



What is happening with Farming Connect?

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CALU and the other Farming Connect Development Centres are currently in what is being called an “interim” period. The future Farming Connect service forms part of the Rural Development Plan for Wales, which covers the period 2007—2013. This Plan has been submitted to Europe for approval. In the meantime, whilst awaiting confirmation of Europe’s approval of the RDP, the Welsh Assembly Government is supporting a scaled down service from the Development Centres.

The main difference users of the service will notice during this interim period is that individual technical advice is no longer available. However, CALU is still supporting the

provision of technical advice through our workshops, open days, discussion groups and technical leaflets.

Another difference is that we are not running demonstration projects during this interim period. However, a number of reports from previously funded Farming Connect projects and from externally funded projects have recently been published and are available on the CALU website.

The summer months have seen CALU staff busy at agricultural shows across the length and breadth of Wales, encouraging farmers and land owners to think outside of the box and consider the many opportuni-

ties that are available to them.

As we move into the quieter autumn and winter months we are arranging a full programme of demonstration events, training workshops, seminars and discussion group meetings to promote sustainable, profitable land uses. The range of topics we cover is broad. As an indication, events already planned include: on-farm energy auditing; small fruit production; beekeeping; managing pigs in woodlands; potato growing in marginal areas; woodland management.

For more information on any of CALU’s activities, please get in touch.

CALU’s subject areas:

- Horticulture
- Bio-energy
- Alternative crops
- Alternative livestock
- Farm woodlands

Wet, wet, wet, but CALU stand’s a winner

Those of you who braved the elements to visit this year’s Royal Welsh Show will know how wet it was much of the time. Despite the inclement weather, more than 200,000 people attended the Show, which is one of the biggest agricultural shows in Europe.

CALU is very proud to report that our stand, which featured displays from the Pembrokeshire Growers, Menterra, Sárvári Research Trust and CALU’s own projects was awarded a Gold Medal for the best educational trade stand.



High hopes for horticulture



CALU's vegetable plots at Henfaes—Spring 2007

A recently completed report for CALU paints a bright picture for the future of field scale vegetable production in Wales.

In the past, most farms in Wales would have grown staple vegetable crops (carrots, potatoes, swedes, etc) as well as rearing livestock. However, increasing specialisation has seen the volume of home grown vegetables decline steeply.

CALU is keen to see vegetable production in Wales increase. In order to support this, a report was commissioned to look at the factors which limit current production and favour future expansion of production in Wales.

The report concluded that the potential for vegetables to make a significant contribution to farm incomes was substantial. However, in order to achieve these potential benefits, there is a need to provide farmers and

growers with technical advice in the short term to adapt to the different skills required for vegetable production.

The report contains example farm budgets which show how introducing vegetables into the system can significantly improve farming profit.

The major retailers sell 75% of fresh fruit and vegetables. The report notes that these multiples are now very interested in sourcing local produce.

Potential growers must, however, give careful consideration to their markets; to the quality of their produce; crop scheduling; and rotation planning. Vegetable production does present a real opportunity for Welsh farmers and growers, but it should not be viewed as an easy "quick-fix" option.

CALU discussion groups—more than just a talking shop

Since CALU began, back in 2004, discussion groups have formed an important part of our work. Our groups have covered a wide range of enterprises from milk goats to herb growers; bee keepers to potato growers. Whatever the sector, the role of the discussion group is the same: to facilitate knowledge sharing and develop best practices.

When a new discussion group is formed CALU will provide administrative support to get the group up and running. Once the group is established we continue to provide support, for example by finding specialist speakers, or suggesting venues for study trips. And, importantly, we provide (limited) financial support.

On average, discussion groups probably meet ever six weeks—although this obviously varies to suit the groups needs. The form of the meetings is very much driven by the group: some prefer informal meetings, hosted by different group members, where specific problems or innovations can be seen and discussed; other groups prefer more formal meetings with a structured agenda and experts from industry brought in to deliver talks on specific topics; still others prefer to run their meetings as workshops, bringing in consultants to provide training in areas of interest to the whole group. Whichever model suits the group, CALU is happy to support it.

If you are interested in forming a discussion group, we'd love to hear from you. We would particularly like to establish a woodland group, and there are definitely more opportunities for groups in north and mid Wales in particular. For further information, please do get in touch—our contact details are on the back page.

Welfare of livestock in transit—new regulations

As you will already know, since 5th January 2007, anybody transporting animals more than 65km in connection with an economic activity has needed a certificate of authorisation. But did you know that from January 2008 anybody transporting animals more than 65km will need to have taken a test and been awarded a Certificate of Competence to legally transport livestock—and this includes goats, pigs and poultry. There is a different test for those transporting livestock on journeys of more than eight hours duration.

Lantra is offering 50% funding towards the cost of this training and testing. CALU can help organise training and testing sessions for groups of livestock owners. If you are interested in this, please contact CALU—calu@bangor.ac.uk or 01248 680450.

For more information on the regulations, contact Animal Health on 0845 6038395.

For more information on Lantra's funding support, contact Lantra on 01982 552646.

DID YOU KNOW...

Sales of fresh herbs more than doubled in the 5 years from 2002 to 2007

(Source: Mintel).

A shockingly bad season for potatoes—but it’s not all bad news

2007 has been widely reported as being the worst potato season in living memory. Unusual weather patterns meant that many areas of the country were affected by Smith’s periods at the same time as waterlogged soils prevented machine access for fungicide applications. As a consequence, many crops have been affected by late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) while others have rotted in the field.

It is against this background that CALU joined forces with the Sárvari Research Trust (SRT) to host a potato information day at the Henfaes Research Centre at the beginning of August. Sárpo pota-

toes, which are bred by the SRT, are naturally resistant to late blight.

Currently, there are only two varieties of Sárpo on the National List (Sárpo Mira and Sárpo Axona), however these will soon be joined by four more, including an early variety.

Dr David Shaw, Research Director for SRT, explained to visitors how the late blight pathogen attacks potato crops, and also the way it is evolving. Simon White, SRT Trials Manager, then went on to explain how the Trust trials various cultivars to evaluate not only their resistance to blight, but their ability

to compete with weeds, their yield potential and their taste and appearance.

Visitors were then able to view the RHS blight trials at Henfaes which dramatically demonstrate the superior blight resistance of Sárpo varieties.

After enjoying a lunch which included chips and potato salads made from Sárpo potatoes, the group traveled to Anglesey to see the trial site there.

For more information on Sárpo potatoes, contact the SRT on 01248 689156, or CALU.



Evaluating the impact of late blight in the plots at Henfaes

Beekeeping for beginners

Over the winter of 2006-2007 the Conwy Beekeepers Association ran a training course on behalf of CALU entitled "Beekeeping for beginners". Around 20 people followed the course and, as a direct result, there are around eight new beekeepers with their own hives.

CALU is passionate about the importance of bees in environmental systems and very proud of the

success of this beekeeping course. By popular demand, the course will be run again this winter.

The course begins with a hands-on session in mid-September at the Conwy Beekeepers’ apiary in the Conwy Valley. Thereafter, the classes are held indoors (at CALU’s base—the Henfaes Research Centre) until the spring when the apiary will be visited again.



Students on the CBKA-CALU beekeeping course at the apiary—April 2007

DID YOU KNOW...
There are about 2,000 beekeepers in Wales

Getting fruity — orchard and small fruit events

In February 2007, CALU teamed up with Planed (Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development) to deliver an "Orchard Awareness" event. The day was an outstanding success and we have subsequently received many requests for a follow up event.

As a result, on 4th September we will be holding another orchard

event, in conjunction with Planed, the Pembrokeshire National Park and Pembrokeshire Growers Association. This time, the focus will be on variety identification and pruning.

Further orchard events will be held during the winter months—watch the website for details.

Another area of CALU’s work which has stimulated a great deal of

interest is the promotion of small fruit production—blueberries, blackcurrants, raspberries, strawberries, etc.

To encourage and support this interest we are holding a small-fruit workshop on 11th October at Bellis’ Country Market, Holt, nr Mold. The workshop will look at cane fruits in the morning, and strawberries in the afternoon.



Pembrokeshire Orchard event February 2007

CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE LAND USE

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Supporting sustainable land use in Wales



Forthcoming Events

Thursday 13th September—Open Day—potatoes for marginal areas, Ceredigion

Friday 14th September—Workshop—Pigs in Woodlands, Elan Valley Hotel, nr Rhayader **Postponed due to FMD restrictions**

Tuesday 25th September—Workshop—potato varieties & potato blight, Aberystwyth

Tuesday 9th October—Open Day—cereals and cereals, in conjunction with Organic Centre Wales. Allt Goch, St Harmon. **Postponed due to FMD restrictions**

Thursday 11th October—Workshop—growing small fruit. Bellis Country Market, Holt. An all day event covering cane fruits, some bush fruits and strawberries.

Tuesday 16th October—Wales Dairy Event—CALU stand providing advice on energy audits, including biomass for energy and energy audits **Postponed due to FMD restrictions**

Thursday 18th October—Organic Producers Conference—Builth Wells

Tuesday 30th October—Herb and ornamentals workshops—Botanic Garden, Llanarthne

Wednesday 21st November—On-farm Energy Audits—practical demonstration and training, Pentrewyn Farm, Llanybri, nr Carmarthen

Monday 26th & Tuesday 27th November—Royal Welsh Winter Fair—Builth Wells

Friday 19th January 2008—On-farm Energy Audits—practical demonstration, training and advice, Coleg Llysfasi, Ruthin

For more information about any of CALU's events, please contact us.

About CALU

CALU is the Farming Connect Development Centre for alternative land uses. CALU exists to transfer information and technology within the areas of:

- Horticulture
- Biomass
- Alternative Livestock
- Alternative Crops
- Farm Woodlands

CALU has three dedicated members of staff and a network of associate specialists covering all the topics within CALU's remit.

CALU ACTIVITIES:

- Open days
- Demonstration events
- Technical leaflets
- Training days
- Press articles
- Crop information sheets
- Project reports
- Talks
- Producer groups
- Agricultural shows
- Information booklets

CALU PARTNERS:

- University of Wales, Bangor
- Welsh College of Horticulture
- ADAS
- Coed Cymru
- Coleg Llysfasi

