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**Agri-environment Schemes - What
have they achieved and where do we
go from here?**

**in conjunction with the British Ecology Society
Agricultural Ecology Group**

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INTRODUCTION

Agri-environment schemes have now been in operation since the mid 1980s, and a range of different approaches are adopted across Europe. Many changes have taken place in the types of schemes supported and the approaches adopted to monitoring and evaluation. Past evaluations have highlighted both successes and perceived failures, and there has on occasion been controversy about the value of the agri-environment approach to environmental conservation on farmland. Nevertheless, such schemes continue to be the major vehicle for achieving environmental objectives in the agricultural context, and budgets are now higher than ever before. Major changes have occurred following the most recent CAP reforms, and monitoring and evaluation data are now becoming available for new schemes, giving early indications of performance. At the same time, new prescriptions continue to be developed and incorporated as schemes are reviewed and revised.

This volume contains papers presented at a three day conference held in April 2010 to consider the achievements of agri-environment schemes to date and how they might develop in the future. Themes explored at the conference and reported in these proceedings include the development of agri-environment policy, the rationale behind the current schemes, the science underpinning the options, implementation at field, farm and landscape scales, the assessment and evaluation of the outcomes, and the implications for future developments. Papers were offered by authors from across Europe, and the collection presented here provides a snapshot of the state of play with regard to agri-environment schemes, their successes and development needs, at a crucial time in their history.

The information contained in this volume will be of interest to all who are concerned with the future of the agricultural countryside of Europe, including policy makers, researchers, advisers, agricultural land managers, students.

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