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**Rural Policy: New Directions and New
Challenges**

D M Winter

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Rural Policy: New Directions and New Challenges

*Research to identify the policy context on rural issues
in the South West*

**Report to the
South West of England
Regional Development Agency
and the Regional Assembly**

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Chapter 1 Background to Research	6
Chapter 2 Drivers of Policy Change	9
Chapter 3 The Changing Architecture of Rural Governance and the Policy Framework	29
Chapter 4 Conclusions and Recommendations	38
References	49
Additional Bibliography	52
Appendix. Components of Rural Policy: A Comparative Analysis of Some Key Rural Policy Documents	56

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Michael Winter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Chapter 1 of the report outlines the main aim of this research as providing a critical review of the current debate on the future of the countryside, with particular reference to rural policy issues relevant to the sustainable development of the South West. The main methods used in the research are outlined. The definitions of policy and rurality used in the report are set out.

Chapter 2 examines the drivers of policy change under four headings.

The Changing Farm Economy

The key components of post-war agricultural change are set out: increasing farm size, enterprise specialisation, mechanisation, higher use of chemical inputs, a declining labour force, intensification of land use. Broadly, these characterised agriculture from the 1950s to the early 1980s.

The downturn in agriculture since 1996 is examined, including changes in land prices, commodity prices and the labour force.

Key policy questions identified in this section of the report are as follows:

- What are the knock-on effects to the Region's economy of the downturn in agricultural fortunes?
- Are current and prospective profit levels likely to maintain historic volumes of agricultural productivity?
- How are new entrants and innovation to be encouraged in the context of high land prices?
- Will the market for grass-keep and short-term tenancy agreement remain buoyant with increasing numbers of residential land purchases?
- What are the implications for land management of increasing numbers of residential land purchases? For example, will it inhibit or encourage conversion to forestry?
- What are the implications of declining numbers of farm workers and casualisation of labour force on the maintenance of the rural estate?
- Are re-skilling and training opportunities sufficient for those leaving agriculture?

Counterurbanisation

This section examines the nature and extent of counterurbanisation. Over the period 1981 to 1999 there was an increase in population in every SW district / UA except for Plymouth. Counterurbanization is expected to continue. A survey of 1,000 people in England in 1995 revealed that 54% had a preference for living in the countryside but only 24% yet did so. A considerable volume of academic research has been undertaken on different aspects of counterurbanisation and much is known about the characteristics of incoming populations and their motivations for wishing to live in rural locations, which include employment, family and retirement factors as well as additional environmental and lifestyle related factors including the perceived peace, quiet and safety of rural living.

¹ Sources for data in the Executive Summary are not given as these are found in the main body of the text

Key policy questions identified in this section of the report are as follows:

- How are likely pressures for housing land in the south-west to be dealt with?
- Are there conflicts between rural and in-migrating populations and, if so, how should these be resolved?
- What are implications for long term energy and transport policies? Could changes in these sectors have significant implications for population trends?

The Countryside as Contested Territory

In this section, pressures on farmers and rural land occupants are outlined, including environmental concerns, animal welfare, food safety. Farming as a core economic activity has had to respond as a result of this growing politicisation of the countryside. The burden of regulation on farming as a result of various directives has been the subject of a central government Task Force and was mentioned in the Curry report. However, the extent of intra-rural conflicts can be exaggerated. Rural research has found that few incomers to rural areas are actively involved in campaigning across a range of rural political issues.

Key policy questions identified in this section of the report are as follows:

- How can good relations between farming and non-farming citizens be promoted?
- How are local conflicts best handled?
- Are there issues, such as the use and management of wild animals in the countryside, which require policy input to prevent future conflicts?

Tourism in the South West

The section notes that the South West is one of the most important tourist regions in the UK. Changes in market segmentation have meant that the South West has experienced relatively steady growth over recent decades. While the face of tourism in the South West is changing, and there is some debate as to the meaning of this for future growth, the economic value of the tourism industry is unquestioned. In 1999 there was estimated expenditure of £2879 m by domestic tourists and £500 million by overseas tourists. Day visitors added a further £1406 million. Using multipliers this translates into estimates that tourism accounts for some 10% of both GDP and employment in the region in 1999. The rural environment, in its many forms including the coastline, remains the key attraction in the South West, despite the significant growth of urban cultural and business tourism in places such as Plymouth and Bristol.

Key policy questions identified in this section of the report are as follows:

- How can rural areas capture a larger share of the tourist spend?
- How can the numbers of tourists who stay overnight (the key to spending patterns) in rural areas be increased?
- How can local multipliers be increased through strengthening local supply chains and purchasing?

Chapter 3 examines the changing architecture of rural governance and the policy framework. In particular, it examines the shifts from agricultural to rural policy and from government to governance. Under the first heading, the chapter examines the the creation of DEFRA which brought together the agricultural and rural development responsibilities of the former MAFF with the environmental and rural development responsibilities of DETR. The new

Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, whilst retaining responsibility for local government, including local authorities' critical town and country planning functions, cedes responsibility for the Regional Development Agencies to the Department of Trade and Industry. And tourism remains under the DCMS. Thus while the new architecture of government reinforces a long-standing shift of policy from agricultural to rural, anomalies and tensions remain. The chapter also considers the significance of the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) of the CAP.

The shift from government to governance involves an erosion of long-standing lines of policy demarcation both with respect to the content of policy and the structures for its delivery. Governance involves a shift from centralism and state-led policy initiatives to policy formulation and delivery by a combination of public and private stakeholders often at a regional or local level. A number of instances of these changes are cited, including the changing role of local government and the regions.

Chapter 4 provides conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions focus on tensions within rural policy identified as follows:

- ideological tensions,
- institutional tensions,
- geographical tensions (between regional, national and European policy),
- rural versus agricultural policy tensions,
- social, economic and environmental policy tensions;
- globalisation: an emerging cause of tension.

Tensions lie at the heart of the policy process and may have positive as well as negative characteristics. Either way they need to be recognised and analysed.

Ideological Tensions

These refer to political disagreement on the nature of a policy problem and are most likely to arise when a particular political party or pressure groups adopts a stance that is at odds with the policy of the government or other groups. There are some issues where profound ideological differences do cause significant policy tensions which are not easily resolved by the Government. A classic example is hunting with dogs, which is symptomatic of a wider set of concerns about the place of animals in society.

Institutional Tensions

These are the tensions that derive from the allocation of responsibilities within central government. The section discusses these identifying a number of potential tensions including the role of the Countryside Agency following the reorganisation of central government responsibilities and the growing regional dimension, and the fact that some rural policy responsibilities are located outside of DEFRA.

Geographical Tensions

This section discusses the ceding of responsibilities upwards from central government to Europe and downwards to the regions and local government. There are unresolved policy tensions between central government's desire for a strong strategic steer to economic

development and the belief in local participation and inclusiveness, so strongly apparent in the Rural White Paper. The appropriate geographical level at which decisions should be made and the manner in which citizens should be involved in decision making also lies at the heart of the policy tension over planning and development control.

Rural versus Agricultural Policy Tensions

These are manifest in a number of ways. The most obvious is the extent to which agricultural policy itself is modified to take into account the new rural dimension to policy. Another manifestation of the rural-agricultural tension is with regard to positive and negative externalities. Policy tensions reveal themselves in policy prescription. Not surprisingly, farming organisations tend to emphasise the poor recompense farmers receive for delivering public goods, while some environmental and food activists tend to emphasise the negative externalities, urging greater regulation.

Social, Economic and Environmental Policy Tensions

The notion of sustainable development, covered in this part of the report, is seen by some as giving rise to significant institutional innovation in policy delivery. The principles of SD have provided a powerful stimulus to joined-up thinking in policy development and delivery. SD provides an opportunity to address and resolve tensions. There are many examples of positive outcomes from the policy commitments already made to sustainable development. For example, the policy context in which forestry operates has been transformed in recent years as a result of the commitment to sustainable development. The Curry Commission report and the Government's initial response to it provide another example of where SD thinking is fundamental to policy development. However it is important to recognise that tensions within SD may grow as a result of its extension to more and more policy areas.

Globalisation: An Emerging Cause of Tension

For the rural south-west, one of the most obvious aspects of globalisation is the liberalisation of agricultural commodity trade under the terms of the GATT agreement and the requirements of the WTO. Increasingly, British agriculture is having to compete with farmers across the world but it is a process that is not complete. WTO pressure on the EU further to reform the CAP is likely to remain high. One of the features of the Curry Commission report is its advocacy of reform to the CAP and the acceptance of a globalised commodity market agenda and this is in line with the UK government's position in the WTO negotiations. Most of the recent contributions to the agricultural policy debate take a broadly similar view. Indeed, there is an emerging mainstream policy orthodoxy that farming has to survive by being both globally competitive in commodity markets and through a range of other non-commodity market means. However, the acceptance of the inevitability of globalisation, particularly within the agriculture and food sector, are challenged to varying degrees by academics and non-government organisations committed to more sustainable, usually organic, forms of agriculture.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The RDA and RA in collaboration with regional partners should consider the key policy issues identified and, where appropriate, stimulate research, debate and/or action.

Recommendation 2: The RDA and RA should review their means for gathering, analysing and disseminating rural policy information and relevant contextual data.

Recommendation 3 The RDA and RA should consider staff CPD and training requirements and make appropriate provision.

Recommendation 4: The RDA and RA should participate in the debate at the regional level so that the Curry Commission proposals might be critically assessed, with particular emphasis on regional implications.

Recommendation 5: The RDA and RA should commission supporting work to examine the potential impact of Curry measures on the region's rural economy.

Recommendation 6: In the light of the outcomes of Recommendations 4 and 5, the RDA and RA, together with relevant regional stakeholders, should identify priorities for research to facilitate appropriate change in the region's rural economy.

Recommendation 7: The RDA and RA should, through the Regional Centre for Excellence catalogue and monitor local initiatives and to establish and disseminate good practice.

Recommendation 8: The RDA and RA should sponsor research or encourage other relevant bodies to undertake research on issues of regional policy and identity.

Recommendation 9: The RDA and RA should support and facilitate rural proofing of policy initiatives regionally and centrally.

Recommendation 10: The RDA and RA should press for regional proofing of central policy initiatives.

Recommendation 11: The RDA and RA should explore with other rural policy stakeholders how best to pursue co-ordination of policy delivery.

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The principal aim of this research is to provide a critical review of the current debate on the future of the countryside, with particular reference to rural policy issues relevant to the sustainable development of the South West of England. Accordingly, Chapter 2 identifies the key drivers of rural change and consequently also of policy change. Some key policy issues are identified in boxes within Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 the institutional context for policy formulation and delivery is examined together with some key elements of the current policy framework. The concluding Chapter 4 points to some of the tensions between different aspects of policy: rural and agricultural; social, economic and environmental; regional, national and European. Recommendations are made for future policy research and the role the South West RDA and Regional Assembly might play in promoting a better understanding of rural policy issues.

1.2 Methods

The research was undertaken in two phases. In the first, a systematic examination was made of a wide range of policy documents. A proportion of these were analysed by identifying the key components of the policies, strategies and initiatives included in the document using the nine-fold categorisation set out below:

- **Aims.** What are the stated key aims of the policy?
- **Rurality.** What is meant by the terms ‘rural’ and / or ‘countryside’? What are the conceptual and / or geographical boundaries of the policy remit?
- **History.** How does this policy relate to previous policies from the organisation / other organisations?
- **Audiences.** Who are the target audience(s) of the policy? What other groups (agency and community) are affected?
- **Partners.** What other groups (if any) are directly involved with implementing the policy, or whose co-operation is seen as necessary?
- **Europe.** Is there a European dimension - in funding, accountability or co-ordination of policy?
- **Mechanisms.** How is the policy to be implemented - through which mechanisms?
- **Impacts.** What are the expected results / impacts of the policy, both direct and indirect?
- **Context.** Are any links with other policies identified - whether positive (integration, symbiosis) or negative (overlaps, conflicts)?

The results of this comparative analysis are set out in the Appendix to this report. A number of the reports covered in this analysis are, of course, also referred to in the main body of the text and these are listed in the references. A number of other reports were also identified and analysed for the research but are not referred to directly elsewhere in the report. For completeness, these are listed in the additional bibliography.

The second phase of the research was to place our analysis of policy documents into a broader context, including the context provided by research on rural change, and to draw lessons for the future of rural policy research. It is this phase of the research which forms the main body of the report. It is important to emphasise in methodological terms that the research is based entirely on analysis of the relevant literature. No primary research has been undertaken.

1.3 Definitions: Policy and Rurality

The complexities of defining and conceptualising rurality have both perplexed and excited commentators over many areas. The same complexities apply to policy. It is important at the outset to recognise these difficulties and to state how they have been dealt with.

In both cases precise definition is almost impossible to achieve and perception is all-important. As a former civil servant once commented “policy is rather like the elephant - you recognise it when you see it but cannot easily define it” (Cunningham 1963). One thing is clear to most policy commentators - policy is not synonymous with legal provision. To examine policy involves looking at legal provision but this is only part of the story, for policy is a process, a “web or network of decision and actions that take place over a period of time” (Winter 1996). Ham and Hill (1993) suggest five characteristics of policy as process which can be paraphrased as follows:

- A web of decisions may take place over a long period of time, thus extending far beyond any formal initial policy-making process.
- A policy usually involves a series of decisions rather than a single decision.
- A policy may change over time.
- Policy may involve non-decisions as well as decisions, especially if the context for policy shifts over time with no corresponding fresh decision taking.
- Actions rather than, or as well as, formal decisions are important in defining policy. This may be particularly true for understanding the content of policy in the context of actions taken by those responsible for implementing policies rather than formulating them.

It follows from this approach that policy is highly fluid. Different issues will rise to prominence at different times and for different reasons. Here perception is of great significance. An issue only becomes a policy issue or a driver of policy change if it is perceived and accepted as such by enough people and interests.

Moreover, to be a *rural* policy issue there has to be some acceptance of a rural dimension. In other words, this report is about issues which seem to be both of public policy significance and have a significant rural dimension. It is not, therefore, an attempt to cover all aspects of social, economic, physical change in rural areas. Some are not policy issues in any significant way, whereas other policy issues that may have an impact on rural people, are not necessarily perceived as being primarily rural. Of course, this is a grey and rather contentious area. Issues such as education and health care provision, of course, impact on rural areas and sparsity of

population and spatial organisation of rural society may give the impact a particular rural dimension. Thus, a rural dimension may feature either directly or implicitly in strategies of almost any agency, regardless of whether it has a specifically rural remit or is addressing what is normally accepted as a 'rural' issue. This was recognised in the Rural White Paper (CM4909. 2000) which recommended a "rural proofing mechanism" to ensure that major policies are assessed for their rural impact. The range of agencies with an interest in the rural question became particularly apparent in the context of the FMD crisis. Significant contributions have been made to both understanding and dealing with the issue from health and social care organisations as well as from rural policy organisations.

Some attempts have been made to define rurality for policy purposes and in most of these cases, population density becomes a surrogate measure of rurality. We use one of these classifications in Chapter 2 (Tarling et al 1993). However it remains the case that for most people characterisation of policy as 'rural' will require fulfilment of one or more of the following conditions:

- Policy that relates to primary economic sectors based on extensive land uses such as agriculture and forestry.
- Policy that relates strongly but indirectly to such land uses, either economically (e.g. tourism) or in terms of protection of public goods (e.g. environmental regulation).
- Policy that relates to the integration of land-based economic and social activities with other activities. One example is integration within the agro-food sector whereby agricultural producer are re-engaged with food processing or retailing. Another is integration of farming and the wider rural economy through new non-agricultural uses for farm buildings.

Broadly speaking these conditions have guided our selection of rural policy documents for this research.

CHAPTER 2 DRIVERS OF POLICY CHANGE

2.1 Introduction

Few would deny, even prior to the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) crisis, that rural areas have been subject to a period of very significant change in recent years. The purpose of this chapter is to set out some of the key factors that lie behind the policy challenge that confronts all those interested in the future of rural areas, particularly in the south-west region. As with all drivers of policy change, we are dealing with a broad set of issues of considerable complexity. In particular, there is complexity in the inter-connections between different factors. This was one of the key messages that emerged from the experience of FMD. For example, the relationship between farming and tourism was seen to be deeper than had perhaps been recognised. However the precise parameters and quantification of this relationship are inherently difficult to calculate. Much of the difficulty lies in what economists call 'externalities'. In this particular example, farming is important to tourism because of landscape quality and recreational opportunity. Yet tourists do not usually pay directly for these attributes. They are of huge benefit to the tourism economy but, in general, are external to it in monetary terms and are, therefore, positive externalities. There are, of course, other externalities that are negative such as the costs of environmental pollution caused by agriculture (Pretty et al 2000). These economic relationships beyond the market are so complex that they defy conventional economic analysis despite the strenuous attempts that continue to be made to develop surrogate and actual economic measures of both positive and negative externalities (see review by Winter 2001a).

In the light of this inter-connectedness, this chapter starts with a health warning. For convenience of presentation we have had to adopt a conventional segmentation by topic. Thus tourism is dealt with separately to farming. Where possible we have made connections between topics but we are aware that the very act of making distinctions on paper is to introduce a process of simplification that can have dangerous consequences in policy terms. Some would argue, for example, that the way in which agriculture was for many years separated off from the wider rural economy in both analytical and policy terms is a root cause of the industry's current difficulties.

Of course, inter-connections have been noted before although the task has been handled better on some issues than others. For example, the loss of labour from agriculture over a century and a half prompted, alongside agricultural policy responses, development policies designed to soak up surplus rural labour. These date back to Lloyd George's Development Commission and subsequently to organisations such as CoSIRA and the Rural Development Commission. Radical critics of agriculture might argue indeed that, in this instance, there was too ready a willingness to think laterally and too great an acceptance of long-term labour shedding trends in farming, but the importance of seeing the farm labour issue in a broader context has long been recognised. By contrast, it is only in the last two decades that the relationship between farming practices and biodiversity has come to any kind of prominence in policy terms, although ecologists and land use historians are able to demonstrate causal relationships over a much longer period.

In the remainder of this chapter we examine a number of key areas of social and economic change that are currently major drivers of policy change. Some of the main policy implications of these are referred to.

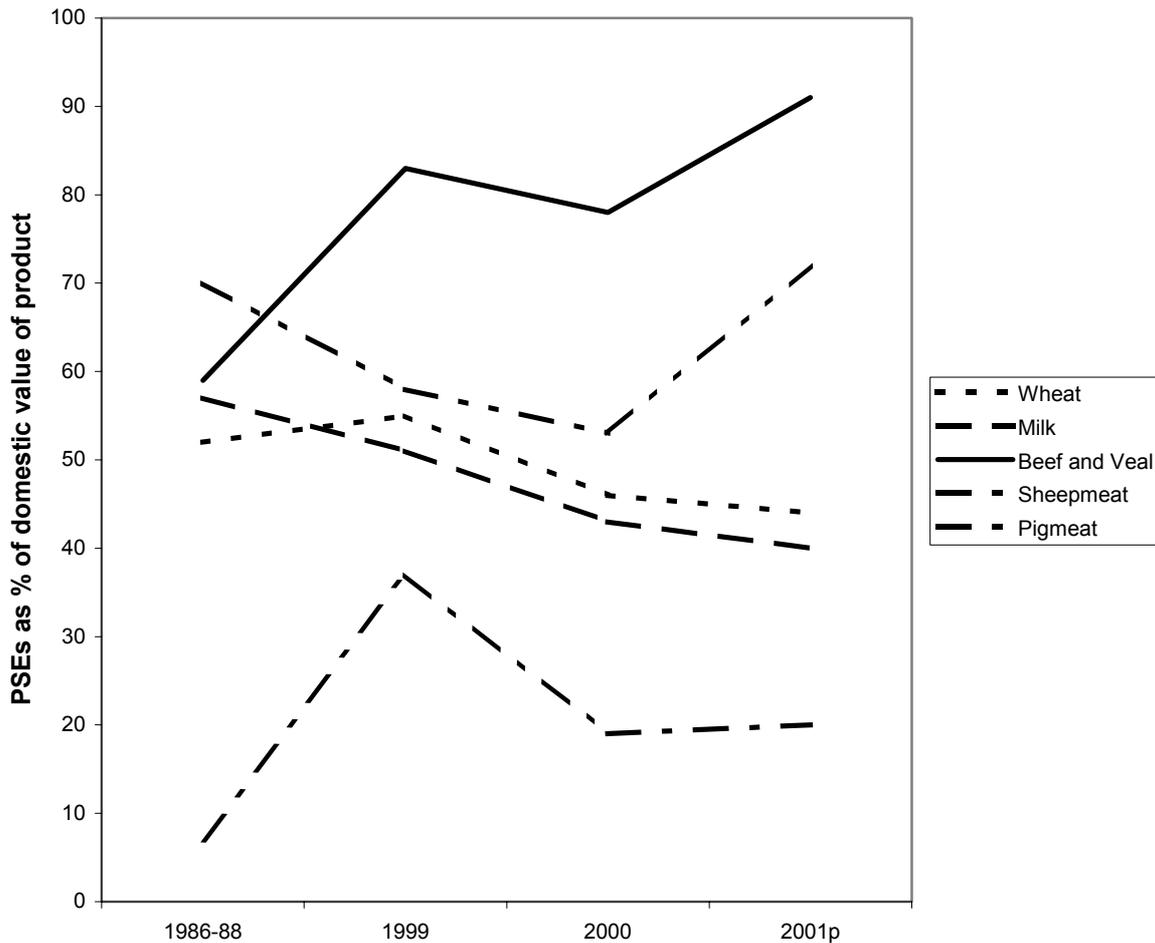
2.2 The Changing Farm Economy

The key components of post-war agricultural change are well known: increasing farm size, enterprise specialisation, mechanisation, higher use of chemical inputs, a declining labour force, intensification of land use. These are the trends associated with high productivity and with a vibrant industry. Broadly, they characterised agriculture from the 1950s to the early 1980s. The imposition of milk quotas in 1984 and, six years later, the 1992 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) marks a watershed in the post-war British farm economy. The 1992 reform of the CAP was the first major step towards bringing EU farm commodity prices in line with world prices, in large measure a response to the Uruguay Round of the GATT talks. By shifting subsidy from indirect support, through market manipulation, to more transparent direct payments to farmers, some aimed at environmental outputs, the CAP was taken into a new era (Kay 1998; Winter 1996). By chance in the immediate aftermath of the MacSharry reforms there was a short period of unexpected prosperity for UK agriculture. World market prices, particularly for cereals, reached high levels in the early 1990s so that farmers were in receipt of compensatory payments for price reductions that had not, in the event, taken place (Winter and Gaskell 1998). The weakness of sterling, at that stage, served only to exaggerate the benefits of the new regime in the UK.

Figure 2.1 shows the trends in Producer Subsidy Equivalents (PSEs)² in the EU, as calculated on an annual basis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It illustrates just how modest has been the move towards liberalisation as a result of the Uruguay Round and Agenda 2000 reforms. In the case of the UK, it is interesting to note that the proportional share of total CAP spending rose after 1992. In 1992, the UK accounted for 7.7% of total European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) expenditure in the EU. This rose slowly to 8.9% in 1996 and dramatically to 10.8% in 1997. Initial increases in share were due to the large farm structure in the UK and the high proportion of arable farmers entering the main Arable Area Payments Scheme (AAPS). The sharp increase between 1996 and 1997 was due to BSE induced expenditure.

²PSEs represent an attempt to aggregate hidden and direct cash support for farmers through market support measures, direct payments, reductions in input costs and general services. For a full discussion of PSEs see Buckwell 1997.

Figure 2.1 PSEs in key commodity sectors of EU agriculture



Source: OECD

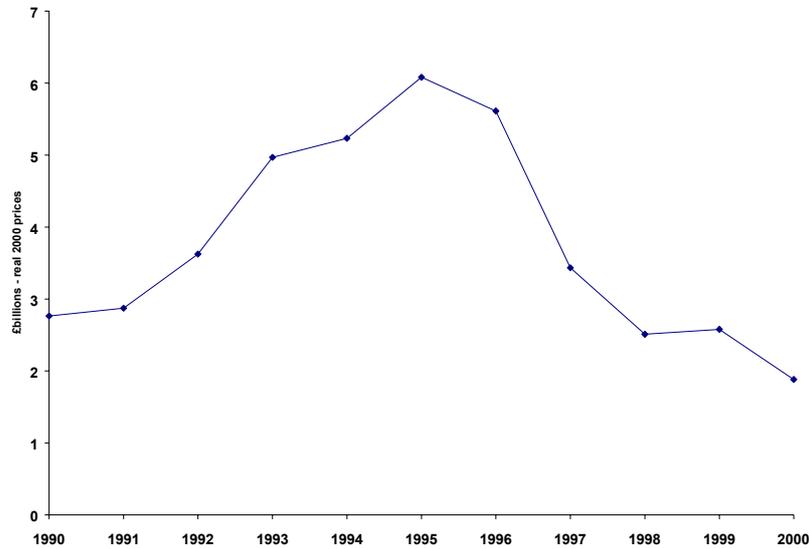
But these trends were to prove a short lived respite before the real consequences of the 1992 reforms hit home, coupled with various other difficulties to confront UK agriculture in the late 1990s. Four re-valuations of the green rate during 1997/98 reduced the sterling value of CAP support payments by 14% (MAFF 1998), and this in particular reduced support payments. With the increasing value of sterling during the period between 1996 and 1998 many of the early gains experienced by the UK as a result of the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreement during a period of low sterling value were wiped out. Both CAP support prices and direct payments fell in real terms and by the autumn of 1998 the aggregate support level was down by 21% from November 1995³. In real terms Total Income From Farming (TIFF)⁴ doubled between 1990 and 1995, before falling back by over 60% between 1995 and 1999 and by a further 27% in just twelve months to 2000 (Figure 2.2).

³ Agra Europe 1813. 28.08.98.

⁴ Total Income From Farming is business profits plus income to workers with an entrepreneurial interest (farmers, partners, family workers).

In some areas of the south west, such as Gloucestershire, there are significant pockets of arable agriculture and as Figure 2.3 illustrates profitability in this sector has been hit in recent years. But two agricultural sectors are of greater importance in the region: beef and sheep and dairying. Figures 2.4 through to 2.6 illustrate similar major downturns in the beef, sheep and dairy sectors.

Figure 2.2 Total Income from Farming in UK (£billion – real 2000 prices)



Source: DEFRA press release

Figure 2.3 Cereals: Net Farm Income in England, Current Prices

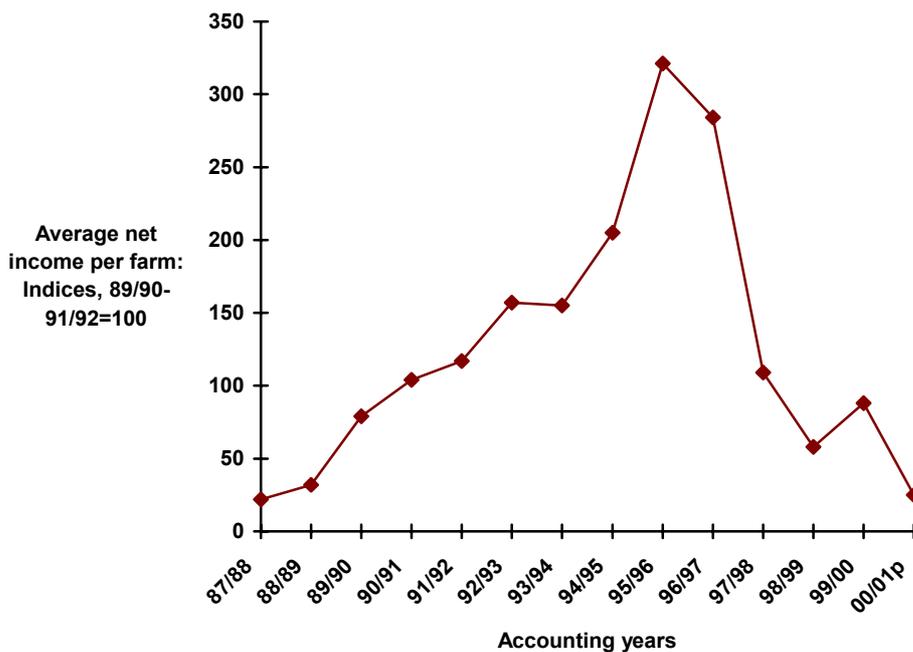


Figure 2.4 Cattle and Sheep (LFA): Net Farm Income in England, Current Prices

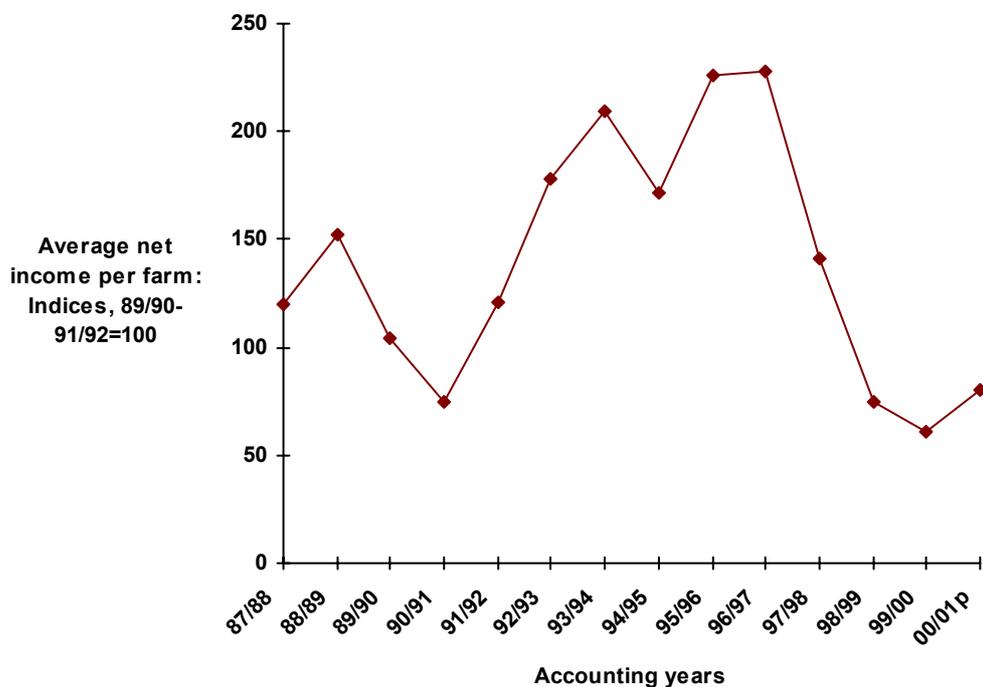
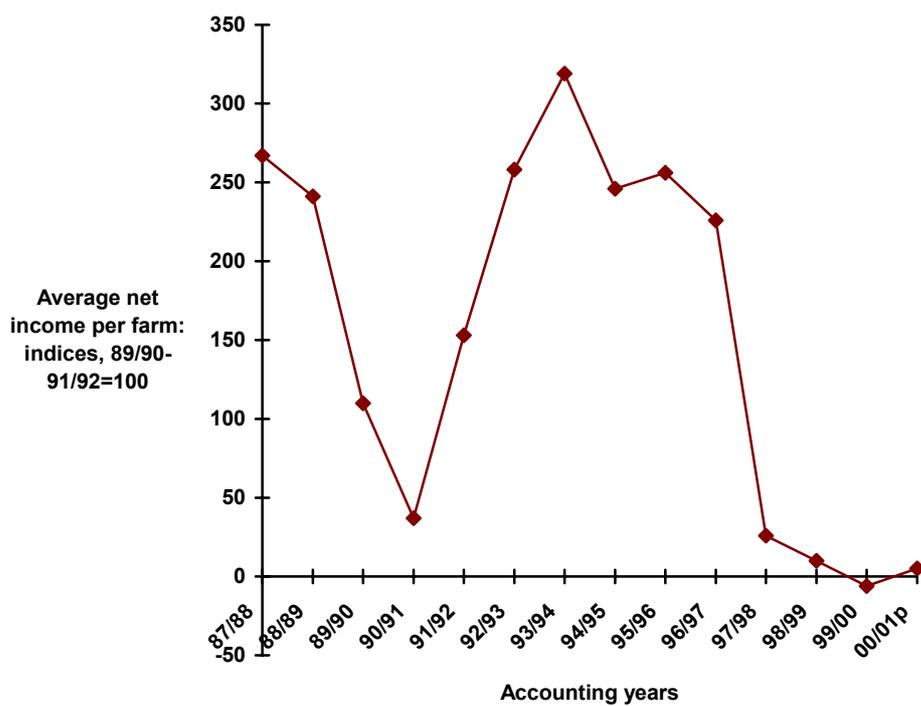
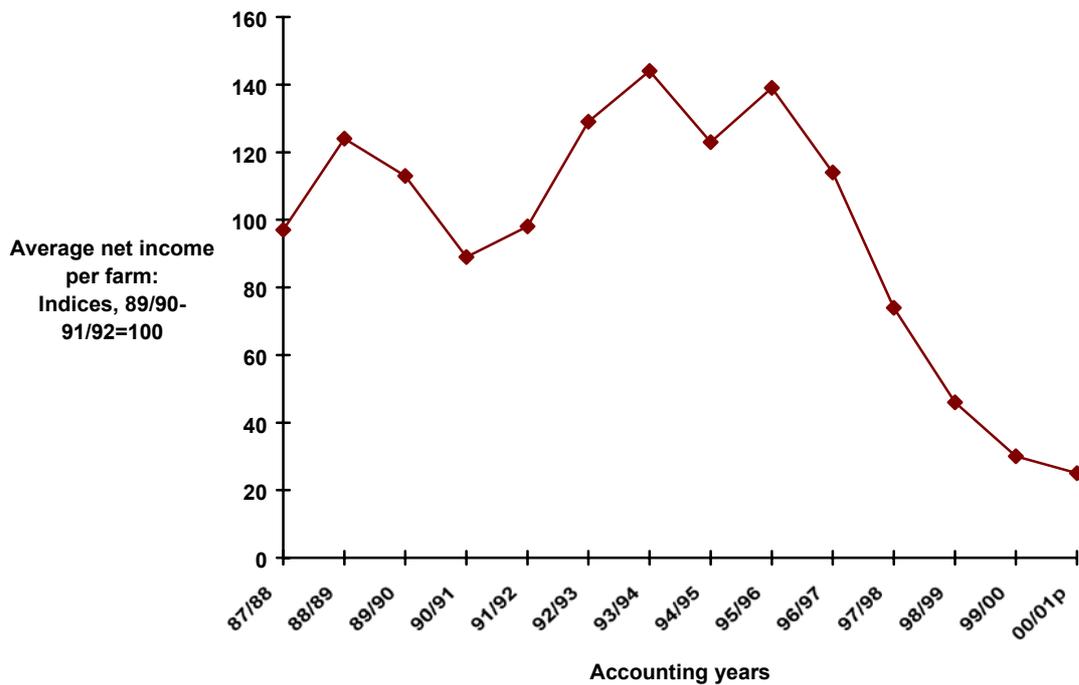


Figure 2.5 Cattle and Sheep (lowland): Net Farm Incomes in England, Current Prices



**Figure 2.6 Dairy Net Farm Income
in England, Current Prices**



The University of Exeter’s CRR Farm Business Survey monitors the financial performance of the region’s agricultural sector.⁵ In 2000/01, the latest year for which detailed survey results are available, there was evidence of a modest improvement in net farm income (NFI) on *cereals, dairy and cattle and sheep (SDA)* systems, although on other types (*cattle and sheep (DA), cattle and sheep (lowland) and cropping, cattle and sheep*) further falls were recorded. Taken in the context of the economic recession which has afflicted agriculture since 1997 these results, which relate to the immediate pre-FMD period, show that the financial position of the industry remains very weak. Details of NFI and of ‘net profit after interest’, an income indicator which better reflects the cash situation at farm level, are given in Table 2.1 below.

Since the spring of 2001, of course, the extent and severity of the FMD epidemic has further shaken the financial stability of agriculture. Estimates prepared in a Centre for Rural Research report to Devon County Council (CRR 2001) indicate financial losses at farm level ranging from £1,348 to £12,057 per farm in the full financial year to March 2002. The actual impact will vary according to factors such as the length of time during which a farm was subject to movement restrictions and farm type. There is little doubt, therefore, that the farming industry is enduring extremely difficult economic conditions the implications of which, both for the structure of the industry and its contribution to the rural economy of the region, are becoming more severe the longer the recession continues.

⁵ The south west region for which data are collected and analysed for DEFRA by the CRR’s Farm Business Survey covers the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset..

Table 2.1 Net Farm Income by type of farm, 2000/2001

	Net farm income 2000/01	% change on 1999/2000	(non-weighted sample) Index (1989/92 = 100)	
			Current	Real
	£ per farm			
Specialist dairy	11,991	+21	24	18
Lowland livestock	-827	nc	-12	-9
Hill livestock	9,528	+23	86	64
Mainly cropping	7,150	+49	68	50

nc = not calculated because change based on a small number.

Source: Farm Business Survey, University of Exeter.

Key Policy Issues: The Farm Economy

What are the knock-on effects to the Region's economy of the downturn in agricultural fortunes?

Are current and prospective profit levels likely to maintain historic volumes of agricultural productivity?

In the past, one way by which agriculture's profitability might be gauged was through land prices. During the depressions of the 1870s to 1890s and again in the inter-war years land prices (and rents) dropped. This allowed farmers to adapt their production systems to changing circumstances and gave opportunities, in particular perhaps to younger farmers or new entrants, to innovate. The corollary is that in the post-war period there has been a tendency for some of the support payment made to farmers to be capitalised into higher land prices. In the agricultural downturn since 1997, there has not been the fall in land prices that might have been expected (Figure 2.7 and Table 2.2).

There are several reasons for this. One is that the stocking rate requirements associated with the livestock and extensification premia rules encourage farmers to seek more land. Another is the rules associated with capital transfer taxation which encourage farmers to limit their tax burden by re-investing in land if they have sold land elsewhere. But by far the most important factor is the buoyancy of the residential market for farms. Recent research by FPD Savills (Ward et al 2001) has highlighted the extent to which the agricultural property market is now inter-twined with the residential market. It is estimated that between 51% and 70% of farms for sale are now marketed as a residential in the south-west counties, with the exception of Wiltshire where the figure is above 70%.

The high prices attached to farms and to land because of residential demand presents a serious impediment to agricultural profitability and to adaptation of land use by conventional farmers. In the previous two agricultural depressions, the 1870s to the early 1900s and the 1920 and 1930s – tumbling land prices and rents allowed innovative farmers to come to the

fore with new systems of farming to match the changed economic conditions. By contrast current high land prices do not serve to encourage existing farm owners to experiment in unconventional land uses or to extensify land use. The disincentive for heavily mortgaged new buyers is even greater. However, for those buying land as part of a residential purchase with no desire to obtain a revenue return on capital, then new land uses, such as forestry for example, might prove attractive, especially if the market for letting land to conventional farmers were to decline. In policy terms it is extraordinarily difficult to provide a strategic steer for rural land use when there are occupants of land with such contrasting motivations and objectives.

Figure 2.7 Agricultural land prices, England 1980 - 2000



Table 2.2 Agricultural land sales, England and SW Region

South West Region				England			
Area sold		Average price per Ha		Area sold		Average price per Ha	
Ha '000s	Index 1993 = 100	£s / Ha	Index 1993 = 100	Ha '000s	Index 1993 = 100	£s / Ha	Index 1993 = 100
1993	14.7	4,454	100.0	78.6	100.0	4,590	100.0
1994	13.2	4,842	108.7	86.6	110.1	4,976	108.4
1995	14.8	5,580	125.3	91.4	116.2	5,465	119.1
1996	16.1	6,733	151.2	105.7	134.5	6,723	146.5
1997	24.1	7,708	173.0	124.8	158.8	6,944	151.3
1998	18.9	7,096	159.3	103.5	131.6	6,429	140.1
1999	20.5	6,973	156.5	87.0	110.7	6,822	148.6
2000	18.0	7,841	176.0	67.1	85.3	7,139	155.5

Key Policy Issues: Land Prices

How are new entrants and innovation to be encouraged in the context of high land prices?

Will the market for grass-keep and short-term tenancy agreement remain buoyant with increasing numbers of residential land purchases?

What are the implications for land management of increasing numbers of residential land purchases? For example, will it inhibit or encourage conversion to forestry?

Another important characteristic of the changing nature of agriculture is the decline in the labour force. Figure 2.8 shows the extent of the decline. Historical trends in the agricultural labour force are less than straight forward because of changes in the 1998 census questions. These changes appear to have led to the recording of additional labour not recorded in previous years. Some caution needs to be applied when looking at data drawn from years covering both parts of the series. The nature of this uncertainty means that, if anything, the fall in the numbers of persons engaged in agriculture may be understated rather than overstated. Provisional figures suggest a further 1.5% fall in labour force numbers at the June 2001 Census.

Figure 2.8 Total persons engaged in agriculture, indexed 1979 = 100, England and South West region

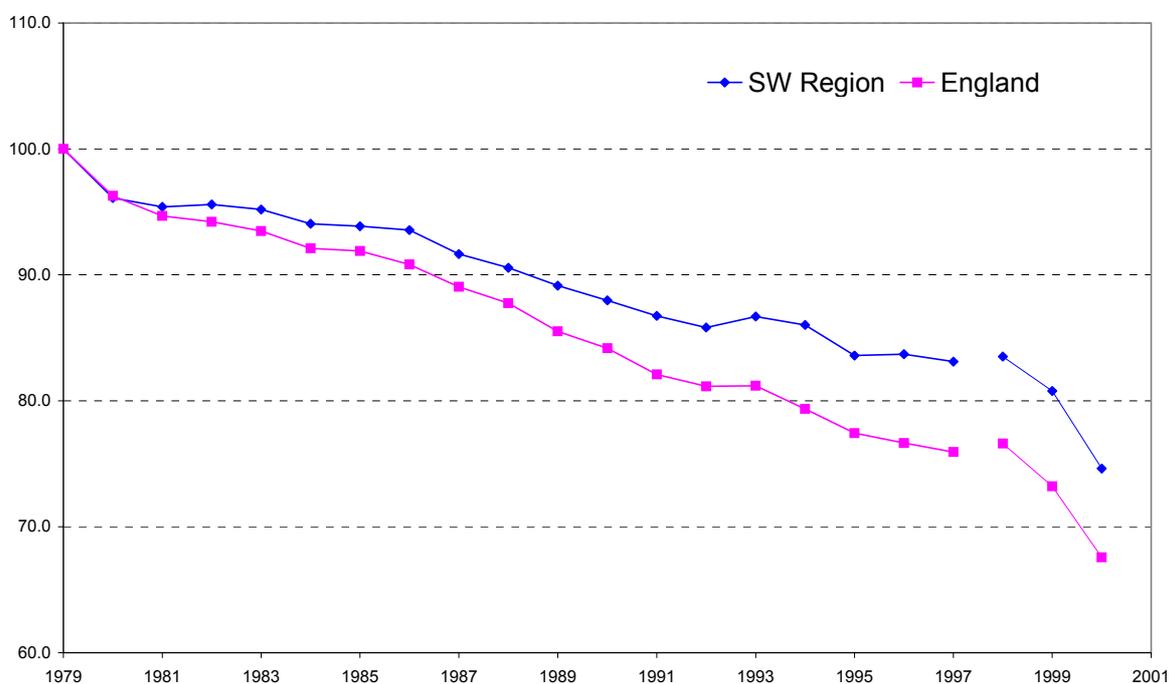


Table 2.3 Labour engaged in agriculture.

	SW region		England	
	Nominal	FTEs	Nominal	FTEs
1979	99,895	71,493	517,702	368,938
1997	83,030	54,962	393,105	263,335
2000	74,538		349,784	
Fall 1979-1997	16.9%	23.1%	24.1%	28.6%
Fall 1979-2000	25.4%		32.4%	

Within the overall fall in numbers there has been a marked shift in the balance of full and part time farmers such that the fall in the number of ‘full time equivalents’ (FTEs) is significantly greater. Up until the recent livestock crises the South West had been relatively lightly affected in comparison to the national trend, because of the lower pace of structural change in the livestock sector and the continuing role of family farming. It is possible also that diversification and off-farm working disguises the extent of change.

Key Policy Issues: Farm Labour

What are the implications of declining numbers of farm workers and casualisation of labour force on the maintenance of the rural estate?

Are re-skilling and training opportunities sufficient for those leaving agriculture?

2.3 Counterurbanisation

We turn now to an examination of the changing demographics of the countryside, for it is undoubtedly the case that alongside agricultural change, another major driving force of rural policy is the changing demographic nature of rural areas.

The extent of counterurbanisation is well known and is illustrated in Tables 2.4-2.6. In order to present an impression of population change within the region the tables are based on a classification of Local Authority districts (and UAs) into ‘Remote Rural’, ‘Accessible Rural’ and ‘Urban’⁶. The distinction between remote and accessible applied to the SW region produces a N.E. / S.W. divide with nearly all of the non-urban areas of Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire being classed as accessible. Over the period 1981 to 1999 there was an increase in population in every district / UA except for Plymouth which had a 0.1% fall. The percentage population increase in the rural areas was over twice that of the urban areas.

Looking at (net) internal migration⁷ over the three years from mid 1997 to mid 2000 there are two clear patterns (Table 2.6). The first is that the remote rural areas are receiving the greatest share of internal migrants. The second is that within this the remote and accessible

⁶ This classification was developed for the Rural Development Commission (Tarling et al, 1993) and quoted in Performance and Innovation Unit (1999) p22.

⁷ Based on the movements of NHS doctors’ patients between FHSAs

rural areas are actually showing a net *out* migration of younger people aged 16 to 24 which is only partly accommodated by the urban areas in the region. Counterurbanization is expected to continue. A survey of 1,000 people in England in 1995 revealed that 54% had a preference for living in the countryside but only 24% yet did so (Countryside Commission 1997). The region's population is expected to increase by approaching half a million people over the next twenty years, nearly 10%, as shown in Table 2.7.

Table 2.4 Population Characteristics of the Region

	South West	Remote Rural	Accessible Rural	Urban
Area (sq km)	23,829	13,623	9,033	1,172
Total Popn, '000s	4,936	1,587	1,479	1,868
Person per sq km	207	116	164	1,594
Popn increase 1981-1999, %	12.7	16.8	15.6	7.1
Popn increase 1981-1999, '000s	556	228	200	124
Pensionable age ^a and over, %	21.0	24.0	19.5	19.7

^aPensionable age is defined as 60 for females and 65 for males

Table 2.5 Migration

Rural classification	Number of districts / UAs	Age range	Mid year to mid year			
			1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	1997-00
			Net internal migration '000s			
Remote Rural	20	All Ages	16.5	14.6	18.8	49.9
		0-15	4.8	4.7	5.3	14.8
		16-24	-4.6	-5.0	-4.6	-14.2
		25-44	5.9	4.5	6.6	17.0
		45-64	8.6	7.3	8.6	24.5
		65+	2.7	2.2	2.5	7.4
Accessible Rural	13	All Ages	8.9	9.9	9.6	28.4
		0-15	3.2	3.9	3.5	10.6
		16-24	-3.6	-3.3	-3.4	-10.3
		25-44	5.0	5.2	5.4	15.6
		45-64	2.8	2.6	2.3	7.7
		65+	1.5	1.6	1.7	4.8
Urban	12	All Ages	5.3	4.1	2.9	12.3
		0-15	-0.1	-1.0	-1.3	-2.4
		16-24	5.5	5.0	6.0	16.5
		25-44	-0.6	-0.9	-1.8	-3.3
		45-64	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.4
		65+	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.6
South West Region	45	All Ages	30.7	28.6	31.3	90.6
		0-15	7.9	7.6	7.7	23.2
		16-24	-2.7	-3.3	-2.6	-8.6
		25-44	10.3	8.8	10.5	29.6
		45-64	11.8	10.3	11.5	33.6
		65+	4.3	4.3	4.2	12.8

Table 2.6 1996 Projections of Population Growth for the SW Region

Year	Total Popn. '000s	Year-on-year change		Cumulative change from 2002	
		'000s	%	'000s	%
1996	4841.5				
1997	4870.9	29.4	0.6		
1998	4898.5	27.6	0.6		
1999	4925.0	26.5	0.5		
2000	4951.0	26.0	0.5		
2001	4976.6	25.6	0.5		
2002	5001.8	25.2	0.5	25.2	0.5
2003	5026.3	24.5	0.5	49.7	1.0
2004	5050.4	24.1	0.5	73.8	1.5
2005	5074.2	23.8	0.5	97.6	1.9
2006	5097.5	23.3	0.5	120.9	2.4
2007	5120.5	23.0	0.5	143.9	2.9
2008	5143.4	22.9	0.4	166.8	3.3
2009	5166.4	23.0	0.4	189.8	3.8
2010	5189.6	23.2	0.4	213.0	4.2
2011	5213.0	23.4	0.5	236.4	4.7
2012	5236.6	23.6	0.5	260.0	5.1
2013	5260.3	23.7	0.5	283.7	5.6
2014	5284.4	24.1	0.5	307.8	6.0
2015	5308.6	24.2	0.5	332.0	6.5
2016	5332.8	24.2	0.5	356.2	6.9
2017	5357.1	24.3	0.5	380.5	7.4
2018	5381.3	24.2	0.5	404.7	7.8
2019	5405.1	23.8	0.4	428.5	8.3
2020	5428.7	23.6	0.4	452.1	8.7
2021	5451.7	23.0	0.4	475.1	9.1

A considerable volume of academic research has been undertaken on different aspects of counterurbanisation and much is known about the characteristics of incoming populations and their motivations for wishing to live in rural locations. Findlay *et al* (1999) interviewed 600 residents in 5 study areas in rural England in 1998 and found 'quality of life' to be the single most important reason for moving to a rural area. Similarly Milbourne *et al* (2000), who interviewed 736 rural residents in five study areas in England and Wales (including one in West Devon), found that those who had relocated from towns or cities cited three main reasons for moving: employment (to take up work located close to their current place of residence); family (to move closer to a relative, usually an elderly one); and retirement. However, they also cited a set of additional environmental and lifestyle related factors including the perceived peace, quiet and safety of rural living.

Counterurbanisation and the declining role of agriculture in the economy are reflected in the changing employment status of the workforce as shown in Table 2.8 and 2.9, which reveal the importance of self-employment in the region. The growing importance of self-

employment in the SW region follows the same pattern as England as a whole but the percentage of the labour force falling into this category is consistently higher in the region. As might be expected the SW region has a high proportion of its self-employed workers in farming and fisheries and in related sectors. The higher level of self-employment which is a feature of agriculture, particularly livestock farming, accounts only for part of the overall higher level of self-employment in the region compared to England as a whole.

Table 2.8 Employment status, 1979 - 1999

	Employees	Self-employed	Unemployed
	%	%	%
		South West Region	
1979	87.4	8.1	4.5
1984	78.6	12.2	9.2
1989	80.3	14.1	4.2
1994	74.9	16.0	8.2
1999	80.9	13.3	4.7
		England	
1979	88.7	7.1	4.2
1984	79.8	9.4	10.8
1989	81.3	11.6	5.6
1994	77.7	12.1	9.2
1999	82.0	11.2	5.8

Source Regional Trends

Table 2.9 Self-employment by broad industry group, Spring 2000

	Agriculture and Fisheries	Industry	Services
	%	%	%
South West Region	8.8	26.0	65.3
England	4.0	27.6	68.5

Source Regional Trends

Table 2.10 breaks the employed workforce down industry and Table 2.11 provides a breakdown by GDP. The classification used in Regional Trends was changed in 1996 so that the latest year for which there is published data, 1999, is based on the new classification⁸. By grouping some of the industry classifications together it has been possible to produce largely, but not exactly⁹, comparable data. Even given the caveats discussed above it looks safe to suggest that the SW region has followed a very similar to that of England as a whole in the transfer of employment from manufacturing to services, in particular financial and business services.

⁸ SIC 1992

⁹ The 1999 figures include 'Research and Development' in 'Financial and business services' whereas in earlier years it comes under 'Publication administration' as did 'Tourist Offices' and 'Radio and TV Transmission' which in 1999 come under 'Transport, storage and communication'.

Table 2.10 Employees by industry

	Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	Industry	Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs	Transport, storage and communication	Financial and business services	Services other than public	Public administration and services	Whole economy
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	'000s
SWR								
1979	2.9	34.9	22.3	5.4	6.7	34.4	27.6	1,603
1984	2.9	30.6	23.3	5.2	8.0	36.5	29.9	1,528
1989	2.1	27.2	22.9	5.1	11.7	39.8	30.7	1,729
1994	2.1	22.2	24.8	4.4	12.8	42.1	33.7	1,693
1999	1.7	21.2	25.9	5.0	16.2	47.1	30.0	1,993
England								
1979	1.5	39.9	18.5	6.5	7.5	32.5	26.2	19,502
1984	1.5	33.9	20.5	6.3	9.3	36.1	28.5	17,866
1989	1.2	29.6	20.4	6.1	12.4	38.9	30.2	19,289
1994	1.1	25.8	21.9	5.8	13.2	40.9	32.5	18,060
1999	1.0	20.8	24.3	6.2	19.7	50.2	28.2	21,563

Table 2.11 Contribution to GDP by industry

	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Industry	Distribution, hotels and catering	Transport, storage and communication	Financial and business services	Public administration and defence	Education and health	Other services	Adjustment for financial services
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SWR									
1975	4.7	36.2	14.3	6.3	14.8	10.2	9.5	6.8	-2.9
1983	3.8	33.6	14.9	6.3	18.6	10.1	10.2	6.7	-4.3
1988	2.0	32.7	16.1	6.2	24.7	9.2	9.3	6.2	-6.5
1993	3.9	29.0	15.5	6.7	24.1	10.2	10.3	5.5	-5.1
1998	2.5	28.6	15.8	6.8	24.7	8.3	12.5	4.7	-3.8
England									
1975	2.4	40.8	12.9	8.1	17.0	7.2	9.7	5.8	-3.8
1983	2.0	37.5	13.7	7.6	21.0	7.0	9.6	6.7	-5.1
1988	1.2	34.3	14.4	7.4	26.6	6.6	8.7	6.7	-6.0
1993	1.8	30.6	14.7	8.8	26.0	6.8	10.1	5.8	-4.6
1998	1.2	27.6	15.7	8.6	28.9	4.9	11.8	5.2	-3.9

Key Policy Issues: Counterurbanization

How are likely pressures for housing land in the south-west to be dealt with?

Are there conflicts between rural and in-migrating populations and, if so, how should these be resolved?

What are implications for long term energy and transport policies? Could changes in these sectors have significant implications for population trends?

2.4 The Countryside as Contested Territory

Most of the reports we consulted for this research recognised, implicitly or explicitly, that ‘farming’ and ‘rural’ problems went well beyond the economics of agriculture. The pressures on farmers and rural land occupants from other sections of the community have grown in recent years. In the last two to three decades, there has been a deepening sense in which rural issues have become more politicised and, in some instances polarised. Environmental concerns, animal welfare, food safety have all become drivers of rural policy deliberations. Because of the deep historical antecedents to some of these concerns in Britain, it is not always recognised how the terms of the debate have been broadened to include the countryside and the primary productive activities that take place there. For example, concern about environmental pollution was once focused primarily on industrial pollution, with legislation dating back to the nineteenth century. In the 1960s pesticides came to prominence with regard to arable agriculture, but it wasn’t until the mid 1980s that livestock agriculture figured highly in the pollution debate. There are many reasons for this, including the success of regulation applied to industrial practices and the intensification of agriculture. However, in a seminal account of pollution caused by livestock farming, Lowe *et al* (1997) make a strong and convincing case that farm pollution has become a moral issue, and that this ‘moralizing of the environment’ is linked to the articulation of concern about pollution by environmental organisations and the public. Pollution, seen by some farmers as a minor technical and management issue, has come to be seen by the wider public as a moral issue with breaches of regulation as ‘criminal’ activity. Crucial to Lowe *et al*’s argument is the link with counterurbanization. Their claim is that new residents in rural areas may have values that contrast strongly with those of farmers and which fuel the fires of intra-rural disputes surrounding agricultural practices.

This process of politicisation of agricultural and rural issues can be seen in other spheres. Concern for animal welfare and animal rights, is another significant social movement which now reaches into rural politics in a manner unrecognisable twenty or thirty years ago (Woods 1998). The animal protection movement no longer coheres around a broad consensus of what constitutes individual acts of animal cruelty. The practices of livestock farming, hunting, shooting and fishing are now to varying degrees subject to scrutiny and critique in generic terms. There is considerable contestation around these issues which threatens to grow rather than diminish. The breakdown of societal consensus of the role of animals and our treatment of them has been recognised by many authors as a major social and cultural shift. To date the policy responses to this shift have been relatively modest, though pig welfare regulations have undoubtedly affected the international competitiveness of that particular farming sector. However the political significance is deeper, with the possibility of a hunting ban, for example, causing deep distrust of central government amongst certain rural interests, a distrust increased by the FMD crisis (Winter 2001b).

Farming as a core economic activity has had to respond to much as a result of the growing politicisation of the countryside, as political concerns give rise to European and national legislation. Consequently the burden of regulation on farming that has arisen as a result of various directives has been the subject of a central government Task Force and was mentioned in the Curry report. However, efforts to diminish the regulatory burden are not easy. For example, DEFRA is currently consulting on the implementation of the EC Nitrates Directive with a set of proposals that would impact on farming practice significantly. Given both the politicisation of rural issues and the extent of regulation, it is not surprising that farmers feel under both regulatory pressure and the pressure of public opinion. A survey of

over 2000 farmers in England and Wales found that more than 60% of farmers interviewed considered that local rural residents were not sympathetic to farmers, and 80% felt that farmers receive unfavourable coverage in the national press (Crabb *et al.*, 1999).

The extent of intra-rural conflicts can be exaggerated. Milbourne *et al* (2000) found that few incomers to rural areas are actively involved in campaigning across a range of rural political issues. Only a minority were members of countryside or environmental organisations and few were involved in campaigning on rural policy issues.

The research examined five sets of rural conflicts. The first related to general conflicts, which allowed residents in the survey to discuss particular issues that they considered to represent tensions, disputes and conflicts in their areas. Overall, 42% of respondents noted the presence of such tensions, disputes and conflicts in their local area and these were bound up with four main issues: development and planning; the interests of different social groups, particularly incomers; the small-scale nature of rural living; and environmental issues. Relatively few respondents made any direct reference to farming and farmers as sources of local conflict.

The second type of conflict examined by the research involved incomer and local groups. Just over half of respondents (57%) reported the presence of incomer – local conflicts in their area. In general terms, incomer – local conflicts were seen as being bound up with cultural differences between the two groups. In particular, frequent reference was made to the limited understanding and awareness of key features of local rural life on the part of outside incomers. In some cases, farming was used as an illustration of cultural difference. Particular groups of incomers were viewed as importing different cultural norms into the local area, and attempting to impose these norms onto local rural life.

Thirdly, the extent and nature of conflicts between incomers and farmers was examined. A lower proportion of respondents (37%) were able to point to such conflicts compared with those relating to incomers and locals. Four main types of incomer – farmer conflicts were raised by respondents. The first related to a perceived limited understanding on the part of incomers, and particularly ex-urban incomers, of contemporary farming practices. A second type of conflict concerned access issues and farmland, with incomers accused by local and farming respondents of viewing farm fields as public property, while some within the incomer group highlighted cases of blocked access on public rights of way through farmland. Thirdly, reference was made to conflicts ensuing from particular aspects of farming. Of particular note here were problems associated with the smells, sounds and by-products of agricultural production. A final key incomer – farmer conflict reported by respondents was connected to the increasingly more marginal position of farmers and farming within rural societies and economies.

The fourth type of rural conflict concerned those relating to specific agricultural practices. Just 10% of respondents considered that local conflicts were bound up with particular agricultural-based issues presented to them. Three particular issues were mentioned by more than one-fifth of respondents – public access, mud and slurry on roads, and plans to sell off agricultural land for development.

How can good relations between farming and non-farming citizens be promoted?

How are local conflicts best handled?

Are there issues, such as the use and management of wild animals in the countryside, which require policy input to prevent future conflicts?

2.5 Tourism in the South West¹⁰

The South West remains one of the most important regions in the UK for tourism, and continues to be first ranked in terms of domestic tourism. It has performed less satisfactorily in terms of attracting non-British tourists. In bald terms, there were an estimated 19.6 million British visitors in 1999 and some 1.6 million overseas visitors. They were supplemented by an additional 97 million day visitors, who originated from both outside and within the region.

This has to be seen against a background whereby domestic tourism in the UK has been growing relatively slowly compared to outbound and in bound tourism. These trends are not generally helpful to the South West, not least because the most severely depressed market segment in the UK has been long stay seaside holidays, which was probably the mainstay of the regional industry up to the late 1960s.

Despite these aggregate shifts, changes in market segmentation have meant that the South West has experienced relatively steady growth over the longer term and over recent decades. There was a 21% growth in domestic trips 1989-97 fuelled especially by the expansion of short breaks. Nevertheless there are some worrying signs of relative stagnation since then, with a decline in domestic trips of some 2 million between 1997 and 1999.

As indicated above, the key to continued growth has been the ability of the South West to win a significant share of the short break (4 nights or less) market. This has been fuelled by the growth in disposable incomes and in leisure times, as well as the ability of the South West to provide a mixture of cultural and natural heritage attractions which are central to the interests of this market segment. These features are underlined by the summary statistics on the market for South West tourism:

- An above average proportion of visitors are in the AB groups, reflecting the availability of above average disposable income.
- Young families and older people are relatively over-represented, reflecting two distinctive market segments: the longer family holiday, and (short) breaks by those with considerable leisure time. The region is however less successful in attracting young tourists or young families without children.

¹⁰ Data sources used in this section are: South West Tourism (2001), South West Tourism (1999) and Tourism Research Group (2001).

- Amongst overnight domestic tourists, 34% originate from within the South West, while a further 40% are from the South East and West Midlands. Proximity is clearly significant, reinforcing the importance of the short break market (as a rule of thumb, 2-3 hours is considered a critical threshold for travel time on short breaks).
- The market has a very loyal following amongst its existing tourists, with many being repeat visitors over long time periods. However, there is a down side to this, as the region attracts relatively few new visitors.
- The major attraction of the region, as borne out by numerous visitor surveys, are its natural beauty, and this encompasses both the coast and the inland rural areas. This is hardly surprising given that about a quarter of the region is designated as either a National Park or an AONB, and about one half of the coastline is designated a Heritage Coast. Moreover, a number of studies have shown that this natural beauty is an important general attraction even for visitors who stay in the coastal resorts. In fact, one of the most detailed studies of tourist activity on holiday (Thornton et al 1998) has shown that there is surprisingly little difference in the actual use of time and space, and activities participated in, between tourist staying in a major resort (Newquay) and the rural interior (Bodmin). The most important lesson here is that the South West tourism product needs to be seen as an integrated whole.

Despite the emphasis on the growth in the short break market, the significance of the long holiday market should not be under-estimated. It is estimated that approximately one half of all tourists nights (but a smaller proportion of visitors) are accounted for by longer holidays. Longer holidays remain important, whether based in rural settings or traditional coastal resorts. There has been a relative shift away from many resorts, particularly some of the medium sized ones without the picturesque charm of smaller towns and villages, or the resources to re-invent themselves as some of the larger resorts have.

While the face of tourism in the South West is changing, and there is some debate as to the meaning of this for future growth, the economic value of the tourism industry is unquestioned. In 1999 there was estimated expenditure of £2879 m by domestic tourists and £500 million by overseas tourists. Day visitors added a further £1406 million. Using multipliers this translates into estimates that tourism accounts for some 10% of both GDP and employment in the region in 1999. While the precise figures are open to debate, the major role of tourism is clearly evident. And in some parts of the region, its significance is even greater. This is evident in the distribution of tourism at (old) county level. In 1999, 11 million of the 20 million domestic tourists were to be found in just counties – Devon and Cornwall.

The rural environment, in its many forms including the coastline, remains the key attraction in the South West, despite the significance growth of urban cultural and business tourism in places such as Plymouth and Bristol. There is a clear relationships between the trajectories of tourism and rural development. This was, of course, underlined by the experiences of foot and mouth disease in 2001.

Tourism is of course highly seasonal, with 38% of visitors arriving in the three main summer months (July-September). This contributes to relatively low room occupancy rates, of just over 50%. It is a challenge for rural areas, as for most components of the regional tourism

industry, to increase shoulder and winter visitor numbers, and hence make better use of capacity.

There has been a shift over time from serviced to self-catering tourism, reflecting the market shift to more individualised and flexible holidays. Precise data on this are problematic, and there are estimates that two thirds of commercial visitors to Cornwall stay in self catering accommodation, while SW Tourism data suggest the proportion for the region overall is more equally balanced. In any case, there is a need to increase the quality of accommodation, as well as the business skill of the large numbers of small firms which characterise the sector.

Key Policy Issues: Tourism

How can rural areas can capture a larger share of the tourist spend?

How can the numbers of tourists who stay overnight (the key to spending patterns) in rural areas be increased?

How can local multipliers be increased through strengthening local supply chains and purchasing?

Chapter 3. The Changing Architecture of Rural Governance and the Policy Framework

3.1 Introduction

There are two key themes running through this chapter and they are themes which lie at the heart of the current rural policy context. The first, is the shift from agricultural to rural policy. The second is the shift from government to governance. Of course, these two trends are interconnected, and it is at these points of contact that the challenge of rural policy is at its most acute and interesting.

3.2 From Agricultural to Rural Policy

The emergence of a new ministry (DEFRA) in June 2001 was the culmination of a series of steps broadening the role of the department responsible for agriculture (hitherto MAFF in England) to reflect a wider set of issues. Thus, the assumption of new responsibilities by MAFF in the 1980s took the Ministry into areas previously the province of English Nature and the Countryside Commission. The Ministry was given a responsibility to promote conservation under the terms of the Agriculture Act 1986 and ESAs became the first of a raft of agri-environmental policies developed in the late 1980s and 1990s. Later schemes included the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, the Habitats Scheme and the Moorland Scheme, prompted by EC Regulation 2078/92, one of the accompanying measures to the 1992 reform of the CAP. However, as MAFF assumed these environmental responsibilities, other areas of environmental responsibility grew within DETR and its agencies, particularly regulation by the Environment Agency.

The main change to the architecture of rural governance heralded by the creation of DEFRA is the bringing together of the agricultural and rural development responsibilities of the former MAFF with the environmental and rural development responsibilities of DETR, in particular the work of the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency and English Nature. This should lead to a greater co-ordination and integration of policies across agriculture and the environment. By retaining food within the department with lead responsibility for rural policy, policy integration within the agro-food chain remains an important policy goal. There have been arguments in the past that aspects of food policy might be transferred to Health and/or Trade & Industry. Another minor but significant shift of departmental responsibility is the transfer of the issue of hunting with dogs from the Home Office to DEFRA.

However, if the formation of DEFRA potentially improves the prospects for a more integrated and co-ordinated delivery of rural policy, some other changes arguably make the task more difficult. The new Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, whilst retaining responsibility for local government, including local authorities' critical town and country planning functions, cedes responsibility for the Regional Development Agencies to the Department of Trade and Industry. And tourism remains under the DCMS.

Thus while the new architecture of government reinforces a long-standing shift of policy from agricultural to rural, anomalies and tensions remain. The shift has largely been led by developments in European policy. In its Agenda 2000 communication published in July 1997, the European Commission proposed major reforms of both agricultural policy and structural policy. The background to the Agenda 2000 reform can be traced to the perceived

weaknesses of the 1992 CAP reforms either in terms of meeting WTO requirements or preparing the European Union for the accession of central and eastern European countries. In the Autumn of 1996 the Cork conference on rural development was convened by the Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler. This was part of a strategy to establish support for Fischler's programme of radically reforming the CAP by driving a middle course between member states keen to embrace trade liberalisation and those committed to the protectionist status quo (Lowe *et al* 1996). What Fischler was offering was liberalisation of agriculture alongside support for fragile rural economies and environments with the CAP becoming a rural development policy to sustain the quality and amenity of Europe's rural landscapes (Winter and Gaskell 1998).

However, the Declaration was not even 'noted' in the conclusions of the Dublin Summit just a few weeks later, when the German and French governments, in particular, sidelined the rural development issue and put the reform process back onto a more traditional footing (Lowe *et al* 1996). Thus, when the Agenda 2000 proposals were launched by President Santer at the European Parliament in July 1997, the sectoral measures seem extraordinarily tame. Nonetheless, the original Agenda 2000 proposals highlighted some of the inherent problems of the post-1992 framework, characterising EU rural policy as "a juxtaposition of agricultural market policy, structural policy and environmental policy with rather complex instruments and lacking overall coherence." But the specific proposals suggested a continuation of existing mechanisms with a further shift towards direct payments, the introduction of an individual ceiling covering all direct income payments (modulation), further expansion of agri-environmental measures under Regulation 2078/92 and the possible transformation of the support schemes in Less Favoured Areas (LFA) into a basic instrument to maintain and promote low-input farming system. It was these proposals which provided the basis for the lengthy discussions and debates that took place during the period

Following the political agreement reached during the Berlin European Council (24 and 25 March 1999) and the approval of the European Parliament (6 May 1999), the Council formally adopted the new Structural Funds Regulations for the period 2000-2006 in June 1999. The following new regulations came into force:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds;
- Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 June 1999 on the European Regional Development Fund;
- Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 June 1999 on the European Social Fund;
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1263/1999 of 21 June 1999 on the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations
- laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)

Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 sets out three priority objectives (replacing the previous objectives including 5b):

- Objective 1: promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions where development is lagging behind;
- Objective 2: supporting the economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties;
- Objective 3: supporting the adaptation and modernisation of education, training and employment policies.

Objective 2 areas is predominantly funded under the European Regional Development Fund with a small element from the European Social Fund but no funding from the Guidance section of the EAGGF.

The Rural Development Regulation (RDR) (Reg [1257/1999](#)) as the second pillar of the CAP, is in part, an effort by the European Union to continue a regime of support for rural areas recognising the special qualities of rural Europe. It should be seen in the context of the run-up to the next GATT round. Whilst the bulk of CAP support continues to operate in the commodity sectors, it is the second pillar which is being promoted as offering the way forward for a particular vision of rural Europe. Thus it both aims at competitiveness and seeks to provide protection to rural areas in non-trade distorting ways. According to DG VI, the RDR “seeks to establish a coherent and sustainable framework for the future of rural areas aiming at restoring and enhancing competitiveness and therefore contributing to the maintenance of employment”.

A major innovation of the policy is to bring existing rural development regulations together in a single, coherent legal text with three broad strategic objectives:

- Supporting a viable and sustainable agriculture and forestry sector at the heart of the rural community;
- Developing the territorial, economic and social conditions necessary for maintaining the rural population on the basis of a sustainable approach;
- Maintaining and improving the environment, the countryside and natural heritage of rural areas.

Under Article 2 of the new Regulation the aims of rural development policy are as follows:

- the improvement of structures in agricultural holdings for the processing and marketing of agricultural products;
- the conversion and reorientation of agricultural production potential, the introduction of new technologies and the improvement of product quality;
- the encouragement of non-food production;
- sustainable forest development;
- the diversification of activities with the aim of complementary or alternative activities;
- the maintenance and reinforcement of a viable social fabric in rural areas;
- the development of economic activities and the maintenance and creation of employment with the aim of ensuring a better exploitation of existing inherent potential;
- the improvement of working and living conditions;
- the maintenance and promotion of low-input farming systems;
- the preservation and promotion of a high nature value and a sustainable agriculture respecting environmental requirements;
- the removal of inequalities and the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women, in particular by supporting projects initiated and implemented by women.

Agri-environment policies within the RDR are largely top-down. In responding to Regulation 2078/92, MAFF developed national measures and these are steered and monitored nationally by MAFF and FRCA. But this is not to say that there is absolutely no regional or local dimension to the institutional policy agri-environment policies. In contrast to mainstream commodity measures, entitlements are not universal. ESAs are confined to certain geographical areas; both the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the Organic Aid Scheme, though nationally applicable, are limited by budget and acceptance is dependent on a scoring system in the case of Stewardship and budget limits for the Organic Aid Scheme. Consequently a new politics operates at the local/regional level representing a fundamental break with previous circumstances. Farmers, or their representatives, are brought into relations with the project officers associated with these schemes and with partner organisations, such as FWAG, who may offer advice and help farmers make applications to schemes. The schemes are subject to some degree of regional scrutiny through MAFF's regional agri-environment fora. Their inclusion within the new Rural Development Regulation is likely eventually to increase the regional element in scheme design and implementation.

Table 2.4 shows, not only the growing importance of 2nd pillar CAP payments, but also the higher take-up for some of these schemes in the south-west. Of course, in financial terms the importance of these payments relative to mainstream commodity payments remains modest.

Table 3.1 Participation in agri-environmental schemes (% of sample)

	South West Region	England
At least one scheme	24.4	20.0
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	10.7	7
Woodland Grant schemes	7.9	9.3
Countryside Stewardship	6.6	6.5
SSSI	1.6	1.7
Countryside Access	1.2	0.9
Habitat Scheme	1.1	0.5
Organic aid scheme	0.9	0.2
Nitrate Sensitive Areas	0.4	0.5
Moorland Scheme	0.2	0.2

The data on participation does not include livestock extensification payments.

Source: McInerney et al 2000

3.3 From Government to Governance

This chapter is about more than the reorganisation of central government departmental responsibilities horizontally, important though that is. It is also about vertical changes in the responsibilities for rural policy both downwards to regional and local government and upwards to the European Union. Furthermore, together the horizontal and vertical changes that have taken place in recent years amount to a significant shift not only in the location of decision making but also in the nature of the policy process itself. The 1990s saw an erosion

of long-standing lines of policy demarcation both with respect to the content of policy and the structures for its delivery. Political scientists have described some of these kinds of changes as a transition from government to governance. Governance involves a shift from centralism and state-led policy initiatives to policy formulation and delivery by a combination of public and private stakeholders often at a regional or local level. Of course, the national state continues to be important and in some sectors its role may be unchanged. Moreover, changes in institutional arrangements or mechanisms for implementation may not necessarily imply a decline in central state power. These are empirical questions. Nonetheless a shift towards governance has been widely commented upon (Jessop 1995, 1997, 1998; Stoker 1998) and is clearly highly relevant to the rural policy sector. Examples of the transition to governance include the growing role of local government and the regions in rural policy.

Local Government

Under the Local Government Act (2000) local authorities are required to develop community strategies. Many of these will build on local regeneration and neighbourhood renewal initiatives. Hitherto, in statutory terms, the role of local government in fostering and promoting rural development in England has been modest through much of the post war period, confined largely to working within the statutory planning framework and promoting economic and social development often in partnership with the Rural Development Commission and/or rural community councils. The role of local government with regard to rural land use and management has been particularly weak. Local authorities were stripped of responsibilities for farming in the 1940s and the powers and responsibilities of the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission and national parks (notwithstanding the local authority role here) placed limits on local government's responsibilities for nature conservation and rural recreation (Winter 1996). The early 1980s saw both an attack by central government on local authorities, in which their powers were perceived as further denuded, and an emerging sense of new policy opportunities outside the statutory and regulatory frameworks. It was in this context that the idea of countryside (or rural development) strategies was born. The idea was initially proposed by the Countryside Commission's Countryside Policy Review Panel in 1987 and built on the experience of national park plans. Their perceived purpose was to provide information and strategic guidance about a range of non-development issues for the countryside, as either inputs or adjuncts to, development plans (Curry 1992). PPG7, *The Countryside and the Rural Economy*, in 1992 endorsed the countryside strategy approach and the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Rural Development Commission published advice in the same year. The Rural White Paper of 1995 also endorsed the approach. Produced at the county level, some 13 had been produced by the end of 1992 and most counties in England have produced them in one form or another (Curry 1999). Land Use Consultants (1996) have indicated the wide variations in style, focus and institutional involvement between strategies.

A key feature of the approach adopted in the strategy approach is the identification of a wide range of actors who might own and contribute to strategic objectives. Strategies frequently identify and promote partnership approaches as the key to rural development and conservation (Goodwin 1999). Partnerships involving different levels of government and public and private sector organisations are at the heart of the strategic approach, with local authorities providing co-ordination and facilitation, but it should be noted that the strategic role for local authorities is neither its only possible role nor necessarily always recognised by others involved in governance processes (Clarke and Stewart 1994, Haughton et al 1997).

The Planning Green Paper (2002) provides a new impetus to the strategy approach by bringing the statutory land use planning system much closer to other areas of rural policy, particularly at the local level. For example, Local Development Frameworks are set to replace Local and Structure Plans, building on Community Strategies. The Local Development Framework will consist of:

- A statement of core policies setting out the local authority's vision and strategy to be applied in promoting and controlling development throughout its area;
- more detailed action plans for smaller local areas of change, such as urban extensions, town centres and neighbourhoods undergoing renewal; and
- a map showing the areas of change for which action plans are to be prepared and existing designations, such as conservation areas.

There are obvious parallels between first phase countryside strategies and more recent developments with regard to Agenda 21 and Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). Indeed, these developments might be considered as part of a new wave of countryside strategies. BAPs have brought many new partners into conservation policy at the local (usually county) level. Commitments made by the UK under the terms of the *Fifth Environmental Action Programme* of the EU (1992-2000) and the UN *Rio Convention on Biological Diversity* of 1992 prompted the UK's *Action Plan on Biodiversity* (Cmnd 2428) launched in 1994. The targets set by the Plan are primarily directed towards the continuation of well established procedures, the improvement of monitoring and the honouring of commitments. For example, the Government committed itself to compliance with the timetable for the designation of Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive by the year 2004. As Wragg and Selman (1998) explain,

“The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has been cascaded down to county level through a process initially entailing the production of ‘Biodiversity Challenge’ documents which outline the locally important habitats and species towards which conservation priority should be directed.” Subsequent local ‘Biodiversity Action Plans’ (BAPs) then convert county ‘challenges’ into specific objectives and methods for each prioritised species and habitat. Crucially, these action plans are to be prepared, publicised and implemented on as consensus a basis as possible, through a local network of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, and expert and lay individuals.”

The local BAPs are charged to:

- translate national biodiversity targets to a local level
- identify targets for species and habitats in the local area
- develop partnerships
- raise awareness
- consider all opportunities for conservation of the whole biodiversity resource
- provide a basis for monitoring progress in conserving biodiversity

(Local Government Management Board 1997)

This is major policy innovation in that an approach is adopted which gives considerable responsibility to local actors in partnership with national government and agencies. In most

counties where the preparation of BAPs is well advanced, local authorities and county wildlife trusts have taken the lead acting in tandem with the local offices of English Nature and other bodies. This process has led to a clear identification of weaknesses within current designation and protection policies and incentive schemes. In some instances this has resulted in innovative local projects which have had a positive impact on local conservation management. For example, in Devon the failure to achieve ESA status for a large tract of north and west Devon led to a highly successful campaign of advice for farmers to safeguard Culm grasslands, led by the Devon Wildlife Trust (Winter and Winter 1999).

The New Regionalism

The term ‘the new regionalism’, coined by Lovering (1999), denotes renewed attention by politicians and policy makers to the region as the appropriate scale to co-ordinate economic strategy and to foster political involvement (see also Jones and McLeod 1999).

The Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), launched in April 1999, are charged with providing co-ordinated regional economic development and regeneration and with the following statutory purposes:

- Economic development and regeneration
- Business support, investment and competitiveness
- Skills, training and employment
- Sustainable development

In order to do this they have to formulate a strategy for their region and develop a regional Skills Action Plan. Although primarily driven by economic considerations, as their stated primary goal is economic regeneration, there is a strong expectation from central government that economic growth objectives should be balanced by concern for social and economic exclusion and the environment. Consequently, regional strategies should pursue concurrently economic, social and environmental objectives (Bridge 1999). Strategies should set out medium term (5-10 years) policies, aims and objectives for the region's economy including how to foster:

- high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone (including all social and ethnic groups);
- effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources; and
- integration of economic, social and environmental objectives.

Given the ambitiousness of these aims, it is perhaps not surprising that concerns have been expressed at the lack of policy guidance for RDAs as to how they might achieve sustainable development (Gibbs 1998), especially given that they have no formal role in the land use planning process (Baker et al 1999).

The launch of the RDAs has stimulated a number of further regional initiatives. For example, the South West Regional Observatory is an intelligence sharing organisation hosted by the Regional Assembly, and developed jointly by the Assembly, the South West of England Regional Development Agency, the Government Office of the South West (GOSW), the Regional Health Authority and the Environment Agency. The partnership element in the initiative is of particular importance. It aims to provide a robust information base to support the decision making and targeting of resources within the region and to promote a shared understanding of the region in key areas of cross agency working. The observatory operates under a steering group convened by the Regional Assembly.

The South West Regional Assembly is both the ‘designated regional chamber’ with the statutory responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the work of the South West of England Regional Development Agency and the Regional Planning Body responsible for preparing regional planning guidance. It has a role to take forward sustainable development in policy. The Assembly was formed from the amalgamation of the South West Regional Chamber and the South West Regional Planning Conference. About two-thirds of the members are local authority councillors and one third are representatives of the region’s “social and economic partners”. Over and above its role relating to the RDA and the RPG the Assembly aims to provide an over-arching vision for the region.

Other initiatives include:

- the SW Regional Rural Affairs Forum foreshadowed in the Rural White Paper and currently being established by the GOSW;
- the SW Constitutional Convention which aims to bring about accountable and representative regional government in the region;
- the SW Chamber of Rural Enterprise which, in the main, represents rural land-based business interests;
- the Regional Environment Network, a group of statutory and non-statutory environmental organisations, formed to share good practice.
- Sustainability South West (the region’s Round Table for sustainable development).
- moves to establish a Regional Centre of Excellence¹¹.

The new regional agenda is also strongly reflected in the Planning Green Paper (2002) with its potentially radical reform programme for the planning system. RPGs are to be replaced with new Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) with statutory status:

¹¹ The background to this proposal is the report of the Urban Task Force, chaired by Lord Rodgers, and subsequently the Urban White Paper, which called for a network of regional Centres of Excellence. The RDA commissioned the University of the West of England to examine the idea and amongst their conclusions was that rural regeneration issues should be considered alongside urban. The UWE report proposes four modules for the Centre’s activities: Architecture, design, planning and the built environment, Regeneration and renewal, Resources and Funding, and Collaboration and partnership.

- RSS should outline specific regional or sub-regional policies, address the broad location of major development proposals, set targets and indicators where necessary and cross-refer to, rather than repeat, national policy;
- ensure that each RSS reflects regional diversity and specific regional needs within the national planning framework;
- integrate the RSS more fully with other regional strategies. Each RSS should provide the longer term planning framework for the Regional Development Agencies' strategies and those of other stakeholders, and assist in their implementation. We will publish best practice advice on integration of strategies at the regional level; and
- promote the preparation of sub-regional strategies, where necessary, through the RSS process.

It has to be said that the rural dimension and how it will be handled is neglected in the Planning Green Paper, particularly with regard to the regional elements.

Chapter 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

In this final chapter an attempt is made to deal with some of the tensions within rural policy. We then return to some of the policy issues identified in chapter 2 and, finally, to a set of recommendations.

There are a number of ways in which tensions within rural policy might be manifest and it is important to conceptualise these adequately, prior to examining concrete examples of policy tension. For the purposes of conceptual clarity we have identified the following tensions:

- ideological tensions,
- institutional tensions,
- geographical tensions (between regional, national and European policy),
- rural versus agricultural policy tensions,
- social, economic and environmental policy tensions;
- globalisation: an emerging cause of tension.

In the muddy waters of the real policy process there is, of course, overlap and only a few issues will fit neatly into one category. However this classification of tensions provides a useful framework for our concluding discussion in this chapter. In addition the chapter contains a short set of recommendations.

It is important to note that the word ‘tension’ does not necessarily mean inherent dispute, conflict or contradiction. These may indeed occur but our use of the term is analytical. In practice tensions may be resolved. Indeed, almost invariably policy tensions of the kind identified here will lead to efforts at resolution and stimulate policy change and innovation. Tensions, therefore, lie at the heart of the policy process and may have positive as well as negative characteristics. Either way they need to be recognised and analysed.

4.2 Ideological Tensions

A major cause of policy tension is if there is political disagreement on the nature of a policy problem and its remedies. These we might term *ideological tensions* and are most likely to arise when a particular political party or pressure groups adopts a stance that is at odds with the policy of the government of the day or with other parties or groups. Of course, there are many instances where such political disagreements are insignificant in terms of policy tension, because the group espousing a particular ideological position has so little real policy influence. For example, land nationalisation is no longer an issue of policy tension because it is no longer on the political agenda even if some groups still espouse it.

However, there are some issues where profound ideological differences do cause significant policy tensions which are not easily resolved by the Government taking a strong policy line, either because of the intrinsic complexities of the issue, or because the underlying ideological tensions run deep within Government itself. A classic example of this issue is hunting with dogs. It is hard, if not impossible, to imagine a resolution of the issue in terms of a consensus-building policy process; despite the 'middle-way' advocated by some parliamentarians and a number of positive policy suggestions detailed in the Burns Committee Report (2000) for consideration if a hunting ban were not to take place. There are no easy compromises when the policy objective of one side in a debate is abolition of an activity that is lauded as beneficial in so many ways by the other side. Whilst this particular issue, is not central to rural policy its symbolic importance within countryside politics is important. It has, undoubtedly helped to sour relations between some, albeit a minority, of rural residents and central government in recent years. Moreover, it is symptomatic of a wider set of concerns about the place of animals in society which may yet have profound long-term impacts on rural policy and land management.

4.3 Institutional Tensions

These are the tensions that derive from the allocation of responsibilities within central government. The reorganisation of central government responsibilities that took place in June 2001 provided a potential resolution to a major institutional tension that had grown to increasing prominence in the period since the 1992 CAP reform. The shift from a policy dominated by agricultural commodity production to one in which rural development, including agri-environment issues, figures so highly brought increasing institutional tension and uncertainty between MAFF and DETR. These difficulties led to joint working between the two departments, for example in the production of the 1995 and 2000 Rural White Papers and, to a lesser extent, in the development of the Rural Development Plans under the RDR. Therefore the merging of responsibilities for rural issues in DEFRA was a logical move and brought together parts of MAFF and DETR with established working relations. There were fewer signs of immediate difficulties than in the past. However a number of potential tensions remain both within the new department and in the overall division of responsibilities across government. Within DEFRA, the main interest here lies in how the agencies inherited from DETR perform their responsibilities and how these relate to the functions of the main department. In the case of the Environment Agency and English Nature, well defined statutory regulatory responsibilities provide them both with core and well defined purposes and sufficient resources for a measure of autonomy under the DEFRA umbrella. The Countryside Agency would seem to occupy a more difficult role not only vis-a-vis other parts of DEFRA such as EN, the EA and the Rural Development Service but also with regard to the RDA, local government, and tourism boards. It inherited some of the economic and social responsibilities of the former Rural Development Agency to put alongside certain landscape and recreation responsibilities held under DETR. These broad and rather general responsibilities can now be seen to touch on all these sectors of government and the Agency itself often lacks sufficient resources or clear statutory responsibility. Whilst, it has a clear national role to stimulate policy debate and innovation, which it has performed to good effect, its regional and local role is less obvious when so many other agencies and local authorities are so actively involved in rural policy issues.

It is not the case that across government as a whole DEFRA covers all aspects of rural policy. There are important exceptions where joint working will be required if tensions are not to

inhibit rural policy development. Three are of particular importance: tourism, town and country planning, and economic development. Tourism provides a clear example of split responsibilities. The tourism boards come under the DCMS and rural recreation, for example the implementation of the CROW Act, falls to DEFRA. Moreover, not least in the aftermath of Foot & Mouth, both local authorities and the RDA are engaged in economic development activities that impinge on tourism.

The planning system, rooted in local government for its implementation through development control, is one of the core responsibilities of the new DTLR. It represents a significant driver and manifestation of rural policy outside DEFRA. By definition the town and country planning covers both urban and rural policy, so its position is understandable. Arguably, less explicable in the June 2001 reorganisation was the removal of the RDAs to the DTI. The RDA is a key player in terms of regional sustainable development with legitimate interests in the tourism, food and farming and related economic sectors. Moreover, with the RA reporting to the DTLR there is now some confusion as to which of the two central government departments (DTLR or DTI) has the most important responsibilities regionally. Given, the different core purposes of the two departments, it would be surprising if this did not lead to some confused policy messages in the coming years.

Finally, in this section it is important to point out that the growth of regional governance may in itself create new institutional uncertainties. The tensions inherent in departmental divisions of responsibility at national level may or may not be reflected at a regional level. Clearly, the GOSW serves to bring together departmental interests to some extent, but its own internal organisation raises certain issues. For example, the Regional Environment Network has drawn attention to the fact that environmental issues are spread around several teams within the with no obvious focal point.

4.4 Geographical Tensions

The strong unitary state that characterised Britain from the seventeenth century onwards appears to be in transition. Central government, it would appear, is ceding responsibilities upwards to Europe and downwards to the regions and local government. However there is considerable uncertainty about how far the process of regional/local subsidiarity might go and the extent of likely tension between local government and the emerging regional layers of administration and policy engagement. One thing is very clear – at the regional level initiatives relevant to rural policy are blossoming – the Regional Assembly, Chamber, the Regional Chamber of Rural Enterprise, the SW Regional Rural Affairs Forum, The SW Constitutional Convention. At the same time at county and district authority level there is also a spawning of initiatives, some in the aftermath of the Foot and Mouth crisis.

The tensions are not merely tussles for power. There are genuine unresolved policy tensions between central government's desire for a strong strategic steer to economic development and the belief in local participation and inclusiveness, so strongly apparent in the Rural White Paper. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the debate on the planning system. Thus the Performance and Innovation Unit report (PIU 1999) suggests that restrictive behaviour by planning authorities "does not fit with the new economic realities of life in rural areas". Subsequently, in May 2001, PPG 7 (relating to farm diversification) was amended to provide more encouragement to planners to allow diversification. However this was not enough to satisfy the CLA (2001) which calls for further wide-ranging reforms of the planning system,

which, it says, remains a major impediment to farm-based development and diversification. By contrast the CPRE argues vigorously for tough local development control policies to protect the environment. Of course, this can be seen as a fundamental tension between environmental protection policy and economic development, with pressure groups predictably placed in the debate but it is also a tension within organisations and within government itself.

The appropriate geographical level at which decisions should be made and the manner in which citizens should be involved in decision making lies at the heart of the policy tension over planning and development control. It is apparent within the Planning Green Paper itself, so much so that it is hard to determine whether this document is a developer's charter or a potential boost to local democracy. On the one hand the proposed abolition of the county structure plan gives rise to the prospect of a strong regional steer to planning and a possible democratic deficit under existing structures of devolved government. At the local level the injunction to local authorities to speed up the development control decision making process and the prescriptive nature of the proposed local strategies also suggest the risk of democratic deficit. On the other hand, much is made of the need to broaden and deepen consultation processes at the local level. The system of consultation over planning matters is compared unfavourably with systems that have evolved with regard to community strategies and local regeneration initiatives. And yet all the research on community participation and social inclusiveness within a local context shows this to be a painstaking and time consuming process. The tension is obvious and yet it is not addressed in the Green Paper: how can the process be speeded up at the same time as improved? Strategic planning and development control are important issues for rural policy, particularly with regard to rural diversification and economic regeneration. The level at which strategies are determined, levels of participation and democratic accountability, and the content of strategies will all have important implications for sustainable rural development and social inclusion within rural localities.

4.5 Rural versus Agricultural Policy Tensions

These are manifest in a number of ways. The most obvious is the extent to which agricultural policy itself is modified to take into account the new rural dimension to policy. Thus the Curry Commission proposals to increase the rate of modulation under the CAP, in effect a transfer of funds from commodity support to rural development and agri-environment support have elicited a negative reaction from the National Farmers Union. Given that these proposals would not have taken money away from farmers to other agents of rural development, the policy tension in the wider implementation of the RDR is obvious.

There are other more fundamental manifestations of the rural-agricultural tension. For example, in Chapter 2 we mentioned the issue of externalities. To some this may seem a rather technical and abstract set of arguments but it lies at the heart of one of the major causes of policy tension at the current time. To put it simply there are those who argue that primary land-based industries, such as forestry and agriculture, impose considerable costs on society and economy, costs that require taxation, regulation, and so forth to deal with them. Others argue that these rural land uses provide public goods (landscape, recreational access, etc) that bring positive economic and public good benefits. The policy response to this analysis is to seek ways of ensuring a continuation of these beneficial rural land uses, for example by rewarding farmers for the provision of public goods. So does this amount to a contradiction in

analysis and policy prescription? Or do the positive and negative externalities cancel each other out so removing the need for public policy intervention? The answer to both these questions is no! The truth is that there are both positive and negative externalities associated with agriculture. To some extent they derive from different sectors of the industry. Pesticide residues, for example, are associated with intensive arable systems whilst tourism benefits tend to be associated pastoral landscapes. But there may be positive and negative externalities in the same region and even on the same farm. A farm may have fine landscape contributing to the local tourism economy at the same time as contributing to diffuse pollution and the eutrophication of water courses.

The policy tensions inherent in these circumstances certainly reveal themselves in policy prescription. Not surprisingly, farming organisations tend to emphasise the poor recompense farmers receive for delivering public goods, while some environmental and food activists tend to emphasise the negative externalities, urging greater regulation.

Both present policy problems which do not cancel each other out. Rather they require special measures. One of the policy challenges is to find policy prescriptions that will in some measure tackle both problems. This is recognised, albeit implicitly and somewhat imperfectly, in attempts to offer both diversification opportunities built around tourism and incentives to manage farms in an environmentally sensitive manner. The whole farm planning recommended in the Curry Report is consistent with this approach.

4.6 Social, Economic and Environmental Policy Tensions

The notion of sustainable development figures highly, if inadequately explained, in many of the documents we have covered. There is almost total unanimity within the policy documents we read, whether statutory or otherwise, that sustainable development is a worthy policy goal. Indeed the term has become a talisman for those anxious to prove both a commitment to environmental protection and to social and economic development. Although it is probably fair to say that environmental protection and enhancement provide the original impetus to thinking about sustainable development, it is now clearly established and accepted that social and economic justice and inclusion are also integral to the concept. It has been given a global as well as a local dimension. It has generated books and papers by the score!

Not surprisingly, some academics have argued that the term has become so elastic as to lose all meaning and, worse, to mask fundamental conflicts of interest and perception. The tensions, even contradictions, inherent within the notion of 'sustainable development' have reached a "conceptual and political dead-end" according to one geographer (Sneddon 2000). Others, whilst alive to conceptual difficulties, stick with the notion of 'sustainable development' for good pragmatic reasons (much as many of us stay with the term 'rural' despite its inherent ambiguities). For example, O'Riordan and Voysey (1997) make a virtue of the ambiguity between development and sustainability, arguing that this provides staying power for the concept in political terms. Crucially, they claim that institutional innovation in policy delivery derives from the impetus to consider economic, social and ecological factors in tandem, as this is necessitated by a policy commitment to sustainable development. Thus the principles of SD have provided a powerful stimulus to joined-up thinking in policy development and delivery. SD provides an opportunity to address and resolve tensions. Important national policy documents, such as the 2000 Rural White Paper, have stressed the importance of SD and this has already profoundly affected policy in the region. Holding

economic, social and environmental issues together necessitates partnership and cross-departmental working. We can see the fruits of such thinking in, for example, the Devon Strategic Partnership, where a set of task groups covering a range of social, economic and environmental issues (comprising representation from a wide cross-section of stakeholders) are working in tandem. One of the task groups is specifically rural but several of the others also have a rural dimension to their work. At the regional level, Benneworth et al (2002) have singled out the south west for commendation in the way its Regional Economic Strategy recognises the difficulties of achieving SD.

There are many examples of positive outcomes from the policy commitments already made to sustainable development. For example, the policy context in which forestry operates has been transformed in recent years as a result of the commitment to sustainable development (Winter 2001c). The Curry Commission report and the Government's initial response to it provide another example of where SD thinking is fundamental to policy development.

Within the EU, too, there is an increasing focus on environmental issues and SD as a central factor. As IEEP (2001) explains, EU states are now required to develop comprehensive strategies to integrate environmental concerns within their respective areas of activity. The Agriculture Council presented an initial strategy to the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, and an updated strategy for the Gothenburg Summit in June 2001. Moreover, the Treaty of Amsterdam has led to proposals for a sustainable development strategy (SDS). The Community's proposed Sixth Environmental Action Programme (6EAP) includes the integration of environmental concerns in all EU policies as one of its central 'strategic approaches'.

Few could argue that the commitment to SD is involving new alliances and important practical policy developments. Much progress is being made. However it is important to recognise that the tensions within SD may grow as a result of its extension to more and more policy areas. Labelling a process or an action as SD cannot rid us of the risk of dispute. An important policy development in recent years which seeks to resolve some of these tensions through the provision of a framework for measuring progress is the use of indicators. It is clear that resolving tensions will often require partnership between private and public actors, for example, quality assurance schemes.

4.7 Globalisation: An Emerging Cause of Tension

Behind both CAP and national agricultural policy lies the drive to globalisation. Increasingly, localities are interconnected by developments in transport, telecommunications, financial transactions and trade (Ward et al 2001). For the rural south-west, one of the most obvious aspects of globalisation is the liberalisation of agricultural commodity trade under the terms of the GATT agreement and the requirements of the WTO. Increasingly, British agriculture is having to compete with farmers across the world but it is a process that is not complete. The level of PSEs acts as a barometer of public support and market distortion for both the OECD and the WTO. As long as levels remain high, as a result of direct compensatory support mechanisms under the 1992 and 2000 CAP reforms, WTO pressure on the EU further to reform the CAP is likely to remain high.

The WTO does not frown on all public support for agriculture. The so-called green box payments for environmental and allied concerns are seen to be compatible with WTO

requirements. In economic parlance, green box payments are designed to reward farmers for the production of public goods or positive externalities. WTO pressure on the CAP are applied in both seeking to shift payments away from direct production supports to green box payments and to scrutinise green box payments to test whether or not they are genuinely neutral in production terms, a desired characteristic usually referred to as de-coupled.

There are considerable difficulties with implementing the green box test as de-coupling is by no means a straight forward matter. For example, conversion to organic farming is funded under the Rural Development Regulation as an agri-environment measure. The only policy justification for funding organic conversion is because of environmental benefits accruing from organic farming systems (Morris et al, 2001) but clearly its subsidisation has direct implications for the market. Even more conventional agri-environment measures, such as the ESA scheme, may have indirect implications for production, not least because the payments represent capital that may be invested in a range of agricultural activities.

Consequently, the defence of these kind of payments will figure highly in WTO negotiations on agriculture. The outcome of these negotiations, and in particular the extent to which the European Union is able to defend its European model of a multifunctional agriculture depends, at least in part, on payment for the provision of public goods, and is of the utmost importance to the future of south west farming. Without green box payments alongside reduced market commodity prices, it is hard to see livestock and dairy systems surviving in anything like their present form, unless there are some radical changes in consumer spending and the food market in general.

One of the features of the Curry Commission report is its advocacy of reform to the CAP and the acceptance of a globalised commodity market agenda and this is in line with the UK government's position in the WTO negotiations. Most of the recent contributions to the agricultural policy debate take a broadly similar view. Indeed, there is an emerging mainstream policy orthodoxy that farming has to survive by being both globally competitive in commodity markets and through a range of other non-commodity market means. Some of the implications of this are explored in 5.8 below. There are, of course, exceptions to this orthodoxy. The acceptance of the inevitability of globalisation, particularly within the agriculture and food sector, are challenged to varying degrees by academics and non-government organisations committed to more sustainable, usually organic, forms of agriculture. They identify the high external environmental and social costs associated with international commodity trade, enumerated for example through the concept of food miles. Such commentators raise questions over the consistency between free trade objectives and sustainable development, raising the possibility of new forms of protectionism, designed not so much to protect specific economic sectors but particular social and environmental systems in the context of global environmental integrity. A more prosaic concern, voiced, amongst others, by mainstream farming organisations (e.g. NFU 2001) is the difficulty faced by businesses seeking to compete globally when local conditions of production give rise to particular costs not borne by competitors elsewhere. For example, regulations on farm animal welfare, present south western pig producers with higher costs than in most competitive countries. Is the notion of economic comparative advantage, the cornerstone of liberal economic thinking, to be invoked to justify imports of pigmeat in this context? Certainly UK farmers, animal welfarists and certain critics of the logic of global economics (e.g. Dupré (2001) would suggest not.

A particular issue that covers agricultural and all other aspects of globalisation is the manner in which distinctive regions and localities should best respond to the realities of globalisation. As Ward et al (2001) explain, drawing on Storper (1997), regional economies are likely to become more specialised, contributing assets to regional distinctiveness. A challenge for the south-west region is fully to recognise and nurture its cultural and environmental distinctiveness, within a globalised context which may contain certain pressures that run counter to this notion of ‘cultural economy’ (Ray 1998). How such pressures are resisted raises important questions about strategic planning, development control, and the maintenance of multifunctionality in the region.

4.8 Key Policy Issues

During the course of Chapter 2 we identified a series of policy issues as follows:

The Farm Economy

- What are the knock-on effects to the Region’s economy of the downturn in agricultural fortunes?
- Are current and prospective profit levels likely to maintain historic volumes of agricultural productivity?

Land Prices

- How are new entrants and innovation to be encouraged in the context of high land prices?
- Will the market for grass-keep and short-term tenancy agreement remain buoyant with increasing numbers of residential land purchases?
- What are the implications for land management of increasing numbers of residential land purchases? For example, will it inhibit or encourage conversion to forestry?

Farm Labour

- What are the implications of declining numbers of farm workers and casualisation of labour force on the maintenance of the rural estate?
- Are re-skilling and training opportunities sufficient for those leaving agriculture?

Counterurbanization

- How are likely pressures for housing land in the south-west to be dealt with?
- Are there conflicts between rural and in-migrating populations and, if so, how should these be resolved?
- What are implications for long term energy and transport policies? Could changes in these sectors have significant implications for population trends?

The Countryside as Contested Territory

- How can good relations between farming and non-farming citizens be promoted?
- How are local conflicts best handled?
- Are there issues, such as the use and management of wild animals in the countryside, which require policy input to prevent future conflicts?

Tourism

- How can rural areas capture a larger share of the tourist spend?

- How can the numbers of tourists who stay overnight (the key to spending patterns) in rural areas be increased?
- How can local multipliers be increased through strengthening local supply chains and purchasing?

These issues were identified for one or more of the following reasons

- issues with an absence of policy comment or potential/actual policy contradiction;
- issues where there is limited research based evidence.
- issues where the RDA/RA might make an input in data gathering and/or policy development.

5.9 Recommendations

The first recommendation flows from the previous section.

Recommendation 1: The RDA and RA in collaboration with regional partners should consider the key policy issues identified and, where appropriate, stimulate research, debate and/or action.

It is clear from this report that the rural policy context in which the RDA and Regional Assembly (RA) operate is both complex and fast changing. It is important that the RDA and RA should conduct proactive assessments of the impact of policy on the region so as to promote policy coherence across the region. There are a number of ways in which this might be achieved.

Recommendation 2: The RDA and RA should review their means for gathering, analysing and disseminating rural policy information and relevant contextual data.

Recommendation 3 The RDA and RA should consider staff CPD and training requirements and make appropriate provision.

The core messages of the Curry Report are consistent with many of the key recommendations of other reports (e.g. CPRE 2001) and revolve around reform of the CAP (modulation) and a multifunctional and diversified agricultural and food sector. More specifically, it is possible to identify four income strands emerging for the region's farmers if the Curry recommendations are carried forward:

- Commodity prices at world market levels (with the problems facing farmers compounded by the exchange rate difficulties and uneven application of regulations internationally).
- Commodities marketed at higher than world prices, through valued-added activities or premium markets (based around specified production standards).

- Rewards, for example through 2nd pillar payments, for the provision of public goods.
- Diversified activities, such as new uses for farm buildings and new land uses (e.g. energy cropping).

Each of these has important implications, not only for the future of farming in the region, but for the wider rural economy and the tourism sector. It is vital that the prospects for each of these are researched and better understood so that appropriate regional strategies can be developed and implemented.

Recommendation 4: The RDA and RA should participate in the debate at the regional level so that the Curry Commission proposals might be critically assessed, with particular emphasis on regional implications.

Recommendation 5: The RDA and RA should commission supporting work to examine the potential impact of Curry measures on the region's rural economy.

Recommendation 6: In the light of the outcomes of Recommendations 4 and 5, the RDA and RA, together with relevant regional stakeholders, should identify priorities for research to facilitate appropriate change in the region's rural economy.

The range of local rural policy initiatives and partnerships, particularly in the aftermath of FMD, is enormous and largely uncoordinated. There are dangers of duplication, contradiction and a failure to learn lessons.

Recommendation 7: The RDA and RA should, through the Regional Centre for Excellence catalogue and monitor local initiatives and to establish and disseminate good practice.

The rapid progress of regional governance, alongside the important role of local authorities, raises important questions about how rural policy issues might best be dealt with under the emerging arrangements. Whilst those involved in the regional structures may well have a sense of both purpose and institutional context (although even this is not empirically proven), it seems unlikely that this will have percolated sufficiently into civil society. Some might construct this as democratic deficit but, arguably, such a characterisation is a step too far. In the first instance we need more knowledge about both the policy workings of the new regionalism and public perceptions of these developments. This should include a sub-regional level (for example, Devon Strategic Partnership is planning to sponsor some social survey research on issues of identity within Devon).

Recommendation 8: The RDA and RA should sponsor research or encourage other relevant bodies to undertake research on issues of regional policy and identity.

The fact that rural issues remain divided between a number of central government departments, notwithstanding the broad responsibilities of DEFRA, suggests the need for a continuation of rural proofing at both central and regional government level. In addition, it is perhaps time to consider the possibility of region proofing at central government level.

Recommendation 9: The RDA and RA should support and facilitate rural proofing of policy initiatives regionally and centrally.

Recommendation 10: The RDA and RA should press for regional proofing of central policy initiatives.

At the regional level, the co-ordination of regional and local policy delivery requires serious attention. There are many (potentially) competing actors, projects and grant schemes. The Chamber for Rural Enterprise is known to be developing a comprehensive list of grant schemes but this will only provide a part of the overall picture and, in any case, a list is no substitute for co-ordination.

Recommendation 11: The RDA and RA should explore with other rural policy stakeholders how best to pursue co-ordination of policy delivery.

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