

<b>Institution: University of Gloucestershire</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 16 Architecture and Built Environment</b>
<b>Title of case study: Evaluating policy instruments for rural development and agri-environment</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) has undertaken research providing a sustained contribution to understanding beneficiary-focused EU and UK rural development (RD) policies. This used novel, context-sensitive and mixed-method evaluation techniques to capture complex, systemic impacts and diagnose causal linkages between design and delivery, and policy performance. In so doing it has generated direct impacts in improved RD policy making and evaluation. The research has influenced restructuring in EU policy frameworks for RD and changed England's upland policy. By increasing policymakers' understanding of farm-level behaviours and responses to agri-environmental policy goals, CCRI's research has stimulated better-communicated and integrated advisory approaches.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The underpinning CCRI research has evidenced the benefits of a more beneficiary-centred approach to designing and delivering rural development policies, and was notable in applying a mix of quantitative and in-depth qualitative research methods in a systemic way.</p> <p><b>EU RD policy development:</b> CCRI research on EU policy for rural development (RD) is marked by a paper co-authored by <b>Dwyer</b> [1] presenting findings from a 'process evaluation' of the EU RD Regulation 2000-06. This paper highlighted how contextual and qualitative factors including institutional conservatism in design and delivery were hindering the ability of RD programmes to deliver EU strategic goals, and recommending ways of overcoming this. Experience and profile gained through [1] helped CCRI to win a '<i>Review of RD Instruments</i>' study for the European Commission, in 2007-8 (leading a 6-partner team). This research made detailed analyses of RD policy expenditure, design and delivery; assessing the cost-effectiveness of instruments; applying methods emphasising contextualised analysis; using case studies and undertaking process evaluation.</p> <p>Building on this, a consortium led by the same core partners developed an EU Framework study <i>RuDI: Rural Development Impacts (2008-10)</i> (collaborators from 10 Member States) which analysed and evaluated European RD policy design, delivery and performance. Policy briefs and workshops promoted RuDI's findings to national and EU policy makers, suggesting improvements to RD policy, strengthening strategic elements in the EU framework whilst increasing the simplicity and flexibility of funding instruments ('measures'), and in turn enabling closer tailoring to local beneficiary contexts.</p> <p><b>UK upland policy development:</b> The CCRI RuDI case study (<b>Dwyer</b>) evaluated CAP RD impacts in the English Uplands, showing how the spatial interplay of policy instruments was leading to perverse agri-environmental outcomes, due to poor appreciation of farmer behaviour in response to these wider trends among those responsible for agri-environment policy design and delivery. This stimulated a CCRI study for Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) and Natural England exploring participatory policy development in the uplands by <b>Dwyer and Short</b> [2], which</p>

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worked with farmers to develop an alternative, 'Ecosystem Services' approach, now being taken forward by ENPA. Insights from these studies supported those of a further study for Defra "Economic and environmental impacts of changes in support measures for the English Uplands: An in-depth forward look from the farmer's perspective" (2010) (**Gaskell, Dwyer, Ingram, Kirwan, Mills**) which identified how upland farmers' opinions and development paths meant that previous and proposed future decline in support payments would most likely lead to a less economically-productive and culturally-differentiated landscape, with reduced biodiversity.

Evidence from all three CCRI studies contributed to Defra's uplands policy, helping to stimulate a review of the agri-environment approach and providing evidence to support a restructuring of CAP Single Farm Payments. Benefits in methodological understanding were also evident: commenting on the third study, one Defra official stated that "The quality of the research was... invaluable at giving Defra the confidence to use qualitative research" [b]

**Farmer engagement:** Research impact also derives from a Defra-funded CCRI study, *Understanding and influencing positive behaviour change in farmers and land managers* (2006-2007) [**Dwyer, Mills, Ingram**]. The research used similar triangulated methods to those discussed above, including in-depth qualitative case studies of four contrasting initiatives and a comparative evaluation of design and delivery, generating two peer-reviewed papers, one co-authored by **Ingram [3]**; the other by **Mills and Ingram [4]**. Findings showed how farmers differ in their engagement with initiatives and that this is influenced by how advice is given; who gives advice and how the message and messenger are evaluated; and how the farmer's capacity and willingness to change is affected. The research team developed a Good Practice Guide for policy makers to assist them in developing future policy. A further, related CCRI study for the Welsh Government [5] made 30 recommendations on appropriate mechanisms to be used in designing and delivering collaborative agri-environment schemes, developing co-operative working through farmer engagement and group capacity building.

### 3. References to the research

- 1] Dwyer, J., Ward, N., Lowe, P. and Baldock, D. (2007) European Rural Development Under The Common Agricultural Policy's 'Second Pillar': Institutional conservatism and innovation. *Regional Studies*, Vol. 41.7, pp. 115.
- 2] Short, C and Dwyer, J (2012) Reconciling pastoral agriculture and nature conservation: trialling a co-management approach in the English uplands, *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice*, 2:13.
- 3] Blackstock, K.L., Ingram, J., Burton, R., Brown, K.M. and Slee, B. (2010). Understanding and influencing behaviour change by farmers to improve water quality. *Science of the Total Environment*.48 (23), 5631-5638.
- 4] Sutherland, L., Mills, J., Ingram, J., Burton, R.J.F., Dwyer, J. and Blackstock, K. (2013) Considering the source: Commercialisation and trust in agri-environmental information and advisory services in England. *Journal of Environmental Management* 118 (2013) 96-105.
- 5] Mills, J., Ingram, J., Reed, M., Short, C and Dwyer, J. (2012) Organising Collective Action for Effective Environmental Management and Social Learning in Wales. *Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 17, 1, 69-83. 10.1080/1389224X.2011.536356

#### 4. Details of the impact

The breadth and depth of CCRI research and the expertise developed by CCRI teams in understanding how aspects of RD and agri-environmental policies' design and delivery can critically affect their outcomes represents a unique position of applied research influence.

Research impacts have been both direct and indirect, and cumulative over time. While they draw from this whole body of work, it is possible to pinpoint instances where research findings have fed directly into policy change at both UK and EU levels. In addition, the impact trajectory has been iterative: including direct dissemination to, and feedback from, policy makers as well as successful research dissemination stimulating further commissioned studies, and expert input by CCRI researchers to policy boards, thematic working groups and committees. Three examples of specific impacts of CCRI research are evidenced for the 2008-2013 period.

**EU RD policy development:** The findings of the *RD instruments review* and *RuDI* studies had direct impacts on the content of the EU Rural Development Regulation finally agreed in September 2013. The RD instruments review generated detailed recommendations for the policy after 2013, most of which are incorporated into the new RD regulation, including a shift to strengthen the strategic goals of RD, the removal of 'axes', and the redefinition and merging of individual measures to provide increased simplicity and flexibility in how funding can be used [a].

**UK upland policy development:** Research findings from the study: *"Economic and environmental impacts of changes in support measures for the English Uplands"* contributed to the development of UK policy for the Uplands and was used in formal evidence to the House of Commons Committee on Farming in the Uplands (2011) as part of Defra's policy statement on this topic [c]. As stated by one Defra official [b] *"Critically, the research supported our approach to CAP reform negotiation and is undoubtedly the most influential piece of qualitative research I have commissioned"*. Also the uplands work on Exmoor exploring more integrated and flexible land management policies has helped to influence the policy debate *"The NFU are regularly using these research findings in discussion with policy-makers to develop more integrated and flexible policies and schemes on the uplands"*[d], stimulating an internal review of Natural England's approach to agri-environment schemes and shaping Defra's proposed response to the 2013 CAP reform (This is currently under consultation – it suggests closing the gap in support rates between upland and lowland farms, effectively increasing upland support).

**Farmer advice and engagement:** CCRI's collaborative research findings on influencing farmers' environmental behaviour have been taken up widely by the policy community and agri-sector practitioners in England and Wales. As one Defra office stated *"There is, over the last five years, no academic research institution that has either had more impact or has influenced to a greater extent, our approach to farmer behaviours, advice and land management environmental issues"* [b].

The research informed recommendations by the independent Farming Regulation Task Force (May, 2011) on the need for clear communication of advice and the importance of working with farmers [b]. The study's good practice principles were used directly in Defra's key principles for the provision of advice, as stated in Annex 3 of Defra's Review of Advice, Incentives and Partnership Approaches, published as a Business Plan Commitment in March 2013 [e]. This review also evidenced CCRI's evaluations in identifying the drivers leading farmers to seek advice. As an indicator of the wider influence of CCRI's research in this area, Annex 1 of the report makes reference to seven reports that the institute was directly involved in producing [e].

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CCRI research also influenced the Welsh Government's approach to farmer engagement. The research on co-operative working demonstrated that successful agri-environmental co-operatives can be encouraged, through facilitation, to work collectively for environmental gain. A direct impact of this work was the employment of 18 Commons Development Officers (*in situ*) operating across Wales whose task is to develop the confidence and capacity of Commoners to apply for collective agri-environment schemes. Approximately 90% of Commons in Wales reportedly subscribe to and work with these Officers [f].

The CCRI research was also used at practitioner level by the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC Value of Advice report, April 2013) to develop an understanding of farmers' different sources of advice and to highlight the importance of farm management advice from one trusted source. As a result Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency are now working more closely with the agricultural industry to deliver environmental advice through integrated advisory packages. "*In the past Defra operated a top-down approach to the way environmental advice, in particular, was delivered. However, now as a result of some of the CCRI research on understanding and influencing farmer behaviours Defra are working more with the industry in delivering their advice*" [g].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

[a] Report [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/external/rurdev/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/external/rurdev/index_en.htm) and table comparing outputs of the RD Instruments report with the EAFRD draft regulation

[b] Email and testimonial letter from Defra officer stating the importance of the research in influencing upland policy and farmer's environmental behaviour.

[c] The CCRI uplands study was used as evidence in the EFRA committee on Farming in the Uplands <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmenvfru/556/556.pdf> (pg 68) and in the Government's response to the Efra Committee's Report 'Farming in the Uplands' (February 2011) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvfru/953/953.pdf> (page 7)

[d] National Farmers Union Uplands Committee Chairman testimonial on impact of CCRI research on upland policy and schemes.

[e] Influence of CCRI on Defra advice illustrated by Annex 1 and 3 of Defra report "Evaluation of selective advice and incentives schemes" [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221050/annexes-evaluation-advice-incentive-schemes.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221050/annexes-evaluation-advice-incentive-schemes.pdf)

[f] A testimonial from a WAG officer stating how CCRI research led directly to the employment of 18 Commons Development Officers.

[g] Testimonial from AIC on the impact of CCRI advice in developing integrated environmental advice packages with the Government using commercial advisors.