

# Small Farms Association Newsletter



autumn 2009

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Members partying at the SFA summer BBQ at Ley Coombe Farm

## An Indian summer worth waiting for!

Dear Members,

All the harvesting should be finished by the time this newsletter is delivered to you. Once again our patience and faith has been sorely tested with yet another wet summer. Thank goodness for the unexpected but welcome Indian summer, which helped to deliver a bumper harvest. By the end of August we still had not made all of our hay. Most of our grass is round-baled haylage and wrapped. We have 18 acres of hay meadows in Countryside Stewardship that we graze with sheep until the middle of May. Then it is cut for hay, ideally in July to allow skylarks to nest and rear their young. This year, however, July was such a washout with the worst rainstorms since 1880, I believe, that we had to wait until the dryer weather in early September before harvesting.

Thankfully, it stopped raining on 9th September and we were able to cut and bale our hay on 14th of the month - a record for me! Also, it's fairly good hay, as no artificial manure is spread on the fields; and it yielded 120 conventional bales per acre.

One of the only cloud hanging over the cattle sector is this dreadful TB in the countryside: at a tremendous cost to the tax payer, as well as the cost to livestock farmers. Farmers who breed and rear cattle are the ones who loose out when their herds are under movement restriction for sometimes up to 180 days. The Welsh Assembly have believed in, and agreed to, a badger cull. We will watch the results of these cull trials with intense interest.

On Thursday, 15th October, the SFA is holding a meeting at Fowlescombe Manor, the home of Richard and Barbara Barker (please see page 3 for details). The main speaker will be Graham Harvey (author, broadcaster and agricultural editor of *The Archers* on BBC Radio 4). Paul Woodham will give a talk on biofuel and how to turn your muck into money.

Lastly, don't forget to take a look at the new SFA website: [www.small-farms-association.co.uk](http://www.small-farms-association.co.uk) or simply type in 'small farms' into a search engine. Please let us know what features you want on the website to best help you run your farm.

## Any news?

We would like to let members know what is happening around the SFA network, and would be delighted to receive and print news that you wish to share.

Contact the Office at:  
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[mary@small-farms-association.co.uk](mailto:mary@small-farms-association.co.uk)

## FUNDING SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

A new grant scheme has been launched, called the Enablement Fund (EF), which is aimed at projects in their infancy where a group need to carry out some research work before a full application can be submitted to the South Devon Coastal Local Action Fund (LAG).

The types of work that can be funded include: ~

Feasibility studies, research into opportunities that match the LAG priorities, assistance with a full business plan (particularly for large scale projects) that will be a pre-requisite in applying for public funding, assistance with the costs of fees, e.g. architects, planning and costing, start up costs for setting up a social enterprise and setting up meetings to engage the local community and develop collaborative working.

Peter Sandover, of Sandover Associates Ltd who chairs the group says "I am very pleased that the fund is up and running and we are able to assist projects that set out to improve the economic performance and environmental quality of the South Devon Coastal Area. We want to encourage applications from both community groups and local businesses and help bring their ideas to fruition. The funding process is straightforward and we would like to work with applicants to help shape ideas into fundable projects".

The maximum contribution will be 50% for profit making organisations and 75% for not for profit organisations.

Applicants must raise the remaining match funding from other sources. The minimum funds offered will be £1,000 rising to a maximum of £10,000 per project.

This project is part financed by the EAF - European Agricultural Fund for European Development 2007-2013: Europe investing in rural areas and is being delivered through the South West RDA with Defra as the Managing Authority.

Further information can be obtained from Devon Renaissance on Tel: 01837 658643 or by email: [enablement@ruraldevon.org](mailto:enablement@ruraldevon.org)

For further enquiries, please contact Peter Sandover 01548 531980 or email: [peter@sandoverassociates.co.uk](mailto:peter@sandoverassociates.co.uk)

## Women Do Business

The South Devon Coastal Local Action Group have funded the Community Council of Devon to deliver a project called Women Do Business in South Devon. The programme enables women in the area to gain free support, advice and training locally to help them be successful in achieving their business aims. It also provides the chance to link up with other like-minded women to share ideas and make contacts.

For more information contact Jan Spencer on Tel. 01392 381256



Following the recent award of funding from the South Devon Coastal Local Action Group, Devon Wheels 2 Work is now able to offer scooter and motorcycle loans to residents of all ages in the South Devon Coastal area. So if you find it difficult getting around and would benefit from a loan of one of the machines please get in touch. Loans start from £20 per week with free training, insurance, tax and protective clothing included in the price. Give them a call on Tel: **0845 0944 308**. This scheme has been very successfully running in North Devon for a number of years.

## More members needed

The South Devon Local Action Group (LAG) Management Team is recruiting more members. To ensure they have a good spread of representation across the entire LAG, members are particularly sought from the far West of the area (Yealmpton/ Brixton/ Wembury/ Newton & Noss/ Holbeton) and also the far East of the area (Dartmouth/ Kingswear/ Dittisham/ Cornworthy/ Stoke Fleming/ Blackawton).

If you are interested please contact John Yeoman – chairman – Tel. 01548 561232.

# Forthcoming Events



## **SFA 2009 Annual General Meeting** **26 November 2009, 7 p.m.** **Ugborough Village Hall**

Papers will be circulated to members in advance of the meeting

### **Guest Speaker**

#### **Julian Hosking - Natural England**

Julian Hosking is a Senior Specialist (Rural Land and Estate Management and Farm Animal Genetic Resources) in the South West Regional Advocacy and Partnerships Team of Natural England

Julian will be talking about the value of small farms and environmental and land management opportunities and developments

Light refreshments will be served during the evening

**Please come and support**

**RSVP to Tel: 01548 830302**

### **New SFA Website**

The Small Farms Association has a new website; but at the same address:~

**[www.small-farms-association.co.uk](http://www.small-farms-association.co.uk)**

We would very much appreciate feed-back from members; and would like to know what you would like to see included on the website; or if we have hit the mark.

Please contact Carole Constable on Tel: 01822 841554 or email: [slymefordfarm@btconnect.com](mailto:slymefordfarm@btconnect.com)

## **RDPE SEMINARS**

**To provide clear guidance on the grant funding available under RDPE.**

<b>South Molton</b>	<b>Mon 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 6pm</b>
<b>Tavistock</b>	<b>Wed 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, 10am</b>
<b>Totnes</b>	<b>Mon 2nd Nov, 6pm</b>
<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Wed 4<sup>th</sup> Nov, 10am</b>
<b>Holsworthy</b>	<b>Fri 6<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2pm</b>

**To book your place, please call Nicole Stacey on Tel: 01392 382157.**

## Confused about RDPE?

### Attend a Devon Seminar

The new RDPE scheme has over ten different grant/funding streams and it has been recognised there is some confusion around the different schemes and what they fund.

A series of seminars are being held across Devon to provide clarity on the various grant schemes available under RDPE.

The areas covered will include: Local Action Groups, Farm Diversification, Adding Value and Marketing, Sustainable Woodlands and Vocational Training. Updates will be provided on the South West Agricultural Resource Management, South West Healthy Livestock Initiative and the Uplands.

The seminars are being held at five different locations across the region at differing times of the day:

Date	Location	Venue	Time
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>South Molton</b>	Woodlands Enterprise Centre	18.00
Wed 28 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Tavistock</b>	Tavistock Town Hall	10.00
Mon 2 <sup>nd</sup> November	<b>Totnes</b>	Follaton House South Hams DC	18.00
Wed 4 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Exeter</b>	Clyst St Mary Village Hall	10.00
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Holsworthy</b>	Memorial Hall	14.00

Representatives from the Rural Enterprise Gateway, SW Regional Development Agency and the Devon Project Development Officer will be giving presentations and will be available to answer questions.

**To book your place, please call Nicole Stacey on: 01392 382157**

# The South West Rural Development Programme for England

## Clear as Mud!

Some farmers will have heard of 'SWARM' 'SWHLI' and 'LAG'. But what do these acronyms stand for and how exactly can they help you?

The South West Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) scheme has over ten different grant/funding streams, all with different acronyms and funding different areas of activity.

The individual schemes are being administered by different people and agencies and have been launched at different times during the past 18 months.

Some schemes are still not open for applications. This staggered approach has meant some farmers do not understand what is available. To fully benefit from the whole of the South West RDPE it is important that farmers are aware of all of the different funding streams available.

The Devon Food and Farming Board have recognised that one of the main problems with the RDPE scheme in the South West is the confusion at the grass roots level about the different grant schemes. Mary Talbot-Rosevear the Chairman of the Devon Food and Farming board says "Farmers are frustrated with the RDPE scheme as the information provided has not been clear and accurate."

The Devon Food and Farming board have raised this issue, and which through the Devon Rural Network (DRN); and have agreed to fund a series of seminars to provide clear information on all of the different grants funds that are available through the RDPE scheme.

This information will include the new Agricultural Resource Management scheme, which will provide small grants to farmers and also information on capital grants for forestry, farm diversification, marketing and processing, business advice and training opportunities.

There will be five seminars across Devon in Totnes, Tavistock, Holsworthy, South Molton and Exeter.

**If you are interested in attending a seminar please call Nicole on Tel: 01392 382157 to book a place. Also see page 4 for details of dates, locations and times.**

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## Concessions at last for sheep EID Regulations

After many months of discussions with Defra, the farming sector has finally reached an agreement about the implementation Regulations for the electronic identification (EID) of sheep.

The proposals, that is a voluntary tagging option, which would give farmers the choice of using an electronic or manual tag for sheep moving directly to slaughter, must now obtain the approval of the Minister, Hilary Benn, MP.

Peter Morris, Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association, was reported in the farming press as saying: "*the talks had been constructive and, while his organisation opposed the principal of regulation, he said it was vital that concessions*

*were made to make compliance easier for farmers*".

The agreement that the Minister will consider has been welcomed by all UK farming organisations, including the Small Farms Association and the NFU since all of them wanted the farmers to have options and not be railroaded into an electronic system.

Details of how the Regulations will work in practice will have to be worked out with Defra; but all farming organisations are urging Defra to keep the Regulations under review. The Regulations are due to come into force in January 2010.





### **The voice of the small farmer**

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**We're on the Web:**  
**[www.small-farms-association.co.uk](http://www.small-farms-association.co.uk)**

*The Small Farms Association was formed in October 1997 because of the reluctance of major farming organisations to support the needs of small farmers.*

*Since its inception, the concerns and needs of small farms have been addressed by: ~*

- \* *Lobbying MPs and other public representatives*
- \* *Liaison with DEFRA*
- \* *Liaison with other farming organisations*
- \* *Contributing to policy development*
- \* *Creating our own Constitution and Code of Practice*
- \* *Providing advice and support to members*

***Please help us to continue the work on your behalf by providing feedback on crucial policy issues and recruiting new members.***

***Annual Family Membership – £20.00***

**Have you paid your  
SFA subscription?**

## **Members' News and Advertisements**

### **FOR SALE**

**Pedigree Devon bull ,horned.  
Quiet temperament, from small  
herd. 2 years old, proven.**

**Tel: 01822 841554  
Carole Constable  
(nr Tavistock).**

### **SFA Members - The Fish Family**

Congratulations to Mary and Peter Fish of Challons Coombe whose farm and dairy enterprise were featured in *Food in the Landscape* series in the Western Morning News on 16 September. Western Morning News journalist, Martin Heap, set about investigating the dairy sector and visited the Fish family on their dairy farm near Aveton Gifford as part of this series.

Peter and Mary converted to organic in 1999 and were fully certified by 2001. They have 39 dairy cows that yield about 5,500 litres of milk annually. And as Mary said in the article: *They are not the*

*milking machines that you sometimes find on more industrialised farms."* When the Fishes initially converted to organic, milk prices were good. When, however, they were fully converted, the bottom had dropped out of the milk market. So they looked around for ways of adding value to the milk and decided the best option was to make their own products. Ultimately, this decision was to prove to be the best option; but there was a long hard road to tread before success would be savoured.

Three years ago Mary began making yoghurt. Only the second batch she made won a silver at the *Taste of the West's Awards*, and achievement of which she is rightly very proud. Since then, she has been growing the market through local shops and selling direct to customers. Challons Coombe now produces five fruit yoghurts and two natural ones.

Both Mary and Peter attribute the quality of the products to the rich grassland on which the cows graze; and the fact that they are out for most of the year bar the coldest winter months.

It's definitely a family affair at Challons Coombe as Mary and Peter's children, Eleanor and Andrew, help out; and Arthur Read, Mary's father, who came to Challons Coombe in 1958, still helps on the farm and delivers yoghurt to local shops.