

# Meet the Team

In the last newsletter we introduced the project team at NIAB. We are also collaborating with social scientists, who are interested in the qualitative aspects of the project, described overleaf. Below are those involved in this part of the project:



**Frances Harris**  
School of Earth  
Sciences and  
Geography,  
Kingston University.



**Fergus Lyon**  
CEEDR,  
Middlesex University

# Events

We are holding two events this year called 'Arable Systems for the Future', one in the East and one in the South. The days are designed for you to come and see and input into the work of this and other projects currently being carried out by EFRC. There will also be talks on arable marketing.

The dates of the two events are:

**21<sup>st</sup> June 2005**

**Sheepdrove Organic farm,  
Lambourn,  
Berkshire. RG17 7UU**

This day will also be incorporating HDRA's participatory weed project event.

**28<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

**Wakelyns Agro-forestry,  
Fressingfield,  
Suffolk. IP21 5SD**

Further details can be found on the Elm Farm Research Centre Events Programme enclosed.

The price for these events quoted in the programme is £75, but for those involved in the participatory cereals project, there will be a special rate of just **£15**. Places are limited so please book early via the booking form on the Events Programme.



**Cereal varieties for organic production: Developing a participatory approach to seed production and varietal selection.**



**Project Aim: To develop a robust system for identifying, testing, multiplying and marketing cereal varieties, lines, mixtures and populations best suited to organic production in different parts of the country.**



Defra funded project OF0330.

# The Participatory Approach

This project aims to involve farmers in extensive, nationwide research for the testing of wheat varieties, and to optimise methods for the generation and transfer of knowledge.

The interviews carried out at the beginning of this project revealed that most farmers already, individually or as groups, carry out experiments on new varieties and techniques. This experiential learning is an important process in all types of farming, but particularly in the organic sector, where there has been only a limited amount of governmental and/or industrially funded research.



## Interviews and Experiments

At the beginning of the project, the individuals interviewed provided details of the experiments/trials they had carried out. In addition, each farmer gave an indication of the areas they considered as priority for future research. Key areas included :

- The identification of the best winter wheat variety for organic production, and
- Methods to ensure good seed quality through novel seed treatments.



Variety trials carried out both last season and this year by farmers, in over 20 locations, will provide the opportunity to identify suitable wheat varieties for different regions in the UK.

We are also interested in your thoughts on the criteria by which the wheat variety performance should be judged, your views on the varieties being tested, and new seed treatments being assessed by NIAB.

## Benchmarking

We are linking up with a larger group of farmers, with the help of Stephen Briggs (Abacus Organic Associates) and Andrew Trump (Organic Arable Marketing Group) to initiate a preliminary benchmarking service. This will provide an opportunity to assess the performance of wheat varieties grown organically over the whole country. It is hoped that compilation of this data will assist farmers in wheat variety selection in the future.

## Future Research

The partnership between farmers and academic researchers offers major opportunities for the identification of problems in wheat production, with the subsequent elucidation of methods for solving some of these major issues.

The more you become involved, the more you can direct the process, from the identification of research priorities to setting the criteria by which wheat varieties should be judged.

**If you would like any more information on this topic, or have any questions about the project, please don't hesitate to contact us.**