

PR1462 – 3 November 2010

Knowledge exchange University of Ulster and the farming community

Lantra and the University of Ulster's Office of Innovation, supported by the ConnectED project and Environmental Science Research Institute engaged a range of academics, educationalists and farmers in discussions around land use and management.

Dr Paul McKenzie from the landscape ecology group led discussions on how farmers and land owners can benefit from the use of computer modelling. The discussion focussed on the use of GIS and satellite imaging to monitor vegetation health, classify habitats, detect biodiversity and model landscapes in light of climate change scenarios.

Dr Dario Fornara, a leading academic in the ecology of grassland systems reflected on the increasing loss of biodiversity and how this could negatively impact important ecosystem processes, such as primary productivity and the carbon sequestration ability of soils. This also covered agricultural practices in terms of grazing, the application of lime, the co-existence of multiple plant species and the dynamics of soil nutrient cycling across a gradient of land use intensity.

Highlighting water quality issues both Professor Phil Jordan and Dr Joerg Arnscheidt spoke of the impact of septic tanks versus agri run-off. The loss of phosphorus from the land to freshwater was also explored with the farming community. Higher than expected levels of faecal indicator bacteria with resistance to antibiotics have been found in small rural streams and the potential implications for water usage and receiving lakes were discussed.

Campbell Tweed OBE, Ballycoose Farm said: An informative and intriguing event, it was quite surprising to hear some of the findings coming out of the research being undertaken with the university.

Karen McCann from the Office of Innovation, University of Ulster said: We are always keen to engage and to provide avenues for knowledge transfer from the university to industry.

If you are interested in finding out more about the research being carried out, contact Karen McCann on 028 70123581 or Lantra at 028 7963 1304.

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EDITORS NOTES

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" An independent UK organisation, Lantra works with employers and the UK's governments to address the skills and productivity needs of approximately 230 businesses (one in every ten UK businesses) in: agriculture; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; land-based engineering; horticulture, landscape and sports turf; production horticulture; trees and timber and veterinary nursing.

" By working together with the sector, Lantra leads research on skills issues and business needs, sets national standards and develops qualifications to meet modern business needs and help businesses grow through skills.

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