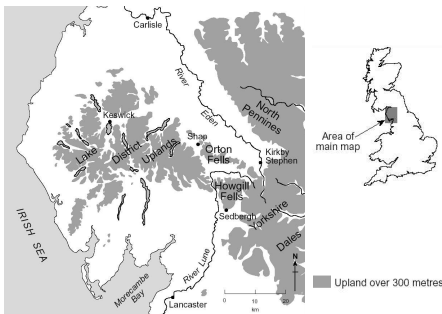




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## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES:

- Research is based on a broader study investigating the importance of maintaining social capital on traditional farms in hill farming regions, commissioned by the International Centre for the Uplands in Cumbria.
- To analyse the impacts of changes in farm structures on environmental management in the Cumbria uplands.
- To explore the opportunities for developing a more integrated rural policy framework promoting public good provision.



## THE ENGLISH RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND POLICY SUPPORT IN CUMBRIA:

- Two main priorities:
  - Priority A: Creation of a productive and sustainable rural economy. Priority A includes, e.g., Rural Enterprise Scheme, forestry schemes, and training and marketing grants.
  - Priority B: Conservation and enhancement of the rural environment through sustainable land management. Priority B includes Hill Farm Allowance Scheme (LFA payment) and agri-environment schemes.
- Approximately 75 percent of ERDP expenditure in the programme period 2000-2006 is used for priority B (agri-environment and LFA support).
- North West regional programme is focused on training, marketing of agricultural products, and diversification, but funding for these regional priorities appears to be limited.
- In Cumbria the ERDP focuses on providing farmers with income in return for the provision of environmental public goods, whereby pillar 2 subsidies available in some areas of Cumbria are amongst the highest in the UK.

## THE CUMBRIA CASE STUDY:

- Cumbria is divided into three distinct upland massifs: the Pennines, the Orton-Howgills complex and the Lake District.
- The physical character of Cumbria is strongly defined through traditional upland farming systems (e.g. stone walls, farm buildings, vegetation) and Cumbria uplands are recognised as a landscape of high cultural and environmental value.
- The upper fell areas in Cumbria are dominated by extensive sheep production using a system of traditional hefts on the open commons. Hefts are defined (but not fenced) areas of open land that are grazed by one farmer only and maintained through employing the hefting instinct of certain varieties of sheep.
- Cooperative action of all farmers on the commons is required, e.g. for sheep gathering for dipping and shearing, and is important for environmental management.



## METHODOLOGY:

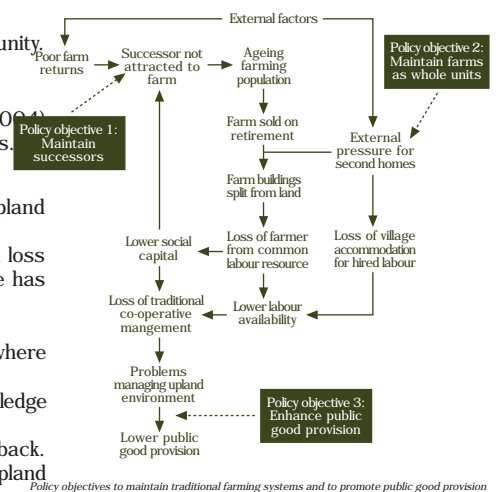
- This study was conducted in Cumbria between November 2004 and February 2005 and family farmers involved in common grazing were selected for the study.
- 8 Repeated family interviews
  - all family members present
  - farm diary kept for 2 months and return visit to discuss issues
- 36 Individual farm interviews
  - 12 from each of the massifs (areas)
  - represent 3-4 common grazings from each massif
- 4 Focus groups
  - 3 vertically (cross-community) tied focus groups
  - 1 horizontally (farming community only) tied focus group

## RESULTS OF THE CUMBRIA CASE STUDY:

- High environmental subsidy levels do not appear to lead to a sustainable farming community.
- Farmers report large losses of farmer numbers in recent years.
- 34% of farmers are certain of not having a successor.
- Very high house prices (e.g. average detached price in Lake District approx. 350,000 in 2006) are causing sold farms to be broken up and decreases the labour supply for the commons.

## CONSEQUENCES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT:

- Loss of farms and farmers leads to problems in maintaining traditional management of upland environment.
- Risk of undergrazing: a relatively new problem potentially leading to bracken regrowth and loss of desirable plant communities. Over the last 50 years the 'productivist' agricultural regime has left us with little experience in dealing with undergrazing.
- Restoring plant communities requires carefully managed grazing regimes.
- Depleted farmer numbers makes common management difficult and may lead to a collapse where the system moves to extensive ranching.
- Hired labour is often not viable both on economic grounds and because they need a good knowledge of the topography of the fells.
- Once farmers have gone because farms have been split up there is no way of getting them back. If we discover that the traditional form of commons management is required to create the upland environments we currently value there may be no way of returning farmers to the land.



## POLICY DISCUSSION:

- Agri-environment support does directly target environmental management, but focus alone on agri-environment does not attract successors back to the farm or tackle split of farms since it does not improve the business environment and enjoyment and satisfaction from farming.
- Stronger focus on "locally designed" project-based support to facilitate structural change and income diversification (e.g. tourism, local brands, traditional skills and rural services).
- Improved targeting of LFA support: Integration as socio-economic component in agri-environment support or in project-based schemes and LEADER-type projects.
- Facilitating interactions between public, rural community and farmers and to provide a link between farming and landscape to ensure farming produce public goods the public want.
- Developments in other countries such as Land Management Contracts (LMC) in Scotland and Contrat d'Agriculture Durable (CAD) in France, a model for Cumbria/England, too?
- ERDP can provide integrated support to maintain traditional farm management, but it does not reduce the external pressure on the farm household in terms of high housing demand and prices.
- Other policies such as planning policy can constraint the impact of agricultural policy support and their consequences need to be considered in an integrated rural policy approach.

## CONCLUSIONS:

- Lack of successors and high property demand in rural locations of high scenic value have resulted in a high level of farm division and loss of farms lower public good provision.
- Key points for ERDP support: Flexibility in targeting and localising policy, community involvement and farmers' ownership, integration of agri-environment and socio-economic support and integration/consideration of implications of other policy areas.