

## Challenging Assumptions about Smallholders

### Points arising from discussion groups - 4<sup>th</sup> January - Oxford Real Farming Conference

- Role of covenants in planning control
- Local planning policy framework – Learn how this will be applied to smallholders, and ensure that the positive aspects of it translate into local policy, such as creation of “Low Impact Development Policies”
- Variation in experiences of smallholders across the country. Research needs to be bioregional
- Need to publicise positive examples of planning through a good practise guide – also to help new entrants to avoid making mistakes that tarnish the image of smallholders, thereby making it harder for other smallholders to follow in their footsteps.
- The term “Real Farming” is a bit confrontational. An alternative suggestion was “Agile Farming” referring to a kind of farming that is flexible enough to adapt to unknown future circumstances.
- There is a need for targetted research into polyculture, yields and viability of permaculture.
- Research into health and wellbeing of smallholders
- The term “ecosystem services” can also be controversial, as it focusses mainly on monetry value.
- There is a lack of understanding among local councillors and planning officers about agriculture.
- Identified a need for a simple guide to all aspects and challenges to smallholder planning, which would best be compiled as an open source document, such as wiki.
- Productivity should also value labour intensive systems. The current system taxes such systems more highly than fossil fuel based systems, since labour is more heavily taxed (ie through income tax) than fuel. Low input systems are often labour intensive systems, and are therefor taxed more highly.
- Need to destigmatise farm labour – currently young people are discouraged from going into an agriculture career, which is considered to be for the less able.
- Need for government support for local food schemes as opposed to intensive (was this meant to mean sustainable intensification?)
- Land Settlement Association – reintegrated service men and women after the war, by providing plots, homes and opportunities to market co-operatively. LSA's became a major supplier of salad crops in the UK until 1980s. Worth studying how these worked and learning from them as a model.
- Engaging with local farming community – vitally important for new entrants to engage with existing farming community, to learn about the land, the social fabric of the area and develop trust and understanding. This is key when it comes to breaking down negative assumptions about smallholders, and can help reduce level of objection when planning applications are made.

### Potential Action

- 1) Research needs - How did the LSA work? Health and wellbeing of smallholders, polyculture yields and permaculture
- 2) Changing culture – Encourage smallholders to engage with local farmers, Educating planning officers and local councillors about realities of farming, Destigmatise agriculture as a career option for young people
- 3) Publications – Guide to aspects and challenges to smallholder planning (for planners?); Good practise guide for new entrants