The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, 10 July 2012

Workshop: Facilitating the delivery of landscape scale ecosystem services - How to encourage collaboration between farmers and support them in implementing multi-objective policies

**Selected points from the plenary discussion**

It remains an open question whether it is better to talk about ‘ecosystem services’ than about ‘integrated catchment management’ or ‘landscape scale management’.

Within the constraints of the workshop we could acknowledge but not tackle the big issues including

* “We need to change our whole value system, ecosystem services valuation is necessary and needs to be comparable to industrial markets (i.e. the capitalist system)”
* “The problem that we are locked into a growth society”
* “Governments live in world of other issues (i.e. poverty) that are just as important – or viewed as more important than the natural environment”
* “Policy change maybe unpopular, and politicians don’t want to engage; there is a lack of political will to follow through with very big transitions because it would necessitate a break of politics from big companies and power”

Several of the participants were of the opinion that no **further research** is needed on how best to organise farmer advice and how to encourage collaboration – “we know what the big problems are, we need intellectual and mindset change”. Nevertheless, the Integrated Local Delivery (ILD) framework benefited from research about it because social scientists were able to highlight reasons for its success and provide the evidence base to agencies (e.g. high uptake, Gloucestershire had highest number of HLS agreements, problem cases were disappearing). ILD practitioners learned ‘why the ILD affords a change in farmer behaviour, and how interaction between people in the partnership group works’. This showed that an engagement process is needed in order to change behaviour and influence attitudes towards delivery. The research also helped to test whether the ILD is replicable and transferable.

Participants with experience in farmer advice noted that the **concept of ecosystem services** (ESS) can be explained to farmers and they understand it well but it is more attractive as another payment route; farmers are pleased to see that their food production (provisioning services) is among the ESS. Farmers are viewed as pragmatists: they need to ‘get a success, then they will bite’ (i.e. buy into a scheme or project) but current structures inhibit this. It was noted that the concept of ‘income forgone’ does not suit ESS and cannot be continually justified. Participants highlighted the need to ‘get all agencies to agree what we mean by an ecosystem approach’ (i.e. delivering public goods and payments to landowners). The Ecosystem approach was seen to help prioritise – a necessity when facing limited budgets.

A shift was observed from whole farm plans promoted by FWAG to a **focus on single issues**. A single issue focus produces results more quickly but at the risk of losing sight of other issues and forgetting about a holistic/ integrated approach. The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) in theory delivers the whole framework/ for the whole farm but advisors have found they ultimately have to split up applications into sections to fit the several axis of the SRDP. Other participants did not think that the current system supports whole farm/multi-objective management.

It was criticised that **agencies still have internal silos** and at the same time recognised that it is not their job to integrate and it may not even be possible or useful for government to integrate at the top. There will always be silos that funnel down activities, so the question is at what level these funnels should become integrated – in England this is the idea of the catchment approach. Participants recognised that an intermediary is missing – ‘Defra is speaking directly to farmers’ – so there is a need for an organisation inbetween (e.g. agricultural chambers in other countries).

*Notes taken by Annie McKee, write up by Katrin Prager (katrin.prager@hutton.ac.uk). Note that these are only selected points from the discussion. Please get in touch should you wish to make amendments.*