

Information Notes

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Environment Focus Farm Initiative

It is important that any new environmental regulations or measures should be grounded in good science, be practical and acceptable to farmers, and, wherever possible, be supported by Land Management Contracts. The recent discussions on NVZ rules indicate that managing diffuse pollution issues in river catchments is rapidly becoming a critical business issue for farmers.

Against this background SAC, with support from SERD, has initiated the Environmental Focus Farm (EFF) project. Modelled on the highly successful "Monitor Farm" approach, the aim is to identify a core group of farmers within river catchments to join together for practical on-farm discussions with several meetings per year. A significant part of the programme will be driven by farmer needs and aspirations, with technical input and assistance provided to meet farmer requirements.

The Environmental Focus Farms will act as a test bed where, in the context of regulatory measures and in a real farming situation, practical and economically viable solutions to pollution issues can be evaluated. Initially, they will be tailored to the Priority Catchments, identified by SEPA, and may later have wider application across Scotland.

Two Environmental Focus Farms have been established.

- Low Holehouse (Ayrshire)
courtesy of Mr Willie Campbell
- Mains of Balgavies (Angus)
courtesy of Mr Tom Sampson

NOTE:

The Water Framework Directive will require all water bodies to meet environmental quality standards. In this context, SEPA identified two Monitored Priority Catchments in 2006 as focal areas for assessing the pollution load in the river and the estuary, identifying their origins, and working to reduce the overall loads in the river system. These are the Cessnock (Ayrshire) and Lunan Water (Angus) catchments where a significant part of the pollution load has been identified by SEPA as being of agricultural origin.

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