

# Effective application: exploring synergy between Agricultural Economics and Applied Biology



Agricultural Economics Society

In response to an approach by the Agricultural Economics Society, a joint meeting with the Agricultural Economics Society, Effective application: exploring synergy between Agricultural Economics and Applied Biology, was held on April 16<sup>th</sup> before the start of their 86<sup>th</sup> annual conference. The meeting was held at the University of Warwick which is set in countryside just outside Coventry and is easily accessible by public transport. Like the AAB, the AES is an applied society which deals with all the messy complexity of real agricultural systems. The two societies have worked together before resulting in *Aspects of Applied Biology 93: Integrated Agricultural Systems: Methodologies, Modelling and Measuring*. The one day meeting described here took these ideas forward with the aim of fostering greater understanding and exploring the scope for productive collaborative research between members of the two societies. There were about 70 attendees, most of whom attended the rest of the AES meeting, including many younger researchers. All the speakers were invited although there was a poster session as well. After introductions from Stephen Ramsden, the AES programme secretary, and myself, the meeting started with the first session, Tools and applications. Steve Langton of the Defra Agricultural Change & Environment Observatory presented the first paper on contrasting approaches to stochastic models in science and economics. It was startling how two groups could use essentially the same technique but in very different ways. David Harvey of the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne then talked about Bayesian Belief Networks. Finally, James Gibbons of the University of Bangor discussed Modelling and valuation of ecosystems, a topic that a whole conference could have been devoted to. A session on Natural and Social Science perspectives on disease risk followed after coffee. Alan Macleod of the Food and Environment Research Agency talked about plant disease while Alistair Stott of the Scottish Agricultural College talked about animal disease. This was essentially a two by two factorial session with useful contrasts between plant and animal disease as well as natural and social science. Before we lunched, Tim Benton, the BBSRC Global Food Security Champion, gave an inspiring paper on this important topic. Unlike many others in the world today our food was secure and the lunch enabled networking to take place and metaphorical batteries to be recharged. However, I had to return early to get organised as I was chairing the afternoon session, Building systems. Andy Whitmore from Rothamsted started by talking about a new project relating to Delivering Sustainable Systems. Finally, Thomas Heckeley from the University of Bonn

talked about Economics and Applied Biology: the SEAMLESS project, which was completed in 2009. It was of particular interest to me as a member of that project to hear Thomas's reflections on its success and how the work was being taken forward. Finally, Stephen Ramsden and I summed up the day. We agreed that there was great scope for agricultural economists and applied biologists to work together. Indeed holistic solutions to the problems of agriculture require us to find ways to work together effectively.

-Graham Russell  
AAB programme Secretary

## A WARM WELCOME to our New Members elected 23 March 2012

**Ms Sarah Barlow**, PhD Student at Newcastle University, with special interests in cropping and the environment, plant ecology and restoration ecology

**Mr Craig Baxter**, PhD Student at The James Hutton Institute, with special interests in cropping and the environment, food systems and nematology

**Dr Emma F Bridge**, MSc Student, with special interests in biological control & IPM, cropping and the environment, pesticide application, physiology and precision agriculture

**Dr Raden R R Brotodjojo**, Lecturer at the Department of Agro Technology Indonesia, with special interests in biological control & IPM, cropping and the environment, pesticide application and integrated pest management

**Dr Toby J A Bruce**, Senior Research Scientist: Chemical Ecology at Rothamsted Research, with special interests in biological control & IPM, cropping and the environment, plant physiology and crop improvement

**Ms Clare Burrows**, Farmland Ecologist with the Countryside Council for Wales, Bangor, with a special interest in cropping and the environment

**Mr Jacob J Chant**, Mendip Hills Advisory Officer at Somerset Wildlife Trust, with special interests in cropping and the environment, grassland ecology and ecosystem services

**Dr Stephen P Chaplin**, Principal Specialist, Common Agricultural Policy at Natural England, with special interests in cropping and the environment and food systems

**Mr Theodore W Chapman**, UK Native Seed Hub Coordinator - Royal Botanical Garden at Kew, with special interests in conservation and habitat restoration

**Ms Claire Cornish**, Haymeadow Ecologist at Cumbria Wildlife Trust, with special interests in plant physiology and phytosociology