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TREES AND OUR CHANGING REGION - Consultation Response Form

ABOUT YOU

Please provide the following information to help us consider your response.

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Main Area of Interest (please tick one)	Public Sector	
	Community/Voluntary Sector	
	Tree/Woodland Owner	
	Tree/Woodland Consultant	
	Land Agent	
	Timber Merchant/Processor	
	Environmental Organisation	
	Recreation Organisation	
	Other (please specify)	Unincorporated association. Comprising researchers, lecturers, farmers, extension officers, consultants & representatives of government and semi-government organisations concerned with research, education and technology transfer related to trees in farmed landscapes

IMPORTANT TREE & WOODLAND ISSUES FOR THE REGION

1. Does the draft strategy identify all the issues that need to be considered?
2. Which issues do you think are particularly important?

YOUR RESPONSE:

1. No. The draft strategy concentrates on trees as components of woodlands or forests, and to a certain extent as isolated trees in urban environments, but does not explicitly include the issue of a strategy for trees on farmland. These trees will include farm woodlands, individual trees in fields and hedgerows, shelterbelts, windbreaks, orchard trees and trees grown for biomass (SRC). Farmland is the dominant land use in the region.

Trees on farmland have a valuable role both in promoting an *advanced economy* and in developing a *high quality environment*.

In terms of the economy, introducing more trees into areas largely dependent on agriculture for their economic success gives a more diverse source of income, and if trees are introduced on the scale of individual farms rather than in large woods, it increases the number of landowners to whom this income accrues. Advantages in terms of the opportunities to develop industries to transport and process the timber are no less for timber grown on farms than for timber grown in forests and large woods.

In terms of developing a high quality environment, introducing more trees to farmland increases biodiversity, improves the visual amenity and has similar benefits regarding coping with climate change to growing more trees elsewhere.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3. Do the eight Strategic Aims adequately cover the issues raised?
4. Do the supporting Objectives properly address those issues?

YOUR RESPONSE:

3. The strategic aims cover the important issues except as explained in 1. above.

4. The Objectives properly address these issues well, except in one instance.

Trees on farmland have a role in providing *healthy environments* too (Theme 6). Although Objectives 6.1 and 6.2 rightly concentrate on urban environments, there are many rural areas in the region that would benefit from introduction of more trees into farmed landscapes through increased biodiversity, improved visual amenity and, if planted in riparian strips along water courses to intercept leached nutrients, from improved water quality.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

5. Will the Desired Outcomes achieve the objectives to which they refer?
6. Are there other Outcomes we need to consider?

YOUR RESPONSE:

5. and 6. If the strategy is to include trees on farmland, this sector must be included in Theme 2, *Knowledge and Understanding*. In this context we note that the term 'sustainable forestry' as defined at the 1993 Ministerial Conference in Europe applies only to "forests and forest land" i.e. it does not include trees and woodlands).

It would be better if in Objective 2.1 and its outcomes “sustainable management” was used instead of “sustainable forestry” (three times) because then sustainable management of trees in urban places, trees in farmed landscapes, large woodlands and forests would all be covered. It is therefore unfortunate that Theme 3 is called “*Sustainable Forestry*” given the limited definition of the term on page 4.

Some modification will be required to some of the outcomes of some of the other objectives to include trees on farmland. However, mostly this will be implicit if trees on farmland are mentioned earlier in the document. Themes and objectives where trees on farmland become important in realising the outcomes are shown below:

In Theme 3, *Sustainable Forestry*, mention is made that the region contains a significant sawmilling and processing cluster for hardwoods. It is also pointed out that, as many of the UK’s timber imports come through local ports, timber processing industries in the region could usefully be expanded. This is a good point, as more processing of timber locally would have considerable economic benefits. Any increased production of timber from farms would feed into this enhanced local industry. In this context the growing of high quality timber furniture species would be particularly useful.

It is mentioned in the draft that if timber prices fail to rise, there will be difficulty in managing the region’s trees, but in spreading some of the tree production to farms, the number of people involved in tree husbandry is increased and diversified into the agricultural sector, so this risk is spread further. A larger base of people with the necessary skills gives more scope for recovery after economic downturn. Farmers are already engaged in a *woodland energy market* (Objective 3.2, outcome b) through their adoption of biomass crops, and would be very well placed to supply a *growing market for non-timber forest products* (Objective 3.2, outcome c). These products could include nuts grown specially (e.g. cob nuts), nuts from dual-purpose trees (e.g. walnut) and fruits, which would all be much easier grown and harvested on a farm scale than in larger woodlands.

Increased involvement of the agricultural sector in growing trees would require adequate *support mechanisms* (Objective 3.3, outcomes a, b and c). Business development advisory services should include ADAS, and skills training should include teaching tree husbandry to farmers and farm workers. Co-operation, in terms of machinery sharing and joint product marketing, is already practised in the agricultural industry, and would valuably be expanded to include processing farm woodland products.

Trees on farmland could have considerable benefits in helping us to cope with *climate change* (Theme 7), through mopping up excess water on floodplains, reducing wind speed, carbon sequestration and through substitution of fossil fuels when they are grown as biomass crops. Trees on farmland should be included as components of the outcomes to Objectives 7.1 and 7.2.

PRIORITIES

7. Do the priorities suggested reflect what needs to be done across the region as a whole?

8. Are there areas within the region where the priorities might differ from those suggested (please use the map on the inside front cover if needed)?

YOUR RESPONSE:

7. The priorities seem to be correct, allowing for the fact that the contribution of trees on farmland seems to have been overlooked. Adding the agricultural sector into the strategy should not alter the priorities given to the different outcomes.

8. No but this is because the supplied map is for local government administrative areas with farmed landscapes distributed across all these administrative areas. If a geographic rather than political map had been used, then priorities would be different in upland areas compared with lowland arable areas.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Please feel free to comment here on any other aspect of the draft strategy.

In conclusion, it is not clear to us who will have responsibility for trees in farmed landscapes. It appears to us that it falls between the Forestry Commission and DEFRA with no-one taking responsibility. At present when it comes to trees on farmed landscapes, foresters say it is not forestry, agriculturalists say it is not agriculture. The explicit mention of 'agroforestry' in Article 41 in the EU's draft Regulation on Support for Rural Development means surely that someone will have to take responsibility in future. The same may well apply to trees in the built environment. It would be encouraging if an organisation with a real interest and great expertise in trees like the Forestry Commission were to take the lead in what presently is a 'poor relation', a no-man's land. This may require a cultural change in the Forestry Commission.

In making this response, the Farm Woodland Forum, is none the less impressed by the quality of the strategy document and the evident time and thought that has gone into it. That the tree, as an individual, is specifically mentioned is a significant step forward; it would be good to see one more 'small step' i.e. recognising that there is a 'continuum' between forest and individual tree.

L.D. Incoll and D.J. Pilbeam
For the *Farm Woodland Forum*

If you need to continue on separate sheets, please mark them clearly with your name and organisation. Your response should be sent to:

Vince Carter, Regional Forestry Framework Co-ordinator, Forestry Commission, Wheldrake Lane, Crockey Hill, York, YO19 4FF.

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Closing date: Friday October 15th 2004