

Impact case study (REF3b)

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| <p>Institution: University of Worcester</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: 17 Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: Agricultural Change in the Welsh Marches: its impact on agricultural policy and practice</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>A body of research on agricultural geography, with a strong regional focus on the Welsh Marches (the English counties bordering Wales), has led to changes in conservation policy and practice relating to rare breeds, primarily at the national level but also internationally; it has shaped farming policy at the regional level, particularly in Herefordshire, specifically leading to increased diversification in the farming sector across the county; and it has stimulated policy debate around the place of farming in society.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Centre for Rural Research (CRR), under the leadership of Professor Nick Evans (1990-present), has engaged in a body of research over a period of 18 years on agricultural change with a particular focus on the Marches region (reflecting a consistent mission of the University to engage in research within the region). While this research has often had a strong theoretical slant (see for example Reference 2 which critically evaluates the concept of 'post-productivism'), three areas of research with a more applied perspective have emerged within this overarching theme of change: (i) Livestock and locality, (ii) Agricultural survey, (iii) Socio-cultural perspectives on farming.</p> <p>(i) Livestock and locality</p> <p>Beginning with a project funded by the Nuffield Foundation in 1996 (Grant a), examining the geographical distribution of rare breeds (Reference 1), the CRR has undertaken a body of research focused on the conceptual and practical problems of defining and identifying these breeds (Reference 3). This led to a project funded by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) (Grant e) to examine the geographical endemism - ecological state of being unique to a defined geographic location - of rare breeds in the Welsh Marches. The study used GIS (Geographical Information Systems) technology to map the distribution of specific breeds across a defined geographical area.</p> <p>(ii) Agricultural survey</p> <p>CRR (Evans and Dr David Storey, 1992-present) undertook two major surveys of farming at county level, in Herefordshire (Grants b and d) and in Shropshire (Grant c), the latter in collaboration with the Universities of Reading and Gloucestershire. Both surveys involved an initial questionnaire sent out to all farms in the counties which sought to define and examine farm and farmer characteristics, agricultural change, diversification, and approaches to environmental management. The questionnaires were followed up by in-depth interviews with a small sample of farmers. Reports were submitted to Hereford County Council in 2001 (and a follow up report post the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2003) and to Shropshire County Council in 2002. The empirical data from these surveys formed the basis of a subsequent paper which examined how farmers in the Welsh Marches had adjusted to agricultural change through the 1990s and 2000s (Reference 6).</p> <p>(iii) Socio-cultural perspectives on farming</p> <p>A theoretical paper examining the cultural turn in rural geography research highlighted the importance of culturally informed perspectives in geographical research (Reference 4). This has been reflected in much of CRR's research going forward. So, for example, Evans has undertaken qualitative research on the incidence of stress and suicide in agriculture amongst farm families in Powys, Wales (Reference 5). This research identified the economic, social and cultural consequences of this problem. More recently, Evans has engaged in a body of work examining the socio-economic value of care-farming, in collaboration with colleagues from the University of Worcester's psychology department and funded by Care Farming West Midlands (Reference 7, Grant f). This research has demonstrated this value explicitly using a Social Return on Investment methodology.</p> |

3. References to the research

1. Yarwood, R. and **Evans, N.** (1998) New places for “Old Spots”: the changing geographies of domestic livestock animals. *Society and Animals*, 6, 137-166.
2. **Evans, N.**, Morris, C. and Winter, M. (2002) Conceptualising agriculture: a critique of post-productivism as the new orthodoxy. *Progress in Human Geography*, 26, 313-332. DOI: 10.1191/0309132502ph372ra.
3. Yarwood, R. and **Evans, N.** (2003) Livestock, locality and landscape: EU regulations and the new geography of Welsh farm animals. *Applied Geography* 23, 137-157. DOI:10.1016/j.apgeog.2003.08.003
4. Morris, C. and **Evans, N.** (2004) Agricultural turns, geographical turns: retrospect and prospect. *Journal of Rural Studies* 20, 95-111. DOI: 10.1016/S0743-0167(03)00041-X.
5. Price, L. and **Evans, N.** (2009) From farming stress to distress: conceptualizing the British family farming patriarchal way of life. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 25, 1-11. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2008.03.008.
6. **Evans, N.** (2009) Adjustment strategies revisited: agricultural change in the Welsh Marches. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 25, 217-230. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2008.10.002.
7. Leck, C., Upton, D. and **Evans, N.** (2013) Social Aspects of Green Care. In Gallis, C. (ed.) *Green Care: For Human Therapy, Social Innovation, Rural Economy and Education*. Nova Biomedical, Nova Publishers, New York, USA: 155-188.

Grants

- a) Evans, N. (PI), *The Geography of Rare Breeds of Domestic Livestock*. Nuffield Foundation March to September 1996, £6000.
- b) Evans, N. (PI), *The Herefordshire Farming Study*. Southern Marches / Herefordshire Partnership. April 2000 to January 2001, £15,000.
- c) Evans, N. (PI), *Sustainable Landscapes in Shropshire: A Farm Study for Shropshire*. Shropshire County Council and Partners. May 2001 to June 2002, £22,000.
- d) Evans, N. (PI), *Herefordshire Farming Study – post-FMD Follow-up*. The Herefordshire Partnership. November 2002 to July 2003, £10,000.
- e) Evans, N. (PI), *Geographical Endemism as a Definition of Endangerment in Farm Livestock Breeds*. Rare Breeds Survival Trust. Two phases, December 2008 to July 2010, £7000.
- f) Upton, D & Evans, N., *The Psychosocial Value of Care Farming*, 2009-2013, Care Farming West Midlands, £30,000.

The University is confident the underpinning research meets the 2* threshold. Reference 1 emerged from a project funded by the Nuffield Foundation which is indicative of its excellence. References 2 and 4 were returned to UoA32 in RAE 2008 as part of a submission where the majority of research was rated 2* or better. In addition, references 2 and 4 have been highly cited (133 times and 73 times respectively). References 5 and 6 are returned to UoA17 in REF2014. Reference 6 won an Elsevier award for ‘Journal of Rural Studies Top Cited Article 2009-2011’ in 2012.

4. Details of the impact

The research has had 3 main impacts:

- It has changed conservation policy and practice for the UK’s rare native breeds of farm animals, while feeding into debates about conservation policy and practice internationally and enhancing UK cultural understanding of the conservation of rare breeds
- It has influenced farming policy in Herefordshire, leading to a greater focus on diversification within the farming sector

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- It has stimulated debate about the place of farming within society

Conservation

The conservation of farm animal genetic resources is of great economic, social, cultural and environmental importance. Previously, breeds at risk have been defined on the basis of numbers and genetic make-up. The research on geographical endemism led to the development of a new, geographical measure of risk which has formed part of the RBST “watchlist” categories since 2009 (**Source A**). Tim Brigstocke, Chairman of RBST, described the impact of the research as follows: “This research is a breakthrough for conservation work. RBST has recognised the problems of geographical concentration for a number of years and has always encouraged the widespread farming of our native breeds. However, we now have clear statistical information which can inform our conservation work of native breeds and make it even more effective” (**Source B**). The research subsequently fed into the work of DEFRA’s Farm Animal Genetic Resources (FAnGR) Committee on Breeds at Risk (BAR). DEFRA’s *UK Country Report on Farm Animal Genetic Resources* states that: “as part of the work in developing a revised list of breeds that meet the UK BAR criteria and are potentially exempt from culling in the event of an exotic disease outbreak, the FAnGR Committee also undertook some work to identify breeds that can be considered to be at risk because they live in a concentrated area. This was based on independent research by the Sheep Trust and RBST”. (**Source C**, p.25). The Committee subsequently developed a definition of geographic concentration (**Source C**, Appendix 1). The UK BAR list was also revised as a consequence (**Source D**).

The research has been disseminated internationally through, for example, Rare Breeds International’s *8th Global Conference on the Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources*, a conference aimed at a broad audience of sector representatives and academics (**Source E**). The research has been further disseminated to the general public through media appearances by Evans on TV and radio, publicising the issue of geographical endangerment and increasing cultural understanding of the issue (**Source F**).

Policy

According to a policy document produced by the Bulmer Foundation in conjunction with Herefordshire Food Partnership, the Herefordshire Farming Study ‘has influenced County policy and thinking ever since [its publication in 2001]’ (**Source G**, p.7). The study’s emphasis on the importance of diversification has been particularly significant with the document stating that some 10% of total farm incomes in Herefordshire come from diversified activity, while the majority of farms in the county are now classified as ‘other’, which are those that do not fit within standard categories. This diversification has contributed to the rise in average farm incomes over the course of the 2000s (**Source G**).

Stimulating Debate

CRR’s research into socio-cultural perspectives on farming led to Evans and Dr Peter Carruthers (Honorary Senior Fellow, University of Worcester, 2008-present) being commissioned to co-author a report for the Oxford Farming Conference in 2013 on the value of farming to society (**Source H**). The event was attended by government ministers (DEFRA), leaders of farming organisations (such as the National Farmers’ Union) and executive personnel of agro-industries. The report was the subject of a detailed debate which focused on the implications of the report for farmers, for consumers and for society more broadly. The full extent of this debate is reflected in a series of videos recorded at the conference (**Source I**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- RBST Watchlist: <https://www.rbst.org.uk/watchlist.pdf>. Geographical concentration was first identified in the watchlist categories in Spring 2009 edition of *The Ark*, the magazine of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, p.21.
- Statement from Tim Brigstocke, Chairman, Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) on the RBST website: <https://www.rbst.org.uk/sheep-breeds-threatened-being-too-close-together>.
- DEFRA (2012) *UK Country Report on Farm Animal Genetic Resources*.

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- D. UK BAR list:
<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/fmd/documents/uk-breeds-at-risk.pdf>
- E. Rare Breeds International's 8th Global Conference on the Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources, 2011: http://rbiglobalconf2011.nku.edu.tr/rbi/Conference_proceedings.pdf
- F. Media Appearances:
BBC Farming Today – The geography of endangerment amongst farm livestock breeds, broadcast 16th December 2008
BBC Midlands Today – The geography of endangerment amongst farm livestock breeds, broadcast 2nd August 2009
- G. Herefordshire Food Partnership (2011) *From Field to Table. A sustainable food and drink strategy for Herefordshire*. The Bulmer Foundation, Hereford:
www.bulmerfoundation.org.uk/download/from-field-to-table
- H. Carruthers, P., Winter, M. and Evans, N, (2013) *Farming's Value to Society*. Study commissioned for the Oxford Farming Conference 2013: Confident Farmers Delivering for Society. Vision 37, University of Exeter and University of Worcester, January.
- I. Videos of debate following the presentation of the report *Farming's Value to Society*:
<http://www.ofc.org.uk/archive/2013/videos>