

## Relu news



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### 1 Defra support for RELU research on management of animal diseases

Animal disease is hitting the headlines once more and Defra has provided an additional £240,000 to support the work of four RELU research projects on the management of animal diseases. That supplements the £3 million allocated by ESRC, BBSRC and NERC for these projects. The aim of the extra funding is to enable additional research and analysis to be carried out directly addressing Defra's agenda and to support a dedicated programme of knowledge exchange between the RELU projects and Defra officials and stakeholders. Two projects are particularly topical. *The Governance of Livestock Disease* is considering a range of cattle diseases, how policy on one disease affects the others, how different organisational levels interact and the consequences for the overall health of animals. Strategies around containment are another controversial issue in outbreaks, particularly when different research disciplines do not always share ideas or approaches and the science community is not always good at translating knowledge into policy advice. *Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control* is bringing together expertise in a very wide range of disciplines to focus on building integrated strategies in three major areas: foot and mouth disease, avian flu and waterborne diseases.

[http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third Call/Medley.htm](http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Medley.htm)

[http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third Call/Wynne.htm](http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Wynne.htm)

### 2 RELU provides international bridgehead for local food development

Frances Rowe, head of rural development at ONE North East linked up with North American researchers at a RELU event which compared international experience on food chain localisation. The contacts she made she was able to pursue through

a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship which took her across the United States to investigate models of local food production, including community-supported agriculture, and their contribution to local and regional development. A report of her study tour and its findings for regional development in the UK is available at

[http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/Frances Rowe Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship 2006 - USA.doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/Frances_Rowe_Winston_Churchill_Travelling_Fellowship_2006_USA.doc)

### **3 RELU research feeds into policy thinking on flooding**

RELU research is making a contribution to many areas of policy making, including such hot topics as flooding. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has decided that it will hold an inquiry, inviting evidence from interested parties and the RELU project *The Integrated Management of Floodplains* has sent in a submission. A Government review on flooding "Making space for water" has already highlighted research by the *Sustainable Uplands* project. Director of RELU Philip Lowe said: "It's most encouraging to see the RELU projects taking the initiative and feeding research evidence into the policy-making process. That's exactly what the programme should be doing."

For more information:

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

[http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/Cranfield - Select Committee Flood 0v5.doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/Cranfield_Select_Committee_Flood_0v5.doc)

<http://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/sustainableuplands>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/policy/strategy.htm>

### **4 RELU establishes land use policy commission**

Land and how we use it has risen up the political agenda, driven there by public concerns over climate change, flood risk, food security and sustainable energy supplies. Politicians have called for a strategic approach to land use. The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is responding by appointing two land use policy analysts to draw out relevant findings from across its range of research projects, backed by an expert advisory group. Alan Woods and Vicki Swales both have a background in land use policy, analysis and consultancy. Alan will be working across the UK, Vicki will be concentrating on the Scottish dimension and both will be liaising closely with RELU research projects to identify cross cutting and strategic ideas that will then be fed back into the policy making process via the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Scottish Government. Read a profile of Alan Woods at: [http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Alan Woods profile.doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Alan_Woods_profile.doc) and contact him at: [aw@awassocs.demon.co.uk](mailto:aw@awassocs.demon.co.uk)

Read Vicki Swales' profile at [http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Vicki Swales profile.doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Vicki_Swales_profile.doc) and contact her at: [vicki.swales@btinternet.com](mailto:vicki.swales@btinternet.com)

### **5 Animal disease historian writes on foot and mouth outbreak**

RELU research fellow Abigail Woods from Imperial College has contributed an article to the RELU website, examining the history of research on foot and mouth disease in the UK and putting the recent outbreak into its historical context. [http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/FMD\\_research\\_\(2\).doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/FMD_research_(2).doc)

### **6 Don't forget to book for Unlocking Change in the Food Chain**

Booking is now well underway for the RELU conference Unlocking Change in the Food Chain at Congress House in central London on Wednesday 7 November 2007. Places are limited and are being filled very quickly so book now to ensure your place. You may do this via the RELU website at [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) or by telephoning Vista Events at 020 8542 7622.

### **7 Biopesticides: The Regulatory Challenge - register now**

The RELU project "*The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides*" will be holding their final workshop on "Biopesticides: The Regulatory

Challenge" on 31 October 2007 at Warwick HRI, Wellesbourne, Warwickshire. The meeting will present findings from the project on the environmental and regulatory sustainability of biopesticides as alternatives to chemical pesticides in the food chain. There are still some places available to hear the findings from this project so book now. More details at:

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/biopesticides/events/biopesticides\\_2007.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/biopesticides/events/biopesticides_2007.pdf)

### **8 Why do ecologists want to work with social scientists?**

Increasingly ecologists are taking the interdisciplinary route in their research. The Bulletin of the British Ecological Society vol 38: 3 August 2007 includes a feature: "Interdisciplinary research: leading ecologists down the route to sustainability?", edited by Alison Holt and Tom Webb, which discusses the whole issue, taking RELU as a model. See [http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/BES\\_Interdisc.pdf](http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/BES_Interdisc.pdf)

### **9 Energy crops attract crowds at BA Festival of Science**

Shoppers on the streets of York were invited to consider how the English countryside might look with large scale plantings of perennial energy crops such as miscanthus grass and willow coppice. Angela Karp who leads on the RELU project "*Impact of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops*" and colleagues took the opportunity to take examples of the crops and 3D computer simulations to the BA Festival of Science, attracting a lot of attention from passers-by and visitors to the festival.

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

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

### **10 Learning lessons from interdisciplinary working**

Interdisciplinary working is making its mark across the academic community, with a series of recent events underlining the strengths that this approach can bring to the research process. Both the Institute of British Geographers and the British Association for the Advancement of Science have recently hosted special sessions on the subject, featuring RELU projects. "Interdisciplinarity within and beyond geography" took place at the IBG, while the British Academy organised, "Working together across disciplines: challenges for the natural and social sciences" and RELU held an interdisciplinary masterclass for junior research staff, both at the BA Festival of Science in York. [http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Interdisciplinarity\\_within\\_and\\_beyond\\_geography.doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Interdisciplinarity_within_and_beyond_geography.doc)

### **11 RELU People**

**Veerle Van den Eynden** has been appointed as the new RELU officer for the Data Support Service. She will be responsible for coordinating the data support services for the RELU programme, for providing guidance on data integration across disciplines and for liaising directly with RELU researchers. Within the next few months, she will be visiting RELU projects to provide specific guidance on data management, sharing and archiving for individual projects. Veerle has a degree in Agricultural Sciences and a PhD in Applied Biological Sciences, her specialty is researching interactions between people, plants and the environment, using a combination of social and natural science methods. The RELU-DSS web site (<http://relu.esds.ac.uk/>) has been revised to offer better information and guidance and an information portal of data collected through the RELU programme will be added soon. RELU researchers are welcome to contact Veerle ([veerle@essex.ac.uk](mailto:veerle@essex.ac.uk)) with any queries.

**Angela Karp** from Rothamsted Research, who leads the project "*The Impact of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops*" was presented with the 2007 Royal Agricultural Society of England Research Award at the Royal Show this year.

Director of RELU, **Philip Lowe**, has been appointed Chair of Defra's Vets and Veterinary Services Working Group. As President of the Agricultural Section at the BA Festival of Science he gave an address on the challenges of rural land use. Read his address at [http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Call\\_for\\_strategic\\_land\\_use\\_planning\\_PL.doc](http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Call_for_strategic_land_use_planning_PL.doc)

**Laurence Smith**, who is leading the RELU project: Local Management of Water Catchments and River Basins: Drawing on International Experience gave a presentation at the 10th International Rivers Symposium and Environmental Flows Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 3-6 September 2007.

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