/RELUBrief6%20Common%20Knowledge.pdf>

11 New funding for sustainable uplands project

The RELU project "Sustainable uplands, frameworks for adaptive learning" has secured an additional £51,000 from United Utilities, for work they are carrying out on "Optimising carbon storage in United Utilities peat catchments". The University of Durham Knowledge Transfer Fund has also allocated an additional £10,000 to the project to investigate "The potential for carbon storage in managed uplands". <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Hubacek.htm>

12 Developing a tool for stakeholder analysis

Researchers at the Natural Resources Management Centre, Cranfield University, who are working on the RELU project "Management options for biodiverse farming", are developing a tool for stakeholder analysis. This runs on a spreadsheet to facilitate easy transfer among different users and at the moment is very much work in progress. Currently, it can be used to manage a stakeholder list, assign various attributes to them and graphically plot their interest and influence. It can then be used to conduct various analyses on the basis of the data entered. Find out more or obtain a copy by contacting Anil Graves (a.r.graves@cranfield.ac.uk) or Joe Morris (j.morris@cranfield.ac.uk).

13 Additional Defra funding for research on water catchment management

Defra has allocated an additional £125K to support two RELU projects working on the management of water catchments in the UK. "Catchment management for protection of water resources" is designed to develop guidance on improving water quality by reducing pollution and identifying the governance arrangements that would be necessary to achieve this. Results from intensive research on two UK catchments, the River Tamar in south west England and the River Thurne in the Norfolk Broads, will be integrated with the findings from international management programmes in the USA and Europe. The second project "Testing a community approach to catchment management" looks specifically at Loweswater in the Lake District and considers how scientists, institutional stakeholders and local people can share expertise and work together for the benefit of that environment. The researchers aim to find ways of creating a mechanism for long term community and stakeholder involvement. Both projects will be aiming to learn lessons that can be applied more widely to catchment management in

the UK.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Smith.htm>

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Waterton.htm>

14 World's leading land-use modelling expert to advise RELU projects

RELU researchers will be working with Professor James Shortle, the world-leading expert in land-use modelling, from Pennsylvania State University, over the next year. He will be coming to the UK in autumn 2007 to visit the RELU programme as part of an exchange funded jointly by the ESRC and the US Social Science Research Council.

15 RELU people

i) RELU Researchers Advise Parliamentary Select Committee on Future of the CAP

The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee published a report on its inquiry into the UK Government's vision for the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on 23 May. To guide its inquiry, the Committee asked for a private briefing with RELU researchers Wyn Grant (Warwick), Alan Swinbank (Reading) and Neil Ward (Newcastle). The report concluded that the CAP should be scrapped and replaced with a new rural policy for the European Union and made more than 20 detailed recommendations on the UK's approach to winning support in Europe for further CAP reform.

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/environment_food_and_rural_affairs.cfm

ii) Biofuels expert to host European event

On 17/18 October 2007, Angela Karp, who leads the RELU project "Impacts of increasing land use under energy crops", will host a high profile European expert consultation event, organised by the EU Joint Research Centre, the European Economic Association and Rothamsted Research, entitled: "Short Rotation Forestry, Short Rotation Coppice and perennial grasses in the European Union: Agro-environmental aspects, present use and perspectives".

iii) Interdisciplinarity within and beyond geography

Liz Oughton and Louise Bracken from the RELU project "Angling and the Rural Environment" are hosting a session at the Royal Geographical Society annual conference on geographers' experiences of interdisciplinary working across the RELU programme. See

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Interdisciplinarity%20within%20and%20beyond%20geography.doc> for details.

iv) Biodiversity abroad

Henry Buller, who leads the RELU project "Realising the Links between Quality Food Production and Biodiversity Protection" presented a paper entitled 'Eating Biodiversity: the commodification of the non-human' at the Annual Conference of the Association of American Geographers in San Francisco in April.

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