



Farming, Water and the Environment

A Farmer's Perspective
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Farming Pressures

- **Staying in business**
 - Energy, labour & input costs rising
 - Product revenues falling
 - 2005 farm incomes down by 11% (equivalent to £12500 per full-time person)
- **Time availability**
 - Agricultural labour force dwindling (80,000 quit in the last 10 years)
 - 65% are self-employed farmers, spouses, family members
 - Average age increasing
- **Acquisition of new skills**
 - New crops, new enterprises, different environmental schemes
- **Burden of Regulation**
 - Mandatory
 - Voluntary




What are we trying to do?

- Raise farmers environmental performance
 - Water Framework Directive
- Reduce diffuse pollution
 - Nutrients
 - Pesticides
- Reduce soil erosion through better land management
 - Cropping
 - Timing of cultivation
- Enhance biodiversity
 - Landscape
 - Margins/ beetle banks/ wild bird cover/pollen mixes/trees
 - Aquatic
 - Reduce nutrient and soil loading
 - Benefit fish stocks
 - Diversification opportunities?



How do we do it?

- Educate farmers!
 - The three “Did You Know” questions
 - Understand concept of diffuse pollution
 - Catchment Sensitive Farming
- Who is doing the educating & giving advice?
 - EA
 - CSFOs
 - FWAG
 - RSPB
 - Rivers Trusts
 - Rural Hubs
 - Natural England....
- Advice overload??
 - Who do farmers to listen to?



How should it be done for farm scale delivery?

- **Agronomists**
 - Independent trusted source of advice
- **Co-ordinated approach**
 - Farm Demonstration Co-ordination Group
 - 20 organisations
 - 40 Events
 - 700 farmers attended
 - Targeted advice
 - Quality advice (with no hidden agendas!)
- **Farmer champions**
 - Demonstration farmers rather than demonstration farms
 - Raise awareness within the farming community
 - Work with advisers to identify problems/best tools to address them
- **Local knowledge, local solutions**
 - Identify who is farming what within a particular area



Toolbox Approach

- VI example
 - Newsletters
 - Mailshots
 - Best Practice
 - Text message and emails
 - Decision trees
 - Application cut off dates
 - Lower does rates
 - Alternative herbicide programmes
 - Forecast and drainflow information
 - Risk maps
 - Monitoring
 - Farmer & Adviser meetings
 - Training farmers and operators



And finally.....

“We can only achieve the results that we seek through partnership. This is what modern regulation is about. It has to be the way forward if the big issues are to be tackled, major legislation complied with, and more draconian measures avoided.”

Thank you