SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION RESEARCH PLATFORM

SIPSCENE

The newsletter of the Sustainable Intensification Research Platform

SPRING/SUMMER 2015

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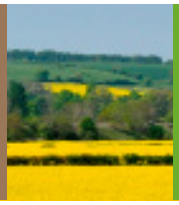

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Editorial: The view from the platform

Welcome one and all to the first edition of SIPScene, the newsletter of the Sustainable Intensification Research Platform, AKA 'SIP'.

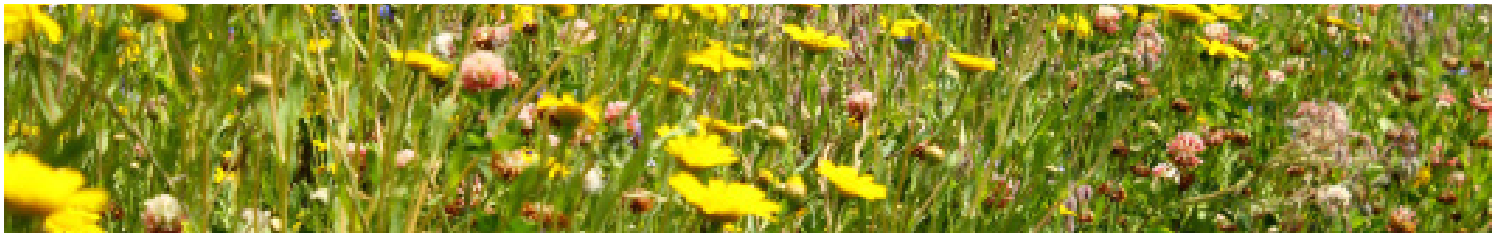
The word 'Platform' conjures up number of images in my mind; a place for lift-off, a place to wait and be patient, and a place to change direction. All of these images are appropriate in the context of SIP. We are a large multi-institutional group of agricultural researchers and practitioners tasked with making inroads into the challenge of sustainable intensification, and doing so in ways that will chart the path for others.

Read closely the text of this inaugural edition and you will discern something of the excitement, ambition and sheer energy that is carrying us forward in our work. As befits a programme that is starting out in earnest, this edition is all about 'scene-setting' but I think it opportune to say, right from very outset, that time is already short. We benefit from a significant Defra investment in fundamental research, but we report in 2017, so we are concentrating our efforts on a number key research areas at the farm, landscape and international scale. Ours is an integrated, multi-level and interdisciplinary approach, but from a project management perspective, the three research areas correspond roughly to Projects 1, 2 and 3 of the Platform. You can learn about the specifics of each project in this first edition.

And yet, SIP research does not exist in vacuum. We already know a great deal about the concepts we are working with, and the practices we seek to enable.
So we are not starting from first principles. And we are instituting a significant programme of knowledge exchange in order to capitalise on the wider practical know-how and know-what of sustainable intensification. More than that, we do this work with a keen sense of legacy. All of our work is governed by an interest in the long term. This means informing the evidence that will help shape long term policy for farming, but also providing a fair deal of insight for practical farming and models of working. Easy, right?

This newsletter is for anyone interested in our work, but you can also find out more on our dedicated webpages (www.siplatform.org.uk) or by following us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/SIPResearch). Notwithstanding this, in the mix of doing our research, there will be opportunities to learn about and contribute to our work. We look forward to meeting you in and around the Scene.

Robert Fish is a Reader in Human Ecology at the University of Kent and part of the Platform's knowledge exchange team



Viewpoint

Rising to the challenge of sustainable intensification

Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser Professor Ian Boyd offers a perspective on sustainable intensification and his aspirations for the Research Platform

The challenge

The global spike in food prices in 2007-08 highlighted the fact that demand for food was starting to increase quicker than supply. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing society today is how to feed a growing global population while minimizing the environmental impact.

Defra's priorities of growing the rural economy, leading the world in food and farming, and improving the environment can often seem to conflict. Sustainable intensification is a process by which all of these can be achieved simultaneously. Food and agriculture are vital to the UK economy. Our food and farming sector accounted for nearly £100bn of GDP in 2012, and is responsible for 13% of national employment (3.6 million people). This productivity is underpinned by services provided by the natural environment. For example, pollination services provided by wild insects are valued at £430m pa.

However, of the range of services delivered by the UK's aquatic and terrestrial habitats, 30% have been assessed as declining. Soil degradation is estimated to cost the UK economy £0.9 – 1.4 bn per year.

Meeting the sustainable intensification challenge necessitates integration of the vast wealth of expertise on the environmental, economic and social aspects of farming held by academia, industry and NGOs across England & Wales. Currently however, much of this knowledge is derived from fragmented research on specific aspects of agricultural land management, such as livestock & plant breeding, air pollution, farmland ecology and cultivation techniques. Synthesis of a potentially overwhelming amount of disperse information is too often left to farmers themselves.

What is sustainable intensification?

Although a term that is now common parlance among researchers and policymakers alike, the definition of 'sustainable intensification' remains a topic of lively debate. Sustainable intensification will mean different things to different people and at different scales. For an individual farmer, sustainable intensification could mean increasing profitability by optimising resource use efficiency. For a national policymaker, sustainable intensification might mean an increase in national yield, or an increase in competitiveness, without negative environmental impacts.

Perhaps rather than trying to establish a universally acceptable definition of sustainable intensification, we should ask 'what might sustainable intensification look like?' Hopefully the SIP will soon begin to demonstrate some of the potential answers to this question. This will be achieved through a practice-based approach, implementing new approaches to food production and observing and measuring the environmental, social and economic impacts.

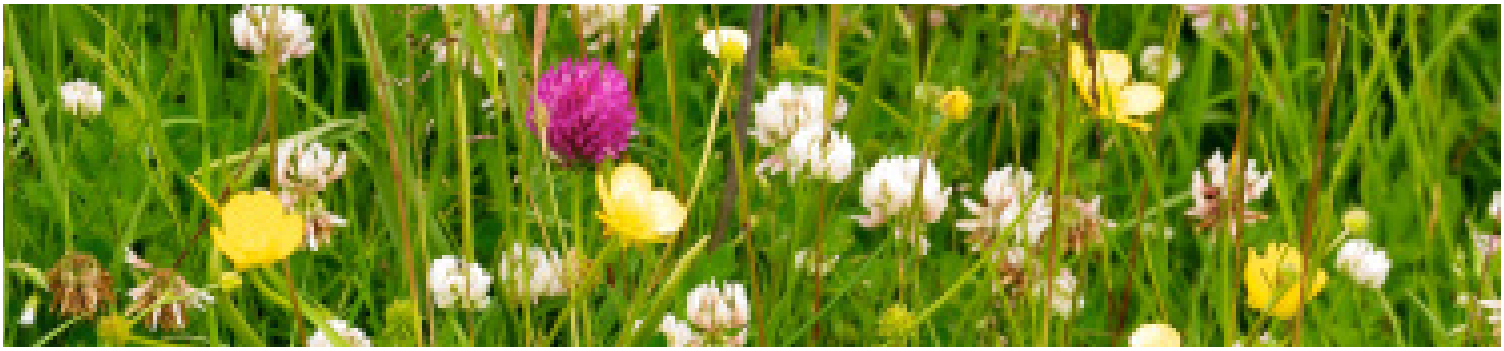
Sustainable intensification trade-offs and measures

Measures of environmental sustainability are numerous – biodiversity impacts, GHG emissions, water quality, land use – and these often represent trade-offs. For example, low-carbon farming might produce lower yields and therefore necessitate use of a larger land area, resulting in a greater impact on biodiversity. Obviously, sustainability cannot be defined merely in environmental terms – if agricultural intensification is to be sustained, it must also deliver sufficient economic and social benefits. All these are interlinked. For example, for better or worse, agricultural activity has a great influence on ecosystem services such as landscape and biodiversity. These are crucial to the 3,000 million outdoor recreational visits UK residents make each year, which create social value in excess of £10,000 million annually. This complexity necessitates the development of more sophisticated, integrated measures of farm performance.

The sustainable intensification research platform

The raison d'etre for SIP is thus to investigate farming systems, landscapes and supply chains holistically, avoiding a piecemeal approach which risks concluding that adoption of certain practices will enable sustainable intensification when in fact they are having negative effects on ignored parameters. Only by adopting a trans-disciplinary approach to research will we establish an evidence base which can inform the development and targeting of fully integrated land management policies, incentives, guidance and advice that will enable farmers to deliver sustainable intensification.

Professor Ian Boyd is Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He is currently Professor in Biology at the University of St Andrews



SIP Says

Views from in and around the Platform

In this first of our viewpoint pieces from inside the Platform we invited the lead researchers to share their thoughts on the work of the SIP

The Big Ask: Stuart Knight, NIAB

You could be forgiven for thinking that whoever dreamt up sustainable intensification was mad. Did they pause to consider what, in practice, they were asking farmers to do?

- Increase productivity
- Use resources more efficiently
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Remain competitive within volatile markets
- Improve resilience in the face of an uncertain climate

I'm sure they did, but I can imagine they concluded that we don't have a choice if we want our farming industry to be profitable, feed a growing population and meet Society's other needs from the same land area.

Our aim within the SIP is to provide tools and demonstrate approaches that can help to make all of this possible. However, we cannot offer silver bullets! Rather, the answers are I believe already out there on farm, in the form of current best and innovative practices, often under the banner of Integrated Farm Management. So: Why is the SIP needed? It will facilitate wider capture, sharing and demonstration of practices, through case study farms and networks. It will propose better ways of guiding farmers and advisers through the maze of information available, to help them determine which practices or combinations are best able to deliver the desired outcomes. And it will provide ways of assessing the impact of those practices on the overall economic and environmental performance of a farming system.

Why is the SIP different? It brings together an unprecedented community spanning universities, research institutes, farming industry, environmental organisations and policymakers, all working together to address the challenges. Farmers are integrally involved as participants in the research, not just a target for knowledge transfer. For both the research and knowledge exchange the aim is to build on what already exists, and to encourage others to develop them further.

Why did I want to lead a SIP Project? I was brought up on a farm and have always loved farming. Sustainable intensification involves huge challenges but also great opportunities. I'm thrilled to be working with such an experienced and diverse research team, and that applies to the farmers in our case study networks as well as our many partners in the SIP. I believe we can learn from one another, and together contribute to a profitable and sustainable future for the industry.

Stuart Knight is Deputy Director of NIAB and Project Leader of Project 1 of the SIP.

The SIP Challenge: Michael Winter, University of Exeter

Achieving sustainable intensification at a farm scale is challenging enough, but the ambitions of the Platform are greater even than that. How do we ensure that what individual farmers do adds up to more than the sum of the parts? How do we deal with the reality that what might be right in terms of SI for one farmer might be completely wrong for another?

The farming industry is highly heterogeneous, both in terms of farmers' own business circumstances and the physical characteristics of their farms. There are huge possibilities to help the cause of SI by recognising this and looking for ways to:

- Encourage farmers to work together through formal or informal collaboration, everything from sharing machinery to exchanging ideas
- Ensure that there is co-ordination across landscapes or catchments to ensure that farmers and society benefit from the right balance of land use
- Provide the evidence and data at the appropriate geographical scale to support decision makers
- Improve the resilience of the farming sector in challenging times

Our aim within the SIP is to provide the evidence, the opportunity and the challenge. This is not a conventional research project where the researchers provide data and then walk away. Our approach is to work with the farming community and others to try to understand what works, what does not and why. And we are not only interested in novel solutions and cutting edge innovation, as sometimes there are tried and tested solutions already out there that, for various reasons, have been neglected.

After a year I find it hard to imagine a world without SIP! Nor would I want to. Sometimes I am asked which is more important: food security or sustainability? The answer has to be that they are equally important and utterly inter-dependent. If our food supply chains are not sustainable then they are not secure and vice versa. We need food but we need all the other ecosystem services that our landscapes provide too. And we need to deploy science and practical experience in tandem to achieve a step change in the performance of our agricultural landscapes.

Why did I want to lead a SIP Project? I am steeped in the world of agriculture and the environment. From a farming background I went to Wye College and read Rural Environment Studies. My PhD in Rural Sociology was back in my beloved Devon amongst dairy and livestock family farmers, a tough and resilient group who continue to inspire and intrigue me. Sustainable intensification, especially at a landscape scale, involves huge challenges and opportunities. Getting it right is important in terms of the global challenges we face. It's great to have the opportunity to be working with a wide range of researchers, industry experts and policy specialists nationally and in our case study areas.

Professor Michael Winter is co-director of the Centre of Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter and leader of Project 2 of the SIP.

SIP in Focus

The what, how and who of SIP research

For the first edition of SIP scene our two project managers Gavin Huggett and Jennifer Preston introduce themselves and provide an overview of the major strands of our current work.

SIP Project 1: Integrated Farm Management for improved economic, environmental and social performance.

An introduction to SIP Project 1

In this project we are exploring the role of Integrated Farm Management (IFM) in delivering SI and interventions that may help achieve this. IFM is an approach aimed at developing a sustainable farming system, measured in terms of economic performance, environmental quality and social health. IFM has the potential to facilitate SI by managing the balance between farm productivity and other (mainly environmental) consequences of farm operations within the context of the whole farm business.

We have three main areas of research. The first, led by the University of Bristol, is very practical, and involves work on five case Study Farms. These have been chosen to represent a range of farming systems and environments across England and Wales. The farms all have established research activities, and each have a wealth of experience and background data that the SIP will build on and develop. These Study Farms will form the physical research 'platform' of the SIP.

The farms are Henfaes (an upland livestock farm, led by Bangor University), Allerton Project (a mixed arable and sheep farm, led by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust), Morley Farm (an arable farm, led by The Morley Agricultural Foundation and NIAB), Nafferton Farm (a mixed arable and dairy with organic farm, led by Newcastle University), and finally North Wyke and Future Farm (lowland beef / sheep and dairy farms run by Rothamsted Research and Duchy College respectively).

Each farm will evaluate and demonstrate farm management 'interventions' using IFM practices, that will look at how we can improve economic, environmental and social performance. For example, at Allerton and Morley we will look at the impacts of crop establishment method and cover crops on combinable crop productivity and soil condition. At North Wyke pastures have been re-sown with high sugar grasses, or grass/clover mixes, to look at their effects on feed conversion, greenhouse gas emissions and meat production. The Study Farms will showcase the potential benefits of interventions as well as providing an opportunity to test farm performance metrics (see below). The demonstrations will also provide platform for engagement with local farmers about IFM and SI. In addition we will be collecting information from a wider network of commercial farms within each study area to identify factors or practices associated with high economic, environmental or social performance.

Our second key area of research for SIP 1 is looking at how we can measure the performance of farms. Led by the Universities of Reading and Nottingham, this work is developing improved indicators and methodologies for assessing farm performance, building on the Farm Business Survey (FBS), and will develop integrated metrics that can used to assess how well a farming system is delivering economic, environmental and social outcomes. The indicators and metrics will be tested using the data collected from the network of commercial farms.

The third part of SIP 1's research is about helping farmers and their advisers to put IFM practices into action on farm. The University of Cambridge will lead work examining the wide range of decision support systems (DSS) and tools available to farmers and advisers, and will investigate better ways of communicating complex messages around IFM and SI. Aberystwyth University will develop a decision support framework linking appropriate IFM practices to desired SI outcomes, taking into account farm type and farming system.

Throughout all of this work we will be talking with farmers and advisers and other stakeholders, to find out how they view SI and IFM, how they make decisions and what practices they use.

Jennifer Preston, NIAB

One of the fundamental elements of the SIP, for me, is Knowledge Exchange; with an emphasis on exchange, not just knowledge transfer. We have 30 partners and sub-contractors on SIP 1, and it is a central part of my role to keep everybody talking and meeting, both within and outside of the SIP, to enable a flow of ideas and experience, working towards establishing the community of practice and expertise that is a key ambition of the SIP.

We have already started talking to a wide range of people, obtaining external insights that we can use to make the SIP as relevant and practical as possible.

Our SIP Partners have led a number of workshops in England and Wales, and have engaged with stakeholders, including farmers, supply chains and policy makers, discussing what SI means to different sectors, and what benefits they hope to gain from the tools and practices tested on the SI Platform. These meetings are helping to build the community of practice and expertise that we are aiming for, and have also raised questions and new viewpoints that can guide our researchers into thinking in new ways about SI and SI interventions.

We have also just had our first SIP Science Meeting in Leamington Spa. This was a great opportunity for SIP partners from all three projects to meet and discuss their progress and plans for the coming year. We were also very fortunate to welcome many external speakers, including Professor Allan Buckwell from the Institute for European Environmental Policy; Dr Rob Lillywhite from the University of Warwick; Mary Ryan from Teagasc; and Uffe Jorgensen from Aarhus University, giving us their perspectives on the challenges of measuring and achieving SI.

Jennifer Preston is Project co-ordinator for SIP Project 1 and is based at NIAB in Cambridge

SIP Project 2: Exploring opportunities and risks for Farming and the Environment at Landscape Scales

An introduction to SIP Project 2

Project 2 of the SIP, led by the University of Exeter, will investigate the actions that are needed at landscape scales* to deliver ecosystem services, productive and profitable farming businesses and biodiversity. This will be achieved by developing an understanding of the spatial variation in land capability (for food production and opportunities for other ecosystem services) and environmental risks, as well as the need for collaborative decision-making between farms to deliver on the SI challenge.

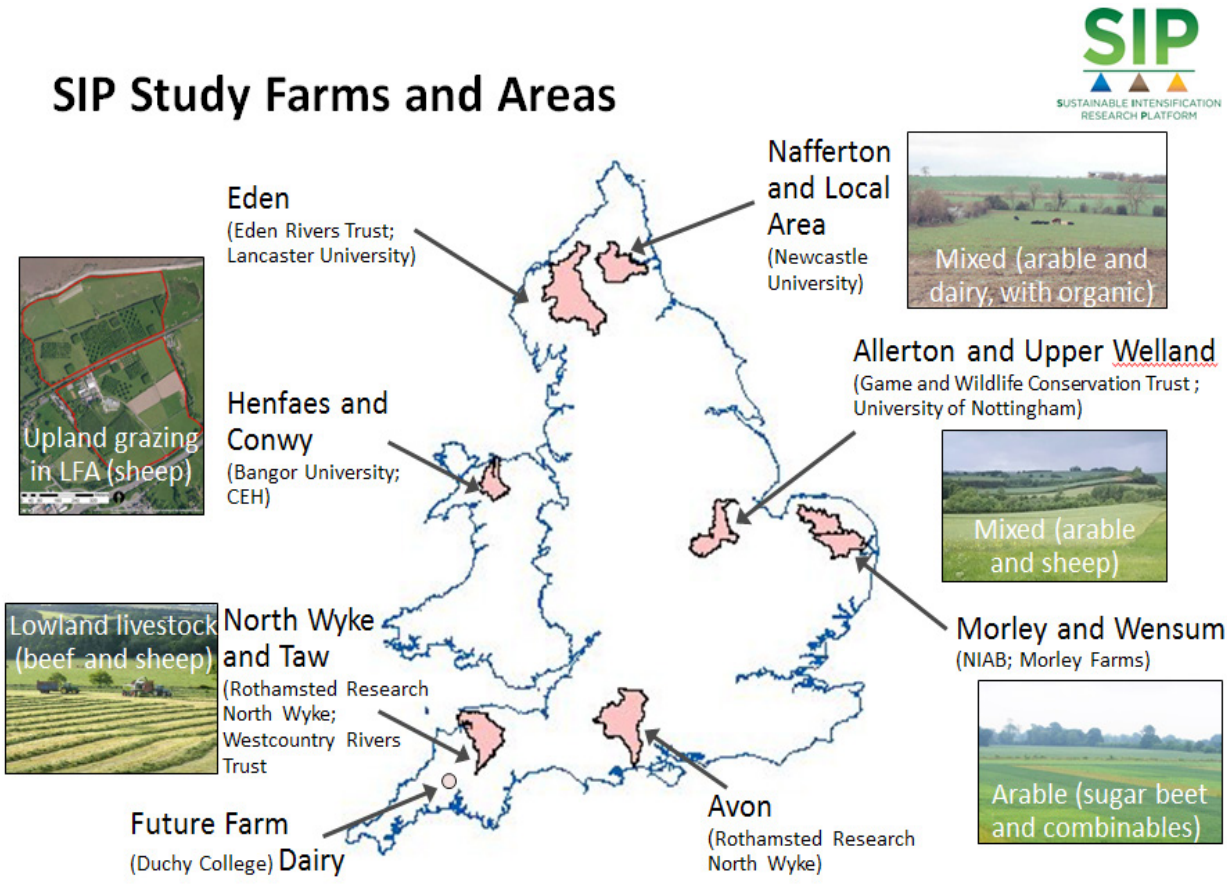
The overarching aim of the project is to establish improved knowledge and guidance for helping farmers and other stakeholders build and maintain collaborative networks and working relationships in order to improve the economic, social and environmental performance of agricultural land.

The research itself will focus on a collaborative approach bringing farmers and stakeholders together with agricultural, environmental and social scientists from over 20 organisations to understand what is required.

Detailed study will take place in seven study areas across England and Wales:

- Taw (Devon)
- Conwy
- Upper Welland (East Midlands)
- Nafferton (Northumberland)
- Wensum & Yare (Norfolk)
- Hampshire Avon
- Eden (Cumbria)

* Landscape Scales – area of land containing multiple farms or a river catchment.



Project 2 has three main objectives:

1. Develop a Landscape Typology for England and Wales

Objective 1, led by ADAS with CEH and Fera, is seeking to develop a way to classify landscapes based on different physical and environmental and social-economic characteristics such as soil type, water quality and crop yield, in order to help farmers and policy makers understand opportunities and risks for food production and the environment. This typology will consist of number of pre-existing sources of data related to some of the beneficial results (outcomes) that we would like to achieve with SI, such as increased crop yields, biodiversity or rural employment. These will be drawn together to form the basis of a *Dynamic Landscape Tool*. The tool is dynamic as it will allow stakeholders to select and weight data layers according to their perceived importance in relation to local and national priorities; it is landscape as it will show areas of similar opportunity and risk; and will be a tool that will enable the targeting of advice and incentive schemes.

The Dynamic Landscape Tool will then be tested as the basis as a targeted approach to SI in the Taw, Conwy and Upper Welland study areas. It is expected that this typology will highlight areas where there are trade-offs associated with delivering various outcomes related to SI and an assessment of these will be made with help from local farm managers, regulators and other stakeholders.

2. Identifying Where Coordinated Action is Required in order to Achieve SI

One of key the aims of SIP Project 2 is to understand when and where coordinated action is required to achieve SI and to design and test ways of collaborative working. There is a growing recognition that collaborative action is required, not only to improve economic performance, but to address environmental issues including resource protection and the improved delivery of ecosystem services. The Universities of Exeter, University of Nottingham, LEAF, Bangor University and Rothamsted Research will lead this work nationally with input from organisations with local expertise in the study areas.

Firstly, within each study area a survey of existing collaborative practices will be undertaken.

The next step is to identify the limiting factors for agricultural production and the desired environmental and socio-economic results that can only be achieved by groups or individuals working together. Focus groups of farmers, local residents, regulatory bodies and academics in the study areas will establish a common and clear set of local objectives for SI and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Thirdly, a prioritised set of these objectives will be selected and design criteria and practical guidance will be produced with the aim of supporting farmers and stakeholders in establishing collaborative practice. Finally, some of these practices will established in the study areas and monitored for their social, economic and environmental benefits.

3. Encouraging and Influencing Landscape-Level Collaboration

This work, led by the University of Nottingham, consists of two parts; a) understanding the social and economic constraints to collaboration and; b) the development of an SI benchmarking system to stimulate information sharing between groups of farmers.

The first will be achieved by conducting a review of existing literature on the subject of farmer collaboration. There will also be case studies produced of key national collaborative initiatives and an analysis of the English FBS 2011-12 module on business management practices. These activities will be supported by discussion groups in each of the study areas to gather in-depth perceptions of collaboration and the barriers to this.

The benchmarking system will be developed by the University of Cambridge and will use the metrics of SI produced by Project 1. It will produce a mechanism by which farmers can benchmark their SI performance across a range of key economic, environmental and social factors by extending the current FBS business benchmarking service. In other words this will enable farm businesses to measure their performance against others and against national data in terms of SI and it is hoped that this will encourage the wider uptake of shared practices.

Gavin Huggett, University of Exeter

When I first read about SIP I was struck by three things that seemed to set it apart from other projects: Its scope, its ambition, its approach...

The *scope* is comprehensive. The Platform will engage a wide range of scientific and practical expertise and examine ways of achieving SI from every angle, technological to biological, chemical and physical. It will look at processes on the individual farm, the river catchment, across counties and across the nation and will seek to understand how these relate to each other.

The *ambition* is huge. It sets out to improve the lives of the rural community, increase productivity and enhance the environmental and recreational other social benefits the land brings. It will do this by putting into place the policy infrastructure and decision support systems that will empower farmers to make choices and enhance SI on their farms.

The *approach* is interactive. The Platform will engage with local communities, understand their perceptions and co-design with them SI practices that will benefit communities and the country at large.

This all seemed like an impossible task, which is exactly why I wanted to manage the project! To be at the cutting edge of research in this area with some of the most enthusiastic, forward thinking and intelligent individuals in this field is a great privilege and I cannot wait to find out what the platform will uncover.

Gavin Huggett is Project Manager for SIP Project 2 and is based in the Centre for Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter

SIP Project 3: Influencing change

An introduction to SIP Project 3 Scoping Study

SIP Project 3 explores the drivers that influence decisions around productive and sustainable farm systems and practices. It is critical that practices underpinning SI are aligned with market demands and account for the demand side as well as farm production, which is the focus for SIP 1 and SIP 2. By understanding the drivers better, we can encourage the uptake of SI techniques and approaches to influence change in this policy area.

A wide range of mechanisms are available to influence production behaviours, from regulatory and incentive-based mechanisms to market instruments, education and information or co-operation. The most effective mechanisms are likely to be those that stimulate long-term changes in beliefs and norms, and support the behaviours that are needed for the sustainable intensification of agriculture.

Farmer decision making is extremely complex and comprises of both internal and external influences. In the SIP 3 scoping study, which included consultations with the supply chain, a LEAF Marque farmer survey and a literature review, it was evident that the supply chain, including farm suppliers and advisors, are key to influencing the adoption of new practices by farmers. The literature also suggests that a 'value chain' approach is better suited to exploring the objective of achieving sustainable intensification outcomes than the more traditional supply chain. The value chain emphasises the sharing of information, adding value and supply chain relationships – all are seen to be critical for securing innovation and efficiency. The scoping study also highlighted that shared goals across the supply chain are important but often absent. This can be addressed by voluntary and collaborative mechanisms that offer shared risks and rewards.

It is vital to further understand the how the food supply chain and other drivers can shape farmer attitudes and practices in the context of SI and what mechanisms are effective in implementing the practices researched in SIP 1 and SIP 2.

John Elliott, Head of Policy and Economics, Sustainable Food and Farming, ADAS UK Ltd

Stakeholder Viewpoint:

What does sustainable intensification mean to me?

Stewart Horne, Managing Director at BIP, offers a farmer perspective on sustainable intensification.

I run a small (46 ha) tenanted farm in East Cornwall, having been tenant there for 32 years. My philosophy throughout has been to maximise output whilst minimising inputs. Easy to say not so easy to achieve. The farm has a self-contained sheep flock of 400 ewes and 85 replacements with the finished lamb sold via a farmers co-operative.

The trouble with maximising outputs is that this usually means an increase in the use of fossil fuels (fertilisers, agro chemicals, purchases of concentrated feeds) in order to increase lambing %, stocking rates and price per animal sold. For many years I concentrated on improving carcass quality which improved the price per animal but increased vet and med costs and the need for intervention when lambing.

In 2009 I decided that it was time to try a new tack; I bought in two composite rams with New Zealand maternal bloodlines to try and produce lamb with less labour required at lambing time and a more resilient ewe. The results have been promising, although like all things in life compromises have been made; the Highlander ewes are prolific, medium weight (65kg) have outstanding maternal qualities but I find the surplus wether lambs slow to fatten and have only average carcass classifications. Selling deadweight is helped by the fact that the selling agents (Innovis) have negotiated a new grid classification at Two Sisters Food Group which penalises excess fat and increases the paid weight limits to 22kg. In my experience this means I can achieve top prices from average grade animals. I am slowly building up outlets for the females but this takes time as most sheep farmers are "conservative" with a small c, something that the SIP platform will need to address going forward.

In the past sustainable agriculture would automatically have assumed an organic system with its inherent low stocking rates, however my fixed costs make this a no win option. I do believe though that I have made the right choice of breed that can help me reach the required profit levels but at the same time will make less demand on external inputs.

Stewart Horne is Managing Director at BIP - Providing Business Support to SME's in the South West

Sippets

Latest news from the platform

Project 1 - First SIP Science Meeting

The First SIP Science Meeting took place on Wednesday 25th – Thursday 26th of March 2015, at the Woodland Grange Conference Centre, Leamington Spa.

As the SIP approached the end of its first year, the aim of the meeting was to discuss progress made on the Projects so far and findings to date. With presentations from each of the work packages and representatives from most SIP partner and sub-contractor organisations present it made for a fantastic opportunity for discussion and interaction.
We were also very fortunate to have excellent presentations from projects external to the SIP: Professor Allan Buckwell from IEEP, Professor Nic Lampkin from the Organic Research Centre, Dr Uffe Jorgensen from Aarhus University, Mary Ryan from Teagasc, Dr Rob Lillywhite from the University of Warwick This was allowed us to explore synergies and opportunities for collaboration, and to enable the SIP to benefit from the experience of others working in related areas.

The afternoon of the second day saw a series of dynamic breakout groups, with delegates in six groups (arable, lowland livestock, mixed arable / livestock, upland livestock, dairy, and horticulture) discussing information and guidance around IFM, barriers to implementation / uptake and how decision support can be fitted into workflows and the role of consultants / advisers.

This was the first of two scientific meetings; the second is to be held in 2016, and will be organised by the University of Exeter.

Project 2 - Research workshop on landscape scale collaboration for SI

Throughout the lifecycle of SIP a series of research workshops are being convened to discuss, elaborate and engage with the concepts and methods shaping platform activities. In early 2015 a workshop exploring the characteristics of landscape scale collaboration for sustainable intensification was held by platform researchers and stakeholders to inform platform activities taking place in the SIP case study areas. Participants learnt about findings of an academic review of research into farmer collaboration and considered the problems and prospects of collaboration in practice through series of recent and current case studies. This included reflections by project partners - the Allerton Project and LEAF - as well as a wider experiment in landscape scale approaches from the Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area. The policy and practice context of this way of thinking about sustainable intensification was provided by Natural England and Defra. These presentations became the focus of group discussion on the day in which some of the main characteristics of a collaborative, landscape scale approach were discussed and expanded upon. The findings of the day are being used by project researchers to shape early thinking about the collaborative measures that may be put in place on the ground.

SIP researchers and stakeholders discuss the characteristics of a successful collaborative approach

Project 1 - Sector-specific workshops on IFM for SI

One of the major objectives of the SIP programme is to develop a framework for guidance for farmers and their advisors on sustainable intensification through the principles of integrated farm management. The first step for this was to collect views and ideas from a range of interested stakeholders in a series of three workshops; these were focussed on the arable, dairy, and red meat sector supply chains. Participants in these included farmers, consultants, retailers, seed and feed suppliers, packaging specialists, wildlife groups, certification bodies, millers and processors, levy boards, and government representatives.

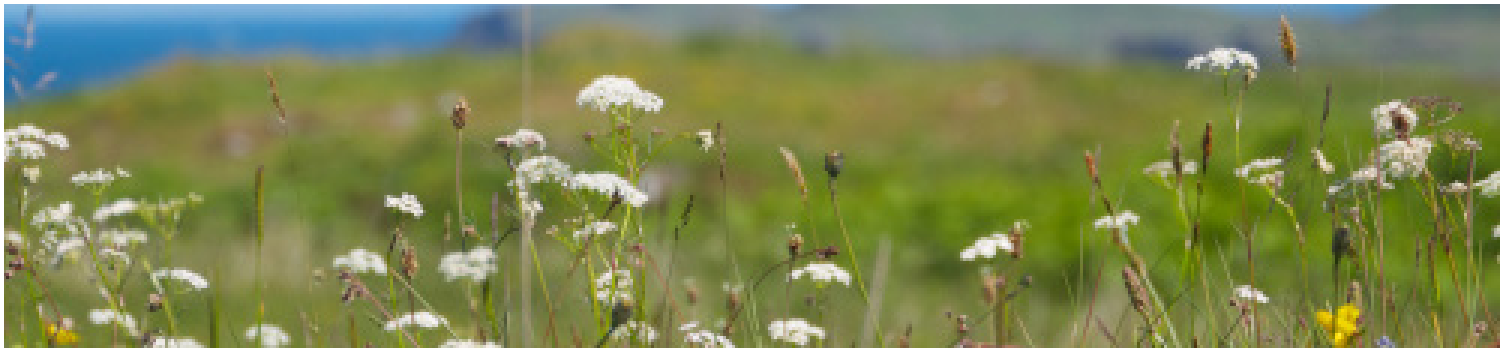
Although delegates to the workshops came from a diverse range of backgrounds, there was general consensus on the need to improve the sustainability of UK agriculture and food production. At the centre of any business is the need to make a profit, although there was much discussion about the fact that many farmers (regardless of sector) do not necessarily try to maximise profit – they may have other interests and objectives beyond simply making money. Greater resilience in the supply change was discussed at length, with the recognition that UK agriculture should seek to be self-sustaining and not be so dependent on subsidies, in addition for the desire for reduced market volatility. A key common message from the workshops was the need to manage the countryside in a way that minimises impact on the wider environment, and ensures that the land and rural communities are maintained for future generations to farm.

After the workshops there was much favourable feedback from the participants, with many people saying how useful the days had been, making them think about how SI is pertinent to what they do as part of their business.

Project 2 - Baseline Survey

The baseline survey commenced in March, with interview teams hard at work contacting farmers across the case study areas. So far, over 100 farmers have now kindly taken part in the survey and the majority of these have responded positively to the possibility of taking part in follow-up research. The survey includes a range of questions about current land and environmental management activities, future plans, and thoughts around the opportunities and challenges of co-operating with other farmers.

Interviews will continue over the next few months and are yet to be analysed, so it is still early days at this point. However, we are pleased with the survey's progress and confident that it will serve as a rich source of information about existing practices and farmer attitudes towards collaborative working. The results will help shape the design of farmer focus groups in each case study area, which will further explore opportunities and challenges for collaborative working at the landscape scale. They will also ultimately inform the development of potential tools to support and encourage landscape-scale sustainable intensification activities.



SIP Partners

SIP 1

NIAB (lead) with:
Aberystwyth University
ADAS
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (NERC)
Duchy College
University of East Anglia
East Malling Research
University of Exeter
Fera
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Harper Adams University
University of Hertfordshire
LEAF
University of Leeds
Newcastle University
University of Nottingham
Organic Research Centre
University of Reading
Rothamsted Research
RSPB
SRUC
Velcourt

SIP 2

University of Exeter (lead) with:
ADAS
Bangor University
BioSS
University of Bristol
BTO
University of Cambridge
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (NERC)
Eden Rivers Trust
Fera
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Glasgow Caledonian University
University of Kent
The James Hutton Institute
Lancaster University
LEAF
University of Leeds
Newcastle University
NIAB
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SIP

SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION
RESEARCH PLATFORM

SIPSCENE