



environmental sustainability



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The Objective One Partnership
for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

FARM ENVIRONMENT LINK PROJECT

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the project

The Farm Environment Link (FELP) Project is run by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and works with farmers across Cornwall. The aim of the project is to enhance the economic sustainability of Cornish agricultural holdings by advising on the economic opportunities achievable through environmental measures.

The Programme has invested £283,014 from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) in the project which has a total cost of £563,920.



Launch of the FELP project at AJ Lobb and Sons, left to right: David Bellamy, Steve Burchett, Mike Cherry, Rosalie Goldsworthy, Edward Strawbridge and Ian Lobb

FWAG will work with 450 farms providing specialist advice on energy use, water use, nutrient use and biodiversity promoting action plans in each area, with 100 farms receiving an in-depth farm audit.

FELP steering group member, James Lyall won the FWAG competition for the Cornwall Farmer's Ltd Otter Award 2004 which rewards the farmer who best combines commercial farming and wildlife conservation.

measures of environmental sustainability adopted

To promote the prudent use of natural resources

The project assesses a farm's resource requirements and opportunities for minimisation via site visits e.g. the farm's slurry and manure will be tested and soil samples taken to create crop diets using fertilisers very efficiently. The farm will then receive guidance in a Whole Farm Plan on energy efficiency and renewable energies, waste minimisation, pollution prevention, water conservation and nutrient control. For example, minimum tillage regimes can be drawn up or rainwater harvesting and the use of leak detectors on water troughs will be encouraged. Specialist advice is signposted to if necessary.

To protect and improve the environment

Advice on the historic environment is included within the Whole Farm Plan (e.g. advice on ploughing

techniques to preserve existing features) and a visit from the County Council's historic environment unit will be instigated. The project surveys wildlife habitats and advises on improvements e.g. to protect important BAP species. FWAG always use local caterers and producers for their events and project staff liftshare where possible.

To take advantage of the business opportunities afforded by growing demands for environmental goods, processes and services

FWAG advisors provide further support with applications to the project's own capital grant scheme which supports the changes recommended within the Whole Farm Plan and will help lead to an environmentally sustainable farming business.

To increase awareness of residents, businesses and visitors of the value and importance of the environment

The farmer's awareness is raised through the project activities of site visits, the Whole Farm Plans, newsletters, the biannual demonstration days and visits to participating farms to share experiences and information. Farmers are also encouraged to become members of FWAG and receive free advice and information on FWAG's work thereby ensuring the sustainability of the positive results achieved through the project.



case study

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benefits of environmental sustainability

Individual advice fits conservation and efficient resource use within the particular context of each commercial enterprise and provides opportunities for farmers to reduce costs, time and wear and tear on kit. For instance minimum tillage measures cut down fuel use, water conservation gives cost savings if the business is on the mains supply, concentrating slurry reduces wastes that need to be got rid of, and rainwater harvesting increases water quality for crops.

FELP can reduce the amount of dirty water on the farm which then reduces pollution to water courses which is good for biodiversity (less nutrient runoff) and for farmers with regards to their responsibilities to the Environment Agency for pollution control.

The environmental sustainability advice within the Whole Farm Plans helps keep information going out to farmers, keeping them up-to-date with modern developments.

In summary the economic benefits created through the adoption of environmental sustainability measures include costs savings, land management improvements and pollution control for farmers. The active linking of environmental and economic gains is likely to ensure the sustainability of both.

lessons learnt

Jillie Dale of FWAG said: *"It's a never ending learning experience. Farmers, land managers and advisors find there's always something new to learn."*

"We can help farmers keep ahead of the game by improving productivity coupled with sustainable land management. We are always looking for simple solutions to improve efficiency, whilst incorporating biodiversity and habitat protection within the commercial enterprise."

"We aim to help farmers be in a strong position in the changing climate of agriculture. The project makes them look at areas of their farm which they hadn't thought about in depth before and helps them to consider new management techniques and opportunities for cost savings. For instance catchment sensitive farming and the water framework directive are looming on the horizon and will be big issues for the agricultural industry and this project will go some way to changing the way that farmers consider their business and be prepared for the changes when they come in. Not only may they be able to cut costs now, but also be in a stronger position for the future."



Demonstration of equipment at FWAG's Minimum Tillage Day

"Farmers are fascinated to find out what's there in terms of archaeology and are usually delighted to be able to preserve it."

One farmer, Len Olds, wrote in specifically to say thank you and how pleased he's been with the Whole Farm Plan. He says: *"The project has helped me to focus my mind on different areas of the farm and use the nutrients available from the chicken manure more effectively which will reduce losses to the environment and save me money on my fertiliser bill."*

"Through the on-farm advice and Whole Farm Plan I have been encouraged in all that I am already doing right, as well as having certain management details pinpointed that I have overlooked. Overall I have been very pleased with the fresh perspective that I have gained through the advice supplied through this project and enabled me to broaden my outlook when planning my farm business."

For more information about how you can incorporate environmental sustainability into your project please contact the Objective One Partnership Office on 01872 241379 or email objectiveone@cornwall.gov.uk.