



## **Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13**

**response to the Defra consultation document**

**by**

**The Rare Breeds Survival Trust**

**National Agricultural Centre  
Stoneleigh Park  
Warwickshire  
CV8 2LG**

**Tel: 024 7669 6551**

**May 2006**

## **Introduction/General principles**

1. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) is the national organisation concerned with the conservation of native breeds of livestock. More than half the total of native breeds are endangered (see [www.rbst.org.uk](http://www.rbst.org.uk)) but they are an important part of the diversity of animal genetic resources in the UK and an integral part of the UK heritage.
2. Genetic conservation is a specific objective within Environmental Stewardship (ES).
3. The *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*, under which Natural England is being formed, requires '*that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development*'.

## **General principles**

4. The strategy for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) must ensure integration not only between the programme's axes, but also between the programme's delivery bodies and stakeholders. The Treaty of Amsterdam stated that "environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the implementation and definition of other community policies and activities". Integration in this way is important for rare native breeds of livestock as their contribution is realised in disparate ways.
5. It is important to adopt an holistic approach to conservation, and this supports the philosophy of integration. Animal genetic resources are part of the wider conservation strategy, but historically they have not received full recognition and support. There should be equality of treatment for plant and animal genetic resources. Genetic erosion within rare native breeds should be minimised. Numerical criteria of endangerment for breeds of livestock are recognised, but also there is a need to recognise vulnerability through geographical concentration and loss of genetic variability.
6. Native breeds of livestock contribute in many ways to environmental health. They are an important element within the maintenance of a healthy natural environment because of their local adaptation.
  - Grazing attributes of native breeds (e.g. hefting ability, hardiness, thriftiness) are ideally suited to achieve favourable condition of European Sites and SSSIs. Many native breeds evolved to graze semi-natural vegetation types in specific locations and conditions.
  - They assist achievement of UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets, and progress towards CBD targets.
  - They provide year-round sustainable environmental land management and wider beneficial effects (through extensive systems with low artificial inputs to land, livestock and natural resources)

- They provide an holistic approach to genetic resource conservation that embraces the grazing livestock breeds, the habitats and plant species grazed and the wildlife species dependent on those grazed habitats (e.g. bats, etc.).
  - Enhanced farm animal welfare and husbandry by improved matching of animals to grazeable vegetation, and by reducing the likelihood of inappropriate breeds being used in conditions to which they are not suited.
  - They help to sustain desirable livestock grazing enterprises post CAP reform decoupling of production subsidies.
7. Rare breeds fulfil, or contribute to the objectives set out in the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*, namely natural environment, public benefit and sustainability. The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (Defra, December 2002) states "*On behalf of the taxpayer, we must identify the **public benefits** - - - for which there is, strictly speaking, no commercial market, and establish how they should be recognised and rewarded.*" [pp. 12 and 13.]. Rare breeds must be included in that category.
  8. Priorities must be identified within the strategy to improve the sustainability of land management and environmental quality to ensure that the economy and quality of life in rural areas benefit from the programme.
  9. RBST is recommending this approach to the RDPE because:
    - i. Intensive land management practices have been a major cause of many environmental problems, and rare native breeds have a role to play in non-intensive systems and conservation grazing because of their local adaptation.
    - ii. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century almost half the historic parkland in England has been lost, and the acceleration of this process in the last 50 years through the drive for productivity and associated specialisation of agriculture led to an erosion of the natural environment, including native AnGR.
    - iii. Effective solutions are available. These include particularly Agri-Environment Schemes.
  10. The RDPE is the main public fund available for this programme.
  11. The RDPE must be adequately funded. RBST fully supports the proposed focus for the programme's spend on Axis 2 and the continuing commitment to Environmental Stewardship (ES) that this represents. The Government's decision to use the national voluntary modulation up to the maximum, underlines its commitment to move CAP support towards agri-environment measures so that public money will be used for public benefit.

### **Response to the consultation questions**

#### **The proposed four core principles for the strategy for the next England Rural Development Programme:**

***Question 1: Do you agree with these four principles. If not please suggest alternatives?***

12. ***Principle i.*** RBST supports the principle of sustainable rural development.
13. ***Principle ii*** Rural communities potentially are disadvantaged by reduction of mainstream services to them. This programme should give emphasis to those requirements that mainstream services fail to meet. For example, non-mainstream genetic resources (native rare breeds) require support to realise their public benefit value.
14. ***Principle iii*** RBST fully supports the proposed emphasis on Axis 2 in the allocation of the programme's resources, and the continued commitment to Environmental Stewardship.
15. ***Principle iv*** 'Reasonable cost' is a relative term that does not convey the need to fund this programme.

***Question 2: Are there any other overarching principles that should apply?***

16. An overarching principle that RBST would recommend is a commitment to a policy focused on integration and sustainable development. Rare breeds have the potential to deliver benefits in different areas.
17. This will recognise the requirements of the Community Strategic Guidelines (integration between and within the Axes), and will recognise the outcomes of both the European Council of Göteborg ('*strong economic performance must go hand in hand with the sustainable use of natural resources*') and the Lisbon strategy ('*must be seen in the wider context of sustainable development requirement that present needs must be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*').

***Question 3: Do you agree that the proposals in this document support these?***

18. It is essential that the programme specifically supports non-mainstream rural activities, and this is not entirely clear.

***Question 4: Do you agree with the proposals for ensuring that Rural Development spending complements other policies and funding streams, in particular the EU Structural Funds and the European Fisheries Fund***

19. See 20 above.

**Theme 1: Enhancing the Environment and Countryside:**

20. RBST fully supports the focus of the programme's expenditure on this theme and the continuing commitment to ES. RBST supports the commitment to move CAP resources towards agri-environment and rural development measures and that such public money should be used to deliver public benefit.

*Question 5: Do you agree that the challenges and priorities listed under this theme are the right ones for the programme?*

*Question 6: If not, what is missing or superfluous? (Please provide evidence for any suggested answers to this question)*

21. RBST endorses the allocation of the majority of RDPE resources on this theme, but if RDPE is insufficient for the purpose other funding must be identified.
22. Native livestock breeds have an important role to play in pursuit of this theme, and their conservation and use add not only to public benefit and wellbeing through outdoor recreation and 'safe food', but also to environmental benefit through conservation grazing.

### **Priorities**

23. The priorities identified in paragraph 41 are very wide, but fail to mention heritage livestock as part of iii (Protect the historic environment). Native breeds are an integral part of the national heritage in conjunction with 'historic rural buildings' and other landscape features, and deserve specific inclusion in the programme.

### **Challenges**

24. RBST supports the commitment to ES.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

25. Agri-environment schemes enable necessary land management practices, and are supported actively by RBST.

*Question 7: What should the balance between priorities be?*

26. RBST can not comment on the balance between broad priorities, but would draw attention to the potential value of native breeds of livestock in delivering desirable outcomes.
27. ES has proved a successful programme. RBST supports HLS, and notes the benefit derived from the 'Native Breeds at Risk' incentive.

*Question 8: What would best enable delivery of this theme to be joined-up with delivery of other themes?*

28. Active involvement of all stakeholders in delivery of the programme. There are many facets, and a framework must be provided to ensure effective cooperation.

## **Theme 2: Making Agriculture and Forestry More Competitive, and Sustainable**

*Question 9: Do you agree that the priorities listed under this theme are the right ones for the programme?*

*Question 10: If not, what is missing or superfluous? (Please provide evidence for any suggested answers to this question)*

***Question 11: What other developments might shift the priorities under this theme in the course of the programme?***

29. Following CAP reform, competitiveness and sustainability are more likely to be achieved by lower-input systems. The increasing relevance of non-intensive systems of livestock management should be recognised. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the effective use of native breeds of livestock is prioritised.
30. The promotion of co-operation in projects such as Local Grazing Schemes where specific grazing qualities are required.
31. The opportunity to produce added-value products, with environmental benefits, by the use of local breeds which do not conform to the commercial mainstream.

***Question 12: What would best enable delivery of this theme to be joined-up with delivery of other themes?***

32. See response to Question 8.

**Theme 3: Enhancing opportunity in rural areas:**

***Question 13: Do you agree with the challenges and priorities listed under this theme?***

***Question 14: If not, what alternatives do you suggest and what evidence supports your suggestion?***

***Question 15: How do we balance focus on specific areas experiencing particular concentrations of low pay with this problem in wider society?***

33. This theme should prioritise opportunities to improve the economy and quality of life in rural areas in a sustainable manner. The proposals do not do so.
34. The focus should be on benefit to the existing population by encouraging activities which both improve quality of life and improve the environment. For example, penalties of 'food miles' would encourage the local production and processing of food, and incentives for local rare breeds would provide advantages for both tourism and environmental benefit through local adaptation

***Question 16: How do we ensure that delivery of objectives under this theme are mutually supportive of those under other themes?***

35. See response to Question 8.

**Cross-cutting themes**

36. Cross-cutting is relevant to the potential value of rare native breeds of livestock, as their use applies across the themes and Axes.

***Uplands***

37. The RBST has responded separately to Defra's consultation on the *Future Upland Reward Structure*.

38. The uplands provide a wide range of important public benefits, and native breeds of livestock have an important role to play in their maintenance. Many of these breeds have particular adaptation to the uplands and are used in many grazing projects.

### **The Leader Approach in the New Programme**

39. RBST understands and agrees the Leader Approach principle.

#### ***Question 17: Do you agree with the regional flexibility outlined here?***

40. RBST agrees the principle of regional flexibility provided it is set within the context of a defined national framework.

#### ***Question 18: What is the Leader approach best placed to deliver?***

41. The Leader approach can deliver positive environmental outcomes to regional projects which assist sustainable local development involving concepts such as linking traditional culture with tourism potential or local food businesses, or coordinating collaborative ventures (e.g. conservation grazing by White Park cattle in Savernake Forest).

### **Delivery Arrangements for the New Programme**

#### ***Question 19: Do you agree with the balance between national strategy and co-ordination on the one hand and regional flexibility on the other?***

#### ***Question 20: Do you have suggestions for adjusting the model proposed?***

42. See response to question 17.
43. Effective partnerships are essential (see example in response to question 18). The RBST can act to provide the expertise and material relating to the genetic conservation of locally adapted livestock.

Lawrence Alderson  
Chairman