

Relu news

January 2010

Contents

1. Chief Scientist welcomes contribution on land debate
2. Does carbon labelling give developing countries a bad deal?
3. Defra progresses flooding solutions proposed by local research group
4. How could agri-environment schemes better promote upland biodiversity?
5. Bovine TB workshop provides forum for debate
6. UK National Ecosystem Assessment
7. Landmarks for Policy and the way ahead
8. Bangor Bug Man spreads the word on research
9. Interdisciplinary guides available
10. Will Flood and Water Management Bill address UK flood problems?
11. Relu presents results to Chinese visitors
12. BBSRC blog stimulates food security discussion
13. Conference on long term ecology in habitat management
14. Researcher presents findings to Godstone Farm enquiry
15. Deer projects finds evidence on how stakeholders communicate
16. Would "greener" pest management benefit farmers and the environment?
17. What's fair about rural life?
18. Research feeds into CRC upland enquiry
19. Commercial Farmers Group puts case for UK farming
20. Researchers contribute to Scottish debate on land use
21. Human versus wildlife conflict discussed at symposium
22. Relu people



1 Chief Scientist welcomes contribution on land debate

Government Chief Scientific Adviser John Beddington welcomed the publication of "What is Land For? The Food, Fuel and Climate Change Debate" as the latest contribution to ongoing and crucial debate when he launched it at the Atrium, Westminster, in November. Professor Beddington said; "The changes we need to make are not just technical or scientific, they are to do with behavioural change, social change and economic change." The book, which includes contributions from researchers across the Relu Programme, is edited by Michael Winter and Matt Lobley and published by Earthscan. <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?Tabid=74738>.

2 Does carbon labelling give developing countries a bad deal?

Carbon labelling could unfairly disadvantage economies in the developing world, and mislead consumers, according to Relu's *Comparative Merits of Consuming Vegetables Produced Locally and Overseas* project. Researchers found that current approaches to carbon labelling may not be an accurate guide to sustainability, and might have serious and unintended consequences for poorer countries. Recommendations about how schemes might be designed in a fairer way may be found in Policy and Practice Note no 11

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/Edwards-Jones/Edwards-Jones.pdf> based on work that the project has carried out for the World Bank. Hard copies are available from relu@ncl.ac.uk.

3 Defra progresses flooding solutions proposed by local research group

The proposal for using bunds to mitigate flooding developed by the Ryedale Flood Research Group that brings together local residents and Relu researchers in the *Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies* project is now being taken forward as a Defra demonstration scheme. Defra will be testing the Flood Research Group's conclusions, and implementing them, subject to practical issues being resolved. The demonstration project is also exploring other opportunities in Ryedale, making use of the models developed by the group. <http://knowledge-controversies.ouce.ox.ac.uk/>

4 How could agri-environment schemes better promote upland biodiversity?

Agri-environment payments could be better designed to promote biodiversity, according to a new policy and practice note from Relu. *The Sustainability of Hill Farming* project suggests allowing payments to vary geographically, or with the amount of biodiversity benefit provided, and advocates improving ecological effectiveness by encouraging farmers to cooperate across land holdings. The note may be downloaded from

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/Armsworth/PP13%20for%20WEB.pdf> or email relu@ncl.ac.uk for hard copies.

5 Bovine TB workshop provides forum for debate

Relu researchers Wyn Grant (Warwick University), Angela Cassidy (University of East Anglia), Katy Wilkinson (Newcastle University) and Gareth Enticott (Cardiff University), will be the speakers at Bovine Tuberculosis: People, Politics and Culture to be held at Warwick HRI on 12 May 2010. They are all engaged in current research on the social context and management of bTB, and work in a range of disciplines from politics through to science and technology studies. The workshop will include presentations on current research findings and open roundtable discussion on the current bTB situation. Poster contributions are also welcome from PhD students. More details may be found at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/2009/Bovine%20Tuberculosis%20Workshop%20AC.doc>.

6 UK National Ecosystem Assessment

Relu researchers are playing a key role in the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA). The Expert Panel includes Chris Quine (*Assessing and Communicating Animal Disease Risk for Countryside Users*), Michael Winter and Ian Bateman (*Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive*) and Louise Heathwaite (*Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control*) as well as a number of Relu stakeholders. Susana Mourato (*Lessons from Dutch Elm Disease in Assessing the Threat from Sudden Oak Death*) is a member of the economic assessment team with particular responsibility for the economic assessment of cultural services. Several researchers are also contributing as lead authors and writers on the assessment including James Bullock (*Improving the Success of Agri-environment Schemes*) and Mark Reed (*Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change*). This is the first analysis of the UK's natural environment in terms of the benefits it provides to society and continuing economic prosperity. Part of the Living With Environmental Change (LWEC) initiative, the NEA began in mid-2009 and will be reporting in early 2011. <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>

7 Landmarks for Policy and the way ahead

“What do we, collectively, as The Great British Public, want of the land? We aren’t making any more of it – how do we achieve multifunctional land use in a small island? The time may have come for a land use plan.” So said Baroness Young of Old Scone when she chaired Relu’s conference on “The Future of Rural Land Use” in June this year. The programme’s latest briefing paper “Landmarks for Policy” draws on the discussion and comments from this major conference, as well as taking examples from the research, to examine how the Relu programme might feed into future policymaking. Download it from <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings/BRIF9.pdf> or email relu@ncl.ac.uk for hard copies.

8 Bangor Bug Man spreads the word on research

The *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* project has been taking their work into schools around Wales in a project supported by the Local Authorities Research Councils Initiative. "Bangor Bug Man" Wojciech Waliszewski has been running the workshops for young people. More than 470 pupils have attended the workshops in 15 schools and teachers have expressed their delight that the young people have such an opportunity to learn about microbiology and its applications.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/Press%20Releases/Bangor%20University%20Bug%20Man.doc>

Extracts from a film made by Aberdeen-based researchers on the same project and featuring Dr Helen Howie, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, can now be viewed on YouTube at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfKnjOJd51Y> .

9 Interdisciplinary guides available

Need help to develop interdisciplinary strategies? A Short Guide to Developing Interdisciplinary Strategies for Research Groups is a new guide in the series developed by Catherine Lyall and colleagues at Edinburgh University, partly drawing on Relu experience. This and others in the series may be downloaded from

<https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/ISSTIInterdisciplinary/ID+Short+Notes+and+other+reference+materials>

10 Will Flood and Water Management Bill address UK flood problems?

Relu’s *Environmental Knowledge Controversies* project asks “Is the draft Flood and Water Management Bill going to address current and future flooding problems in the UK?” in an online debating forum called ‘Debategraph’ (<http://debategraph.org/>) They are asking all interested and concerned individuals to contribute and want to use this debate to inform flood risk policy. If you have views on this issue or are just interested in being part of such a debate then go to <http://debategraph.org/Stream.aspx?nID=35305&sd=y>.

11 Relu presents results to Chinese visitors

Relu’s project *Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive* was invited to present findings to the Communist Party of China’s Central Committee and the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection during their recent visit to the UK. The audience included Baolong Xia (tipped by many to become the next Chinese Premier), and Vice Minister of Environmental Protection Jian Zhou, as well as 28 provincial governors and mayors.

12 BBSRC blog stimulates food security discussion

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council has launched a new blog on food security, featuring Relu Director Philip Lowe as one of its first contributors. Read what he says and the discussion about it at <http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/blog/index.php/2009/12/the-human-and-technological-dimension/#comments>

13 Conference on Long-term Ecology in Habitat Management

Relu Interdisciplinary Research Fellow Althea Davies is organising a conference 18-19th January 2010, at the University of Stirling, Scotland. This will include an on-line choice experiment around the question ‘Are we really making the most effective use of the different sources of evidence available for understanding how upland ecosystems function and how they, and as a consequence we, are likely to have to adapt to changes brought about by climatic and management shifts?’ Contact Althea Davies a.l.davies@stirling.ac.uk for more information. or see http://www.sbes.stir.ac.uk/long-term_ecology_conference/index.html

14 Researcher presents findings to Godstone Farm enquiry

In December Colette Jones from Relu’s *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* project presented findings on farmer’s and visitors’ understanding of risk to the independent investigation of the Godstone Farm E coli O157 outbreak. The investigation will report early this year and make recommendations for reducing risks of farm visitors contracting the disease, as well as improving the health protection response to outbreaks.

http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1253205520141?p=1231252394302

15 Deer project finds evidence on how stakeholders communicate

Research from Relu’s *Collaborative Deer Management* project confirms that despite the wealth of scientific and policy related literature, face to face meetings and word of mouth remain the most common conduits for knowledge exchange across stakeholder groups at national, regional and local levels. Public agencies have a particularly

important role in delivering practical guidance. This understanding of how information is exchanged needs to be incorporated into strategies for communication among policy makers, practitioners and researchers, say project researchers. More information and the latest project newsletter are available at <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/RELU>.

16 Would “greener” pest management benefit farmers and the environment?

For many years chemical controls have been the first line of defence against weeds, pests and diseases, and have proved very effective. But overuse can encourage resistance and affect biodiversity and water quality. EU regulations are also leading to the withdrawal of many pesticide products. Could Integrated Pest Management Programmes that encourage complementary use of chemical and biocontrols be the way forward? A new policy and practice note from Relu’s project *Overcoming Market and Technical Obstacles to Alternative Pest Management in Arable Systems* explores this question and makes recommendations for policy that could encourage such an approach. It may be downloaded from <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/Bailey/Bailey%20PPN10.pdf> or hard copies obtained from relu@ncl.ac.uk.

17 What’s fair about rural life?

What is inequity and how does it differ from inequality? And how do people who live in rural areas feel about the inequalities they experience? A new policy and practice note in the Relu series examines these issues and draws out pointers for policymakers who are aiming to address problems of disadvantage in the countryside. Policy and practice note 12, based on findings from Relu's *Social and Environmental Inequalities in Rural Areas* project may be downloaded from http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/Huby/PP12_WEB.pdf or hard copies obtained from relu@ncl.ac.uk.

18 Research feeds into CRC upland inquiry

“Developing the English Uplands” a synthesis report for the Commission for Rural Communities, as part of the inquiry it is currently carrying out, draws on the work of several Relu projects and may be accessed at <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/DevelopingtheUplandsReportNov2009.pdf>. It is due to report in February 2010.

19 Commercial Farmers Group puts case for UK farming

Relu stakeholder the Commercial Farmers Group, has produced a paper that they say addresses the main challenges and suggests what needs to be tackled as a matter of priority for UK agriculture in the current financial situation. The paper may be downloaded from <http://www.commercialfarmers.co.uk/Let%20UK%20Agriculture%20compete%20CFG%20November%202009.doc>

20 Researchers contribute to Scottish debates on land use

Relu researchers from the *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project took part in Scotland’s Rural Land Use Summit on 9th November and contributed to stimulating and constructive discussions. Full technical reports for the three Scottish Rural Land Use Study projects are now available on-line alongside the Research Findings Notes distributed at the Summit. Relu researchers also contributed to the development of these. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/Agri-Fisheries-Rural/social-research/publications>

21 Human versus animal conflict discussed at symposium

Humans and wildlife increasingly come into conflict in many areas of the world. Relu supported a recent symposium on human-wildlife conflicts, which resulted from work by the Relu *Collaborative Deer Management* project and was organised through the Mammal Society. Project team members showed how their research has led to new ways of facilitating collaboration, using participatory GIS. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Events%20and%20Meetings/RELU%20MS%20symp%20report.doc>

22 Relu People

- **Tobias Krueger** from Relu’s *Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources* presented work he carried out with **Kevin Hiscock** at the 2009 American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting in San Francisco in December.
- **Wyn Grant** from Relu’s *Governance of Livestock Disease and Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides* projects gave the opening plenary address at the annual Biocontrol Industry conference in Lucerne, Switzerland in October. He talked to an audience of over 300 about the challenges and opportunities facing the industry.
- Relu forum member **Tom Warburton** has moved from One North East to take up the post of Head of Strategy, Programme Management and Performance at the Homes and Communities Agency’s North East Team.
- **Les Firbank**, Director of North Wyke Research and **James Bullock** from the Centre of Ecology and

Hydrology in Oxford, and from Relu's *Improving the Success of Agri-Environment Schemes* project have been appointed to the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, which gives advice to Government on the risks to human health and the environment from the release and marketing of GMOs and of non-native non-GM species.

- **Lord Jeff Rooker** has replaced **Dame Deirdre Hutton** as Chair of the Food Standards Agency.
- **Susana Mourato**, who is working on the Relu project *Lessons from Dutch Elm Disease in Assessing the Risk from Sudden Oak Death* has been co-opted onto Defra's Science Advisory Council.
- **Paul Cross** who was a Relu PhD student on *Comparative Merits of Vegetables Produced Locally and Overseas*, and went on to become a Post-doc on *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities*, has been appointed to a research lecturer post in Socio-economics of disease management at Bangor University.
- **Kay Heuser** is now the Relu link person at NERC. She takes over this role from **Frances Collingborn** who has moved to a new post within NERC.
- **Roger Clarke** who was a member of Relu's People and the Rural Environment Forum has been appointed Chair of Defra's Third Sector Advisory Board.
- **Bill Sutherland** from Relu's project *Management Options for Biodiverse Farming*, **Jules Pretty** and **Ian Crute** were among the members of the working group that produced the Royal Society report "Reaping the Benefits: Science and the sustainable intensification of global agriculture"
<http://royalsociety.org/Reapingthebenefits/>
- **Jeff Waage**, from the London International Development Centre has coauthored a new book "Science and Innovation for Development". Published by UKCDS, the book offers a valuable insight into the role that scientific education, technology, knowledge and research play in solving development challenges.
- **Isobel Tomlinson** from Relu's project *Lessons from Dutch Elm Disease in Assessing the Threat from Sudden Oak Death* has been appointed Policy and Campaigns Officer at the Soil Association.
- **Rob Fish** who has worked on two Relu projects: *Sustainable and Safe Recycling of Livestock Waste* and *Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control* has been appointed a senior research fellow in the Centre for Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter.

Rural Economy and Land Use Programme
Centre for Rural Economy
School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
University of Newcastle
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
Tel. 0191 222 6903
Fax: 0191 222 5411
E-mail: relu@ncl.ac.uk

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter, please go to
<http://www.relu.ac.uk/contact/subscribers.htm>