

Adapting to Climate Change Skills Programme

November 2008 – October 2011



Aim and rationale

This is a three year skills development programme, which will prepare agricultural businesses for the impacts, opportunities and risks that climate change brings. The programme will equip farmers with the skills and knowledge to plan for and adapt to climate change, improve the sustainability of their businesses, and reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted by agricultural activities. The project supports the aims and objectives of the Scottish Rural Development Plan 2007-2013, and will contribute to its environmental, economic and social targets.

The phrase 'global warming' has led to hope among some farmers that warming will enable them to grow a wider range of crops. There may be some such benefits, but farmers must also plan for the risks, particularly those of unpredictable seasons and extreme weather events. A recent survey by Farming Futures found that while 20% of farmers and land managers cite new crop opportunities as a benefit of warming, fewer than 2% anticipate increased pests and diseases – despite, for example, the spread of Bluetongue which is directly linked to climate change.

According to a report to Government last year, farming, food and land-based industries could be contributing 25% of Scotland's GHG emissions – significantly higher than the figure for the UK as a whole.

The Scottish Government is keen to enact the Scottish Climate Change Bill, which aims to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. The Bill, if enacted, will have a significant impact on farms and other agricultural businesses.

Beneficiaries

The programme's target audience is farmers, and other land managers involved in food production, throughout Scotland.

Project outline

The skills programme will comprise the following elements:

- 1) A programme of 27 regional workshops featuring expert speakers and farm visits, held at locations around Scotland, to:
 - Enable participants to plan for and adapt to climate change and maintain / increase business productivity and profitability.

- Show participants how to implement practical measures to reduce GHG emissions, through the use of green technologies and appropriate land management practices.
- Demonstrate to participants the benefits of making the transition to more sustainable agriculture, including organic, and the potential for generating new income streams.
- 2)** Post-event technical advice and support, including site visits, to help participants to implement changes.
- 3)** Complementary resources including information packs, fact sheets and case studies.
- 4)** Dissemination of best practice at conferences and events, and a published report illustrating case studies.

Initial 'core' events in year 1 will focus on:

- Getting the basics right: managing soil to improve structure and fertility.
- Improving carbon sequestration through the conservation of soil organic matter.
- Optimising crop productivity through fertility building and FYM.
- Nutrient budgeting.

Subsequent events in years 2 and 3 will be demand-led but will cover the following:

- Selecting and managing crops and livestock to suit changing weather patterns.
- Reducing GHG emissions through green technologies.
- Producing home grown feed.
- Introducing protected cropping.
- Converting to organic production.
- Implementing actions that contribute to Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Outputs

- 500 farmers trained in, and using, new skills.
- 150 agricultural businesses implementing changes to improve environmental and financial sustainability.
- 60 agricultural businesses moving to / gaining recognised quality / label standards.
- 30 new profitable and sustainable enterprises created.

Impacts

- Decrease in GHG emissions from agricultural activities.
- Increase in biodiversity and landscape value of the Scottish countryside.
- Increase in soil and water quality.
- Creation of a skilled and confident workforce that embraces new opportunities.

Funding

£202,201 over three years, broken down as follows: 75% Scottish Government: SRDP Skills Development Scheme, 15% Soil Association Scotland, 10% Participant fees.