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Category: Research: Project Summary

Key words: RELU, case studies, participatory, scoping study, agro-ecosystems

Project Title: Learning and research for sustainable agro-ecosystems by both farmers and scientists.



Project Code: RELU01

Short Title: RELU- farmer/researcher collaboration

Project Leader: Dr. Fergus Lyon, Centre for Economic and Enterprise Development Research, Middlesex University

Project Partners:

EFRC: Prof. Martin Wolfe, Dr. Bruce Pearce, Dr. Sarah Pepler

University of Kingston: Dr. Frances Harris

Agricultural and rural livelihood systems: Dr. David Gibbon

Start Date: November 2004

End Date: September 2005

Funder: Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme

Key Words: RELU, case studies, participatory, scoping study, agro-ecosystems

EFRC Programme:

Project Aim: The aim of this scoping study is to find out how farmers learn and how farmers and researchers collaborate when undertaking agro-ecosystems research.

Abstract of Research: This scoping project examines ways of generating knowledge for organic and other forms of sustainable farming and land use. The efficiency and productivity of organic farming depends on the ability of both farmers and scientists to adapt knowledge to specific agro-ecological, social and economic contexts. The

challenge for sustainable agricultural research is to develop knowledge that can be used to adapt farming to local specificity and ecology. It is necessary to understand how farmers learn, make decisions, benchmark and carry out their own informal experimentation to find the system that meet their needs and their local ecological context. Similarly, there is a need for more understanding about how researchers can examine whole systems.

This requires greater understanding amongst scientists and between scientists and farmers, recognising each other's strengths and weaknesses and finding ways of working together. This interdisciplinary subject will be examined by a team of social, environmental and biological researchers with the aim of identify good practice in interdisciplinary research on agro ecosystems in UK agriculture. At the same time this collaborative project will build the capacity of individual researchers involved.

Objectives:

- How do organic farmers innovate, learn and develop farming systems that are best suited for their land and the context of their farming enterprise?
- How do research scientists carry out whole farm agro-ecosystems research?
- How can farmers and researchers collaborate?

Expected Benefits: Hopefully this project can help to determine how farmers and researchers can best collaborate to produce useful and rigorous results in a systems context, which can then guide methods used by future research projects.

Output:

Lyon, F., Clarke, S., Harris, F., Wolfe, M.S. and Gibbon, D. (2005) Learning and research for sustainable agro-ecosystems by both farmers and scientists: A briefing note.

Lyon, F., Clarke, S., Harris, F., Wolfe, M.S. and Gibbon, D. (2005) Learning and research for sustainable agro-ecosystems by both farmers and scientists: A short report.

Lyon, F., Clarke, S., Harris, F., Wolfe, M.S. and Gibbon, D. (2005) Learning and research for sustainable agro-ecosystems by both farmers and scientists: A full report.