Visions for agriculture in the North East: Findings from the FarmPath project

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NESAAG, 6th November 2013
Outline

● Introduction and ‘FarmPath’

● Background:
  ➔ Regional sustainability of agriculture and transition pathways
  ➔ Futures thinking and Transdisciplinarity

● The ‘visioning’ process

● Key features and actions
  ➔ Why are they not happening already?

● Concluding thoughts...
The overall goal of **FarmPath** is to identify and assess future transition pathways towards the regional sustainability of agriculture in Europe, and the social and technological innovation needs required to initiate and progress along these pathways.
Regional sustainability of agriculture and transition pathways

- Big questions and **public good requirements** of farming in Europe, e.g. safe and high quality food, renewable energy, environmental protection, viable rural communities, etc.

- Increasing **sustainability of agriculture** may be best addressed by enabling flexible combinations of farming models.

- In order to move towards increased sustainability, **transition** needs to occur (Darnhofer et al., 2010).
Futures-thinking and Transdisciplinarity

- ‘Vision’ – a ‘desirable state in the future’ (1)

- Opportunity for creativity, reflection and transdisciplinarity.
‘Visioning process’ (1)

- Recruitment and participation of 4 key groups:
  - ‘Run the Land’
  - ‘Young Farmers’
  - ‘Official Interests’
  - ‘Those who benefit from the management of the land’

- Aim to ensure representation of land-based interests across North East and work with recommended individuals
‘Visioning process’ (2)

- Four stage process:
  i. Stakeholder recruitment
  ii. Visioning focus groups
  iii. Compilation of visions and participant validation
  iv. Final workshop and vision analysis
Methods: Focal question

‘What are your wishes for agriculture and other land based activities in North East Scotland in 2030?'
Visions for 2030: Outline

Connected communities

Farm resilience/profitability

‘Green’ landscapes
Vision 1: ‘Connected communities’

- ‘More people living and working in the countryside’
- Planning systems that allow affordable rural housing, maintain infrastructure and services, and support more local working
- Countryside access and increasing awareness and respect, as well as community growing space
- An increased sense of community spirit and closer relationships between the farming population and communities, with improved societal understanding of agriculture.
Vision 2: Farm resilience/profitability

- Economically viable farming, with profits derived from the market, and less ‘red tape’
- A clear and certain CAP, with assistance for innovation and non-market goods, and support for stronger cooperation and collaboration
- Diversified farm businesses and more accessible technology
- Increased on-farm and rural employment, and more new entrants and young people staying on farms
- Local people are more involved in farming, with an improved public image of farming sector
- Agriculture as a more powerful partner
Vision 3: ‘Green’ landscapes

- An **improved, diverse, landscape**, including crops, livestock and the **native and strategic woodland planting**
- A **balanced and ‘sensitive approach’**, maintained by long-term **biodiversity and wildlife-friendly** measures
- Policy-makers aware of the **complex inter-linkages**, utilising **local and historic knowledge** and communities with **more of a say about how land is used**
- **Energy produced sustainably** and **local food production** is maximised, underpinned by **alternative economic models**
Why have these visions not yet been achieved?

Constraints include:

- current planning and agricultural policy
- lack of funding availability
- rural community division and disconnect from farming practice
- perceived lack of rural understanding

-> Identifying actions for transition
EU/National level actions (1)

- Targeted **rural investment** and encouraging farmers to **involve local communities** in applications for SRDP funding
- Better **allocation of Pillar 2** and SRDP to meet objectives for community groups and enterprise
- **Planning policy** to support use of rural buildings, and greater funding to enable affordable housing
- **Reduce legislation** and farm-level ‘red tape’, with the aim to drive more profitable farming
EU/National level actions (2)

- Central government to invest in rural broadband and facilitate home working and rural business creation
- EU and government support for farmer cooperation and cooperative practices
- Provide funding for innovation and innovation clusters, especially around energy technologies
- Provide longer term agri-environmental strategies and subsidies, which add value through marketing.
Regional level actions (1)

- Make **advisory and regulatory role** of SGRPID **more distinct**, through local case officers working on an individual farm basis and encouraging open farmer-agency relationships.
- **Encourage engagement** between community organisations (formal and informal), landowners/farmers and local authorities.
- **Facilitation by local authorities** to bring groups together and ‘realise vision’.
Regional level actions (2)

- Provide information on location of footpaths and ensure community consultation prior to subsidy provision.
- **Develop networks** and demonstrate agri-environmental schemes on commercial farms and reality of ‘profitable greening’.
- Grant assistance for farmers to **employ young people** and pass on skills, working towards qualifications or through apprenticeship schemes.
- More support for **regional level slaughter house and processing facilities** to reduce food production costs.
- Greater legislation targeted at retailers, to **reduce ‘steps’ in food chain**.
Local level actions

- Local farming discussion groups to be represented on higher scale groups, reconnecting and sharing knowledge.
- Continue discussion between communities and landowners to encourage people to access rural landscapes.
- Incentivise community income streams.
- Farmer clusters to work together with communities, supported by local councils, NESAAG’s collaborative action and RDP measures/SFP.
- Localised policies to fit local circumstances.
- Encourage more monitor farms and local champions to demonstrate good practice, increasing farm profitability, resilience, cooperation and the dissemination of innovation.
Identifying ‘transition pathways’

‘I will bring 100 Mb fibre optic broadband and install in my Rural Business Centre – lead by example!’

‘Use marketing to educate the younger generation and in turn increase value to product, and utilisation of local products.’

‘Take on board the FarmPath visions and ensure where possible key issues/actions are considered as part of the Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot.’
Concluding thoughts...

● Outcomes of the ‘visioning’ process
  ➔ Opportunity to compare results with European partners.
  ➔ Identification of actions and the potential for consensus/ conflict through implementation.
  ➔ Further development of recommendations and communication with different groups/institutions – NESAAG, JHI workshop and Brussels conference.
  ➔ Lessons to be learned regarding best practice in stakeholder engagement.

● Next steps: communicating findings and developing ‘transdisciplinary dialogue’.
Thank you for listening!

● With many thanks to:
  ➔ Co-authors and facilitators of visioning process in North East Scotland
  ➔ ‘Visioning’ participants
  ➔ FarmPath project partners, in particular Teresa Pinto-Correia and Helena Guimaraes, University of Evora, Portugal
  ➔ The funders: European Union (FP7) and the Scottish Government

http://www.farmpath.eu