



NEWS RELEASE

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Cumbrian food for thought

Cumbrian Hill Farmers gathered in Cockermouth last Thursday to discuss how upland farming methods can help to address issues of food security, and the maintenance of the region's natural environment.

This, the fourth annual Hill Farming Conference, was organised by ACTION with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) and the North West Uplands Farming Forum, with the support of the Rural Development Programme for England - Fells & Dales.

Sir Donald Curry, former Chair on the Government's Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, set the tone for the day. He pointed out that hill farming in Cumbria has a good story to tell but that more people need to hear it.

Hill Farming shapes and maintains Cumbria's world renowned landscape whilst also producing high quality food; both enjoyed by millions of visitors each year. The future of this is threatened by the lack of young people entering hill farming today.

Jonathan Birnie, Agricultural Research and Development Manager for Dunbia, one of Europe's leading meat suppliers, highlighted the emerging global food security challenge; '25% of wages was spent on food in 1950, compared with only 9-10% today' 'There is a need to balance the requirements of the western consumer with the need to feed nine billion people by 2050.'

He went on to acknowledge the unique character of the hill farming system: 'hills can only really produce ruminants (grazing animals), there is a limit to other production options'. Without economic sustainability for hill farming the opportunities this unique character brings will be lost.

Conference Chairman Terry McCormick of ACT summed up the event by saying: 'Cumbrian Hill Farming is well placed to meet food security challenges and has a long tradition of serving the environment. Economic fragility puts all this at risk.

'Young people will only be attracted into Hill Farming if it is economically vibrant. Without this succession, the environmental and community benefits currently taken for granted will disappear. These annual conferences continue to bring resources and people together to meet the challenges facing hill farming today.'

For more information about the conference and presentations, please contact Terry McCormick at ACT on Tel: 01768 869523 or Email: terrymccormick@cumbriaaction.org.uk

- Ends -

Further press information available from:

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Notes to Editors:

North West Uplands Farming Forum

- The aim of the North West Uplands Farming Forum is to provide a mechanism to increase co-operation, knowledge and communication between organisations and individuals working to support sustainable upland communities in the North West.
- Current membership includes; Action with Communities in Cumbria, Natural England, LDNPA, National Farmers Union, Friends of the Lake district, University of Cumbria, Lancaster University, Country Land Owners Association, Cumbria Farmers Network, Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency, National Trust, Carnegie Remote & Peripheral Areas.
- For more information please visit the website: www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria

(Previously known as Voluntary Action Cumbria)

- ACT is Cumbria's Rural Community Council and a registered charity.
- ACT is working with people and communities to improve the quality of life in rural Cumbria.
- ACT is an independent organisation able to work with a wide range of partners on an open and equitable basis.
- Established in 1948, for 60 years ACT has been supporting communities that are socially, economically and environmentally vibrant where the needs of all are considered.
- To find out more information, please visit ACT's website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

Rural Development Programme for England and Wales

The Rural Development Programme for England is jointly funded by the Government and the EU through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Defra is the managing authority for RDPE which forms part of 'Solutions for Business', the Government's package of publicly funded support designed to help companies start and grow. The Regional Development Agencies have been charged with managing the delivery of the RDPE and, in Cumbria, it is delivered by Cumbria County Council through two Local Action Groups covering the Cumbria Fells and Dales and the Solway, Borders and Eden area.