

4. The FarmPath project aims to provide:

- Evidence-based policy recommendations for local, national and EU levels for identifying and pursuing future transition pathways and social and technological innovation needs for agriculture.
- An analysis of the preferences and challenges facing young people and new entrants in agriculture at local, regional, national and European levels.
- Resources for policymakers, academics and other stakeholders in order to develop their understanding and enable the pursuit of transitions towards the regional sustainability of agriculture.

FarmPath research is led by The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, and is being undertaken in France, Germany, Portugal, Greece, Czech Republic and Bulgaria (see map below).



Contact information

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What is your vision for agriculture and other land based activities in North East Scotland in 2030?

'FarmPath' – Farming Transitions: Pathways towards regional sustainability of agriculture in Europe

Research progress and next steps: Identifying future visions



Image source: <http://thearticulateceo.typepad.com/.a/6a0128763842f6970cc01539185f571970b-800wi>



1. What is FarmPath?

FarmPath is a three year collaborative research project funded through the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme, with additional funding from nine European research partners, including the Scottish Government, running from March 2011 to February 2014. The overall goal of FarmPath is to identify and assess future transition pathways towards regional sustainability of agriculture in Europe, and the social and technological innovation needs required to initiate and progress along these pathways.

The first stage of the project was the study of specific changes that are occurring in agriculture in Europe. Each of the partner institutes in seven countries (see map) are exploring three examples of new ways to approach farming. In Scotland our work has focused on formalised farmer collaboration (machinery rings), non-commercial farming and on-farm renewable energy production (see www.farmpath.eu for details of our findings).

Importantly, an overarching theme of FarmPath is to gain an understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing young farmers and new entrants.



2. Visions for Agriculture

The FarmPath project now aims to build on what we've learned about 'transition processes', and to identify ideal future situations and the steps needed to progress agriculture across Europe. This will involve a series of focus groups with local stakeholders who have been selected to represent the full spectrum of people with rural interests, and those involved in land management and agriculture across the European regions under investigation in FarmPath.

This process will be replicated in seven partner countries and, in Scotland, will focus on visions for agriculture in the North East of Scotland in the year 2030. Therefore, the central question to be considered in this process will be:

What are your wishes for agriculture and other land based activities in North East Scotland in 2030?



3. The Visioning Process

Each group of stakeholders will meet (with around 8 people per group) to discuss what they see as important in the future for agriculture in the North East. These focus groups will be held in late February and early March 2013, and will last around 3 hours. They will be fully catered, and mileage costs will be reimbursed. Participants are invited to attend one focus group here and another in May, 2013. During this second meeting, all the participants will come together to discuss the 'future visions' and identify the steps required to progress in the North East towards the visions, including the opportunities for government support, and the responsibilities of different land managers and users.

The results of this research process (i.e. the visions and steps needed) will be communicated to Aberdeenshire Council and other relevant local authorities, the Scottish Government, and the European Commission. We believe this represents an opportunity to raise awareness to policy makers of the particular threats and opportunities facing agriculture in the North East of Scotland. We also hope that this will be an interesting and enjoyable experience for participants, providing an opportunity to network with other local rural, farming and land management interests, and to influence the direction of agriculture in the North East.

Whilst participants in the different focus groups will be known to each other, the participation of individuals and organisations will remain confidential, and names will not be used in any publication from the process without prior permission.