

ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

ASPECTS OF APPLIED BIOLOGY 121

Rethinking Agricultural Systems in the UK

**in conjunction with the British Ecological Society's
Agricultural Ecology, Computation Ecology &
Forest Ecology Groups**

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INTRODUCTION

The organising committee welcome you to Rethinking Agricultural Systems in the UK; a meeting organised by the British Ecological Society and the Association of Applied Biologists. This meeting is a response to calls from international organisations, including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), for the development of sustainable solutions for food security.

There is potential for innovative development in the field of agroecology to meet the demands of the growing human population in a sustainable way. However, there is a natural tendency for thinking to fall into 'silos' and this can hinder such innovation. An important feature of the meeting will therefore be to encourage discussion of techniques across disciplines and discourage the use of labels so that we are unhindered by possibly negative preconceptions.

The meeting will explore theory and practice from a wide range of farming systems in the context of the ecosystem services they provide: we will discuss what we could do in an ideal world and how we can envisage positive changes to the current system given socioeconomic constraints. Participatory discussions will be focussed in four key workshops: Computational and Technological Solutions to Rethinking Agricultural Systems; Re-thinking Farming Systems: which novel systems will deliver?; Grand 'Landscape' Designs: beyond convention; Measuring Farmland Ecosystem Services: How should we measure the contribution of biodiversity to commercial food production?

The intention is that this will be the first in a series of three strategic events. This meeting aims to generate ideas for practical approaches, however radical, for the generation of more resilient agro-ecological systems. These proposals will be tabled in preparation for a second meeting (2014), where these concepts will be discussed with a view to assessing their feasibility with practitioners (e.g. farmers, growers and NGOs). A third meeting is planned, to take place in regional government centres with policy-makers to facilitate implementation.

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On behalf of the organising committee

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