

Environment Agency Common Ground Workshops

London, 12th March 2009

Morning and Afternoon Sessions

These two workshops were part of a series being held across different regions. These “Common Ground” workshops are a pilot for what could become a series of periodic meetings aimed at giving businesses working with the agricultural sector a better understanding of key topical environmental and regulatory issues relevant to agriculture. Each set of workshops will focus on a specific topical issue or issues. The Environment Agency hopes that workshop participants will also come to act as partners in helping to convey key information from the workshops to their clients and contacts in the farming community.

The first set of workshops aims to bring together agricultural specialists and key industry players to consider land management issues and actions arising from the draft River Basin Management Plans that have been developed in response to the Water Framework Directive. Specifically the first set of workshops aimed to:

- To get a feel for diffuse pollution issues and the Water Framework Directive (WFD), and for the implications of both for the agricultural industry; and
- To consider key actions/measures in the draft River Basin Management Plan and consider what would actually need to happen on the ground to get these done.

On 12th March, 8 people (including 2 Environment Agency delegates) attended the morning session of the workshop held in London, Dexter House; and 12 people attended in the afternoon session.

The evaluation reports from both sessions form appendices to this report.

What follows is a single consolidated report that brings together the responses of participants from both the morning and afternoon workshop sessions. The report follows the chronology of the meeting, with each section providing a brief description of that part of the meeting and the questions participants were asked to consider. This is followed by a transcript from the worksheets used in the sessions and from the flipcharts notes made by the facilitation team during the plenary sessions.

Welcome and introductions

Following a welcome to participants, Clive Phillips from Environment Agency gave a presentation on diffuse pollution. The participants were then asked to consider the following questions at their tables on the morning session

Q1. What are the key barriers to achieving best farming practice (BFP); and what are the key opportunities to achieve it?

Diffuse Pollution Q&A - morning

- What about other sectors e.g. sewage works?
- The Environment Agency is working with LAs, highways agencies etc. All industries need to play their part.

Each table was asked to come up with a list of bullet points of the key barriers to achieving best farming practice and the key opportunities to achieving it.

Morning Session

Barriers	Opportunities
<u>Table 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge • Reluctance to change – too much regulation already 	<u>Table 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial gain • Grants to encourage compliance • Conservation, biodiversity leads to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial loss i.e. land out of production Identification of main culprits Depends on location of farmers. Farmers at the top of hill and at the bottom will tackle different problems Lack of visible results. Takes many years to prove what impact it may have whereas farmers want to see immediate results Difficulty in understanding some key policies such as Nitrates Vulnerable Zones. Can be very confusing <p><u>Table 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not noticed resources being well advertised Locals don't like fences to pen in stock We may not necessarily be keying into large estates run by 'non-farming' groups e.g. National Trust Estates This requires a long term view of farming Do they have the time? There's a tendency for a knee-jerk reaction to new initiatives <p><u>Table 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating with the farmers – a diffuse group Information overload Denial of the issues Fear (of inspection) Farmers frightened to ask for help, particularly from the 'regulator' Farmers time poor – lack of time to do Simple straight forward messages No easy solution to the problem of diffuse pollution The nature of the issue itself – its diffuse so away from source and there's a time lag Full compliance – a few bad eggs ruining the cake Need for training of advisors in diffuse pollution etc 	<p>personal satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good advertising, PR if 'eco-conscious' Long term sustainability will mean their soils will be providing good crops for longer so will result in a better yield in the long term Encourage more diversification New business opportunities Attracting public/ tourists by having a nature reserve on your ground Better infrastructure: financial gain would lead to investments to improve their infrastructure i.e. fences, machinery etc <p><u>Table 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use farmers weekly and farming press Use a wide variety of media; CD, internet Need to tell NFU, CLA and other key customer contact groups to cascade to farmers Health impacts on farmers own livestock Debrand – link to business Separate out regulation from advice and incentives Explain why <p><u>Table 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solving diffuse pollution = good business sense Case studies needed to back up money saving Amnesty from fines to allow farmers to get their house in order Use those networks close to farmers to spread good messages More project work across organisations to pinpoint causes of diffuse pollution so more information Use Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) to train advisors as well as farmers in correct practice More measurements of losses from farmers systems which can be translated into financial losses??
--	---

Afternoon Session

Barriers	Opportunities
<p><u>Table 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of knowledge about new approaches 	<p><u>Table 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial gain

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more research in science • Different policies that work against each other -> contradictory arguments • Changing farming sectors • Fewer labour to carry out all the work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lack of time to consider the options • Too many bodies and local schemes involved which can lead to confusion • Biogas will become a big issue in the near future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target farming advisors to spread key messages • Present business case first then the Best Farming Practice • Launch of environment schemes • Leaving sections of fields unfarmed to reduce the risk of diffuse pollution • Agronomist might have a more detached view and able to spot issues farmers might not • Holding breakfast seminars to get key messages out • Evening seminars especially for dairy farmers • Cultivation systems
<p><u>Table 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inherent variability of the weather – possibly increasing in the future • Lack of knowledgebase/ understanding – what is BFP? I.e. such variability/ complexity in catchment • Lack of trust • Labour resources • Pollution transfer • Reaching / targeting some communities such as horse paddocks • Expertise of Environment Agency staff • Reaching/ engaging with the less willing farmers • Not just farmers, but growers too 	<p><u>Table 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial savings • Technology advancements • Access to new markets • Public perception/ respect • Farm assurance • Stewardship/ grant breaks • Diversification
<p><u>Table 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity – getting the message through to the ‘punter on the farm’ • No overall consensus about what <u>is</u> best farming practice – currently its an Environment Agency view • How do we get to the 20% of the farmers who don’t / won’t listen to the WFD message • Large documents without interpersonal contact put farmers off 	<p><u>Table 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast meetings/ meetings with a good lunch • More 1 to 1 advice – interpersonal – between Environment Agency / advisors and farmers -> continuing dialogue • Club atmosphere, not big meetings. E.g. CSF meetings with 4/5 farmers (neighbours), their agronomist and a small, targeted geographical group • Target agronomists – arable farmers will listen to them (for arable, grassland groups are a good network) • Buyers’ cooperatives – where farmers buy their tools and supplies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Covers the whole <u>range</u> of farmers ◦ Such buyers groups can be contacted but with difficulty – google! • We need to target our messages and meetings • The message – a scare tactic! If we don’t cooperate voluntarily, top-down regulation will ensue • ‘Ten – tonne clubs’ - ICI influenced the farmer in a subtle way – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Elitist, but the club attracted farmers who had achieved 10 tonne yields. ◦ Meetings were clustered around catchments and were driven as much by the farmer as ICI.

After the table groups had discussed the opportunities and barriers in groups. The facilitator continued the discussion in plenary, teasing out the key issues.

The Plenary comments were captured onto flipchart paper by facilitation team.

Comments made in Plenary - morning session

Barriers

- Need to communicate with diffuse group of people
- Need to be innovative in how to get the message across
- Who does communicate with these people well?
 - Tax/ VAT man – most are VAT registered
- Environment Agency does have quite a good database but its how farmers are engaged with – how to optimise this?
- The turn out at meetings is often just the usual suspects so its difficult to get two way communication going
- Getting a good speaker (e.g. someone with a reputation) entices better turnout but there are lots of demands on farmers' time Local areas issues – target local farmers through demonstrating end products
- Identify the culprits
- Environment Agency's lack of knowledge about sources, historical impact, how long been going on for, of diffuse pollution
- Lack of knowledge as to the best solutions – needs more research in this area
- Lack of acceptance that there is a problem and then taking responsibility for it
- Once many farmers do know there is a problem then fear of regulation and prosecution and wanting to improve the environment means that they will try to remedy it
- Farmers will listen to those that they already seek advice from and that they trust e.g. agronomists
- Solving diffuse pollution could take 50 years which is a difficult timescale to get heads around
- Is there potential for using the impact on livestock drinking water as a carrot?
 - We have anecdotal evidence but not vetinary studies/ evidence to back this up

Comments made in Plenary- afternoon session

Opportunities

- Breakfast meetings with small numbers to get to farmers
- One to one meetings with farmers
 - Reticence to speak in front of neighbours
- Far less people on farms now so difficult to take out the decision maker to go to workshops. 1 to 1 meetings can go to them
 - But setting up 1 to 1s can be tricky
 - 1 to 1s need to be part of a bigger package
- Use buyers and grasslands groups as well as agronomists as an avenue to farmers
- NB arable farmers have to demonstrate they have an agronomist as part of due diligence
- Be aware of adding additional meetings to the plethora of those already going on
- Farmers and land managers have to prioritise which meetings to attend
 - Decision factors for this:
 - Breakfast and good lunch
 - Time of year (predictable)
 - Weather conditions (unpredictable)
- E.g. '10 tonne' clubs – could have clubs around various river catchments. These:
 - Work because they are slightly elitist/ club atmosphere/ social
 - Need to be run well
 - Allow the members to contribute to the agenda etc
 - Provide practical solutions to everyday activities
 - Demonstrate machinery and how integrates into system – on a farm

- Has to be profitable or not sustainable
- Environment Schemes are an opportunity
 - Buffer strips
 - Land near houses put aside
 - Compensation by payment
- Precision farming techniques are now much more available – raise awareness of these through the business angle
- The problem is in contacting 20% not the 80% including equine holders, 'good life' farmers, household gardeners. Through the agricultural supply industry have the names and addresses of these farmers
 - Did invite people to this event from pharmaceutical companies etc. still working on engaging with them
 - Are trying to engage with the 20%, working with SEEDA(South East England Development Agency)and Kent Wildlife Trusts etc but have no regulatory powers here
- Not enough joined up thinking between government bodies
 - Needs to be at a national level
- Lack of research, e.g. biogas units on farms being promoted but not being told re long term impacts on WFD
- Information technology is an opportunity; We aren't the only country facing these issues – lots of research out there (e.g. America) on mechanisms for putting the message out to farmers

The next session was introduced by Robert Iles who gave a presentation on the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans. Some participants asked few questions of clarification.

WFD Q&A morning

- Good ecological status requires everything to be good or higher
- Is there an idiot's guide to what is classified as a ditch/ riparian area? (to avoid getting into trouble when trying to do the right thing)
 - Need to get in touch with Environment Agency departments for advice on by-laws for specific area and appropriate consents required etc.
 - Conservation
 - Flood Ops Delivery
 - Development Control
- Do you know how much of pesticide use is due to urban and domestic use?
 - The Environment Agency know there is a contribution and are looking to raise education and communication on this issue.
- Will the WFD have teeth?
 - As we get closer to 2027 teeth are more likely to arise
 - The initial round of the WFD has lots of investigation to identify and fill gaps in knowledge
 - Its difficult to identify the sources of diffuse pollution to use 'teeth' against so looking to raise general best practice
- The Environment Agency is being criticised by NGOs for not front loading the plan, other sectors are warning over the cost aspect of measures – limited resources available
- If don't achieve plan UK Government will be susceptible to infractions proceedings
- Water Protection Zones also being discussed – these may make voluntary standards statutory but will require lots of local engagement and an evidence base first

WFD Q&A afternoon

- Is the Environment Agency targeting aspects that need improving?

- The WFD is targeting onto specific issues in specific areas rather than blanket schemes as much as possible
- How will you deal with temporal changes in flow etc?
 - Need to find out from Head Office **Action**
 - Have different standards for chemicals in upland rivers etc
 - UK TAG (Technical Advice Group) have done modelling
 - Use rolling 3 year period for GQA (General Quality Assessment) used by Environment Agency

The participants were then asked to consider the following question at their tables:

Question 3. How would you go about getting these messages across to the farming community?

Each table was asked to come up with ways they believed that these messages could be successfully communicated to the farming community.

Morning	Afternoon
<p><u>Table 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older farmers – majority – not into internet • Farming press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kent – South east farming ○ Farmers Guardian ○ Tractor/ machinery magazines ○ Farmers weekly • Champion farmers – those who lead by example, have a lot of connections in the industry. They'll be the ones who'll be able to show the way • Different shows • One to one engagement. Make it more 'personal'. They don't really care about the Environment Agency as an organisation, they want to meet a real person • Branding can be off putting • Freebies • Provide specialists to give out free advice • Emphasise the advisory side more than the regulatory side • Use the key farmers who you have a good relationship with to spread the messages to other farmers without necessarily them thinking it comes from the Environment Agency or other organisations • Work around the farming calendar • Consistency in post • Engage with young farmers, sons/ daughters of land owners <p><u>Table 2</u></p>	<p><u>Table 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press • Brief news letters • Promote good farming examples and bring it up • Work with organisations which farmers trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NFL/CLA ○ Wildlife Trust • Use of modern IT e.g. trade associations have a weekly email update • Consider seriously the modern technologies • Texting – brief update, reminder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Beware of information overload • Think about the right timing: seasons, specific weather conditions may lead to the farming community being more receptive • Encourage farmers feedback and share their views with the Environment Agency • Show successful examples of improving soil quality and its positive results to help promote new technology <p><u>Table 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad scale needs to be localised to catchment and river level • Ownership of the problem • Good for environment - Good for business – saving money • Demonstrating risk – linking their actions and routes to what is happening in the rivers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring WFD messages into agricultural colleges – horticulture included. This will ensure that the message is delivered over the long term -> education • Deliver WFD messages to young farmers clubs. Needs a clear message that WFD will be achieved by voluntary means first. If we don't achieve this regulation will follow e.g. WPZs. (Barrier to this is a knee-jerk reflex to a perceived 'threat' of regulation – may be counter productive to be direct and unsubtle) • Agricultural shows and events <p><u>Table 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knock on everyone's door! • Incentives? Grants • Through existing advisors and farming bodies • Need consistent messages and to be delivered without threat • Non Environment Agency advice – viewed as a regulator so do through other channels • Tailored to local conditions – YFC, local farmers clubs • Use case studies • Translate benefits into costs • Better signposting to grants – needs simplifying or at least making clearer • Celebrate good news and good job that farmers are doing, not just in environmental protection but in other fields. Stop labelling them as the 'bad guy'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't make farmers feel they're being blamed – other issues are also being addressed • Farmer champions – help to filter the message through the peer group • Workshops need to be co-ordinated between organisations • Small groups work better • Follow up with 1 to 1 • Free food at workshops <p><u>Table 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water body summary sheets – tangible for those expected to deliver • Environment Agency – viewed as a police force • The language used – River Stour preservation society NOT The Stour Catchment Management plan • Image and publications on WFD – need to be re-written to be farmer friendly • Fund a farmer to study water management (champion farmer) • Research farms (champion farmers) and farm trials
--	---

Comments made in Plenary- morning session

- Engage with Agricultural Universities
- Need to get the message across that even though first phase will be mostly voluntary need to implement now (or will get regulations later)
- Champion farmers – those that lead by example – use as case studies
 - Link to LEAF accredited farmers and utilise those that know farmers at a local level (e.g. agronomists) to help identify Best Practice farmers
- Utilise farmers that are passionate about their subject and comfortable speaking to others about it
- Try to link those that want to do something with those that have already
 - Logistically difficult to do in large groups
 - So perhaps Environment Agency can broker one to one meetings
 - Overcomes issues of public speaking and logistical issues
- Utilise agricultural shows – farmers are already going
- Is the Environment Agency targeting all farmers or just those with rivers?
 - Should be all farmers as actually about land use
- Messages need to be tailored locally in terms of networks and examples
- 2 level approach
 - Raising levels to good generally
 - Targeting areas of specific issue, especially through local networks

Comments made in Plenary- afternoon session

- Bring broad messages to a local level to result in ownership e.g. take farmers to their local river to see the problem
 - Enables to then follow up with 1 to 1s
- Tell farmers what they are doing well and what can improve on – will help with planning etc and may then pass the information onto neighbours
- Need to find case studies
 - Farmers Weekly features 8 -10 farmers each week, following them throughout the year
- Sponsor farmers to go and study, WFD/ water management elsewhere and how it is being implemented
- Demonstration farms
 - Were used more in the past
 - Are an effective method of demonstrating different cultivation schemes
- Need to have good science message plus farmer benefit visible
- Environment Agency should link to LEAF – utilise their demonstration farms
 - NB Need to enlarge the pool of farms so can keep it fresh
- Short-term project – cascaded messages through training farmers who then set up own groups to pass on messages
- LEAF in East Anglia trained farmers in comms and then each set up own groups
- Water Body Summary Sheets need to be rolled out widely – more specific and local
 - Then run breakfast workshops around each sheet
- Some countries are encouraging local people to consider themselves 'owners' of rivers
- Need to put the message into language that farmers understand and doesn't have negative connotations e.g. 'catchment' and 'directive' are no gos
- Need to get the messages to operators, not just land owners
- The perception of the Environment Agency is not always positive, perhaps co-host events with another organisation that farmers trust, especially if the other organisation isn't legislative –farmers will see as an organisation can work with. Farmers often feel that the Environment Agency is waiting to catch them out

Draft River Basin Management Plan - actions

After a coffee break the participants discussed three actions taken from the draft River Basin Management Plan. The topics were:

- Bid to extend the English Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative into new catchments to reduce diffuse pollution from agricultural sources
- Encourage uptake of Voluntary Initiative best practice advice by farmers and agronomists
- Promote use of soil and nutrient management plans. Promote Best Farming Practice. Raise awareness of Codes of Good Agricultural Practice

The group was asked to address the following question for each topic ***'What would actually need to happen on the ground to get this action done?'*** Comments and suggestions were captured on flip charts by the facilitation team.

Discussion on Soil and Nutrients - morning

- Environment Agency's key messages:-
 - Soils are farmers' key resource so look after them
 - Make sure you have a nutrient management plan
- The codes are big documents. Need to ensure raise awareness of the key messages within the code rather than just that the code exists

- Key messages need to be prioritised for particular types of farming
- If 'sectorise' the code then can give smaller documents to farmers or use other advisors to give key messages.
- Need to make sure advisors are up to speed on the content of the codes
- Utilise feed advisors, fertiliser advisors, seed merchants, FWAGs, agronomists etc FACT advisors (or BASIS), vets etc
 - Use wider network so that can drip feed information to farmers and from different directions
- Needs to be kept simple. Is mentioned in cross-compliance but it is in a different document
- Cross-compliance written by Rural Payments Agency on behalf of Defra. Codes written for Defra
- The bits that get through from the mass of information sent to farmers are those that they can be fined for
- Less is more
- Farmers prioritise reading material depending upon who has sent it – depends upon personal relationships as to whom farmers trust
- Often, if buying a service from someone have made a choice as to that person therefore may have greater trust of them
- Is there a liability risk in giving advice?
 - This is a concern for agronomists
- Message is 'think before you do it' then if need more information seek help. Use your common sense

Key messages

- Can broadcast messages that codes exist direct to farmers
- However, if want increased understanding as to their content need to use third parties
- Overload of too much information
- Difficult for the Environment Agency to promote another organisation's code

Discussion on Soil and Nutrients - afternoon

- Institute of Professional Soil Scientists are keen to work with the Environment Agency on soil standards
- Continuation and further promotion of R&D
 - The Environment Agency should put pressure on government for this
 - Need to prove/ quantify the contribution from the industry and to research methods for improvement
 - The EU has some research we could learn from
 - Very difficult to get funding, for R&D on improving agricultural systems/ production, therefore difficult to find researchers to do this
- Value of soil management plan =? Often bit of paper that gathers dust
 - Need practical training but value of putting on paper is dubious
 - Can be a tool to make think about soil and how to manage it = awareness raising
 - Need to promote understanding rather than form filling
 - Having an advisor on the farm rather than a plan
- Livestock farmers have contractors in to do other work – very difficult to reach
- If don't have plan as driver to manage soil then crop yield is driver to manage
- Climate change is leading to
 - More extreme weather therefore more need for soil management
 - Increased neighbour complaints for run off onto their property
- Need to separate the process of developing the soil management plan and the piece of paper
- Soil Management Plans need to be working documents to be of value
- On certain sites need to stop growing certain crops (e.g. forage maize) due to the slope of the land etc. This is controversial. Covered by cross-compliance?
- Soil is an extremely important asset that all farmers need to look after
- Education, e.g. grow an early crop
- Need to be careful of preaching without understanding the pressures that individual farmers have
- Cross-compliance is not giving soil management enough respect

- Issues such as the permeability of surface soil should be part of soil management
- Need a measure in the WFD to promote soil management planning
- How can we help, e.g. the dairy industry, to change and adapt to survive more extreme weather etc?
 - Training of those visiting farms on a regular basis
 - Drive these changes through end customer demands
- Need more education of soil planners
- Need to think about the consequences of the Environment Agency's and other agencies' messages in longer term to other parts of the farm e.g. bio-fuels could be encouraging bio-digesters and therefore maize growth
- Supermarkets demand particular environmental conditions which require an independent audit and the farmer gets an increased price for their product
- In the future, farmers will be asked by insurance companies to demonstrate that they have taken all measures to prevent run-off etc – helps get message across to farmers
- For arable farms, the majority of straw is going back into the soil which leads to higher yields and higher organic matter levels in the top soil.

England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative - morning

- Runs til 2011 (limited life)
- Jointly managed by Environment Agency and Natural England (funded by Defra)
- Advisory (not regulatory) including financial incentives to encourage dealing with diffuse pollution
- Individual Catchment Officers target priority catchments (approximately 50)
- Looking to extend the catchments via partnership arrangements
- Would like views on
 - How do we deliver the message nationally? (learning lessons from this project and applying them elsewhere)
 - What will happen to catchment areas post 2011?
- To extend the project need to prove the benefit for the financial input
- Success has been mixed as haven't always reached everyone within a catchment
- Remedying diffuse pollution can take a long time to see a positive impact
- How can we get farmers to events?
 - Need to deliver the message via innovative (and varied) methods e.g. text messages have had some success
 - Need to target farmers that don't use agronomists
- Lead with success stories and examples of what has worked
- This is an opportunity for Defra, Environment Agency & Natural England to put their money where their mouth is to demonstrate the requirements & possibilities for the WFD and produce case studies
- Could ask other farmers along to see the different stages of a demonstration project locally
- The outline the advantages and steps taken etc on case study cards
- A high percentage of farmers may not use the internet due to; broadband availability; inconvenience of turning computer on; printing costs; age. Therefore need to utilise other means of passing on information as well
- Use the initiative to demonstrate whether the voluntary approach works during the first phase of WFD (almost as a pilot for later stages of WFD)
- Definitely need to take learning from the programme and its effectiveness
- The programme measures changes in water quality for the future by using a proxy of changes in farming practices (via survey of farmers)
- Gain credibility if have measurements of change, especially if can link to the bottom line e.g. I have used x% less fertiliser, but will take five years minimum to see any real difference that not due to other variables
- Before and after case studies may be useful
- Utilise local peer pressure from neighbouring farmers
- Credibility of messenger can be more important than actual message and evidence base
- Need to be careful not to overuse particular farmers as a comparison or others will switch off
- Wildlife Trusts – already have leaflets telling what has been achieved in the local area, on their own land and in partnership with other land owners

- WFD requires partners other than the Environment Agency to lead projects and demonstrate change
- Branding should perhaps focus on implementation of farming best practice as good business sense (and then the knock on beneficial impact on the environment)
- Brand as an opportunity not as a problem

England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative - afternoon

- If can achieve environmental objectives under assurance schemes then can spread Environment Agency resources wider
- Think having officers focused on specific areas is a good one and cost compared to water purification is minimal
- Officers with a farming background have been most effective and found communications with farmers easiest
- Need longer to determine if being effective (just a few years is not long enough)
- Lots of farmers are looking for second jobs – with a bit of training could they be employed by the Environment Agency to boost resources? The Environment Agency has targeted advertising at farmers in the past
- CSF has worked well where the Environment Agency has recognised that change is happening and made allowances for that in regulation
- Perhaps farmers groups with some funding could extend the scheme
 - Head hunt the farmers to start groups if necessary
- Everything seems to point towards one to one advice on site but most of the River Basin plan looks at policies and management plans
- If the Environment Agency want to move away from the perception they are unapproachable they need more one to one meetings/ interface
- The Environment Agency is in a very difficult position of being regulator and advisor
 - Need to make clear which hat have on when Environment Agency visits a farm
- Can utilise partnership arrangements
 - 1) Environment Agency sets out what wants
 - 2) Partners visit farms (no regulatory powers) and determine whether deliberate misdemeanour
- The Environment Agency is nationally looking at its regulator/ advice dual role conflict
 - It is possible to be regulator and an advice giver but difficult for same individual to do so
- Need to make sure CSF officers are actually adding value to farmers and are giving advice that farmers don't already know/ already doing
- CSF project has been very beneficial but much of this does depend on the individuals giving the message.

Voluntary Initiative (VI)- morning

- Pesticides can be a very emotive issue for the public
- How do we get better uptake of VI?
- Difficult to keep the message fresh and simple for farmers to use
- Difficult to engage with those that aren't the 'usual suspects' that do attend meetings etc
- Need to tell farmers that it is achievable rather than being overwhelming
 - Does this require proof?
 - Demonstrate what the future looks like and why want to be there
 - Need to develop an evidence base for this
 - Do nothing is not an option for UK Plc but how does this get passed to individual farmers?
- Agronomists and economists have 1 to 1 contact
- Also need to use traditional communication methods e.g. farmers press
- Look at using BBC programmes – radio and television
- Engage with agronomists via AIC
- Integrate with existing training
- Would infracture proceedings be passed onto farmers?
 - The fine is levied onto the UK Government therefore it is passed to all tax payers
 - Government is very keen to avoid fines so will develop a strategy to avoid them, especially closer to 2027 i.e. through more regulation

- The VI is likely to be easier to follow than a regulatory scheme is likely to be
- Will be passing on problems to future generations of farmers (and own kin if a family business)
- Harder message for pesticides required: Need to take measures as to how to use pesticides and particular products or will be removed from the market
- This will mean that can't use some pesticides on certain fields and therefore can't grow certain crops there due to soil type, proximity to river etc
- Also impact of more freak weather due to climate change
- Good stewardship is a saleable quality e.g. supermarkets promote good environmental practice
 - Needs recognising through accreditation/ mark e.g. LEAF mark
- If get into standards then have leverage from buyers and gets audited
- Some farmers might already be buying into VI without knowing it just by following advice from their agronomists who have got the messages but are not labelling them as the VI

Voluntary Initiative - afternoon

- Increase humus levels to improve soils so don't require as much pesticide
- Incentives required for farmers in the background to push them down the voluntary route
- As an industry, need to start delivering results now. Have been discussions of more regulatory measures e.g. water protection zones for further down the line if required. This is an incentive to act now.
- Need to consider scientific progress/ issues for future years e.g. GM/ plant breeding could drastically reduce the use of pesticides.
 - Needs to be licensed by Europe first.
 - If the UK rejects this as an option need to recognise the impact on pesticide use
 - Debate as to the need for GM/ added benefit
- Still a lot of scientific research/ evidence missing to inform decisions/ actions, especially on diffuse and point sources of pesticides
- Some pesticides are more difficult to remove from drinking water and others are worse for the environment
 - A more risk based approach would be more beneficial for targeting, and then move to zeroes
- Will definitely be prioritising in the first round of the WFD as won't have the resources to tackle everything at once
- VI only gives broad brush feedback to farmers
- VI doesn't address amenity users including LAs
 - The WFD is drawing together all strands and must take account of this – measurement in WFD to look at this
- Has been effective in training spray operators
 - Continuation of this imperative for public trust

Finally, the participants were asked to make their final comments during the final plenary.

Final Plenary – morning session

Key Messages to the Environment Agency

- Profitability in Best Practice farming
- Target key messages
- Take key points to assurance schemes
- Try to use as many routes as possible and utilise feedback from those on the ground
- Simplification – in schemes/ organisations etc
- Be approachable and have a public face in each catchment
- Simplification of the message/ advice and targeted to sector
- Prolong CSFs to ensure get answers
- Distil information without installing fear of prosecution
- Use direct financial incentive – grants

- Need to encourage farmers and demonstrate why they need to change
- Establish a link between consumers and farmers and quality produce
- Rebranding to be about finances
- Separate advice and regulatory aspects
- Be clear how farmers can contribute to the greater good
- Use all media available and third parties to get message across
- Refine engagement strategy

Final Plenary – afternoon session

Key messages to the Environment Agency

- Think about using products that help improve humus and therefore reduce artificial input required
- Challenge is growing (i.e. climate change)
 - Communication with the farming industry is key
- Want to see before and after results so that can give local feedback to farmers
- Groups of people working together with a common aim will result in an increased impact
- Use language that reflects positivity and is their language rather than ours
- Take into account budgetary constraints for 1 to 1 meetings rather than producing large volumes
- Engage with where at now (not where hope might be) – think Environment Agency is moving in this direction
- Need to change use of language – ‘growers’ don’t consider themselves to be ‘farmers’
 - And Environment Agency need to have a greater understanding of what do (not just what farmers do) – even if its just one ‘expert’ within the Environment Agency region
- Communications – make sure not giving out conflicting messages
- Evidence – needs to be continuous sampling
- Diffuse pollution is largely about soil management – don’t forget this

There was also a flip chart, called the barn, for other points which people wanted to emphasise, or to add in to the record but which had not come up in discussions.

The Barn

- Text messaging at appropriate times would be very effective
- ‘Growers’ are not the same as ‘farmers’. Don’t forget them
- Asking the Environment Agency to act as both regulator and advisor weakens its effectiveness at performing both roles. It is a regulator and should find partners to act as advisors
- Translate benefits into costs.
- Celebrate good news/ things that farmers are doing – they are fed up with being seen as the bad guys

Appendix 1: Acronyms

AIC	Agricultural Industries Confederation
BASIS	British Agrochemical Standards Inspection Scheme
BFP	Best Farming Practice
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
CSF	Catchment Sensitive Farming
EU	European Union
FACTS	Fertiliser Advisor Certificate and Training Scheme
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GQA	General Quality Assessment
HLS	Higher Level stewardship Scheme
HSE	Health Security Environment
LAs	Local Authorities
LEAF	Linking Environment and Farming
NFU	National Farmers Union
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NVZs	Nitrate Vulnerable Zones
PR	Public Relations
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency
TAG	Technical Advice Group
VI	Voluntary Initiative
WFD	Water Framework Directive
YFC	Young Farmers' Club

Appendix 2: Delegate List – Morning session

First Name	Surname	Job title	Organisation	
Tracy	Adams	Farming and Land Use Officer	Chilterns Conservation Board	
Camilla	Blackburn	Living Landscapes Project Officer	Kent Wildlife Trust	
Isla	Browne	Development Manager	Assured Food Standards	
David	Cameron	Managing Director	De Sangosse	
Deborah	Cawood	Business Development Manager	Assured Food Standards	apologies for absence
Clive	Deeley	Advice Manager	GrowHow UK	apologies for absence
Hazel	Doonan	Sector Head Crop Protection	AIC	
Roger	Hands		Water Group	
Adrian	Laycock	Consulting Engineer	Adrian Laycock Ltd	apologies for absence
Anna	Palmer	Senior Countryside Officer	Canterbury City Council	apologies for absence
Alastair	Stewart	Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer: The Stour	Natural England	
Patrick	Todd		Patrick Todd Chartered Surveying	
Lars	Akesson	Environmental Planning Officer (SE area)	Environment Agency	
Alice	Varkala	Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer	Environment Agency	

Environment Agency

Andrew Fielder (Natural England and EA)

Robert Iles: Principal Officer

Vicky Kirk: External Relations Officer

Mari Leeks: External Relations Officer

Clive Phillips: Principal Officer Agriculture

Dave Willis: Environment Manager

Facilitators – Dialogue by Design

Helen Ashley

Penny Walker

Appendix 3: Delegate List – Afternoon session

First Name	Surname	Job title	Organisation	
Amanda	Bassett		Hampshire Wildlife Trust	
Richard	Butler		RJ Butler & Son	
Ana	Delgado	Projects Officer (and Biodiversity Partnerships Lead)	Maidstone Borough Council	apologies for absence
Jill	England	Horticulture Consultant	ADAS	
Kate	Ody	CSFO	Catchment Sensitive Farming	
Chris	Older		RM Farms	
James	Standen		FGS Agri	
Peter	Taylor	Exec President	Association of Independent Crop Consultants (AICC)	
Dick	Thomson	Consultant	T R E THOMPSON	
Ben	Underwood	Assistant Director	CLA	
Gill	Wardell	Technical manager	Abbey View Produce Ltd	
Charlotte	Wilson	MD	Swift Nature	
Emma	Wood	Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer	Natural England	

Environment Agency

Kat Buy: Senior Environment Officer

Andrew Fielder (Natural England and Environment Agency)

Robert Iles: Principal Officer

Vicky Kirk: External Relations Officer

Mari Leeks: External Relations Officer

Clive Phillips: Principal Officer Agriculture

Dave Willis: Environment Manager

Facilitators – Dialogue by Design

Helen Ashley

Penny Walker