

## **THE ‘WHOLE FARM APPROACH’**

*Relevant report: The Mid-Term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy (Third Report, Session 2002-03, HC 151, 21 January 2003) (Government Reply: Fourth Special Report, Session 2002-03, HC 615, 8 April 2003)*

*“In 2003, Defra told the Committee that the Government was “developing the whole farm approach to improve outcomes in all areas including administration, business planning, management and enforcement”. The Committee would welcome an update on progress in introducing the whole farm approach.”*

### **Defra response**

#### **Background**

1. We will create a single set of core data on farms and farming activities. This will be accessible to the widest audience, and shared with other regulatory partners through the most appropriate channels possible. This will:

- reduce bureaucracy and duplication of requests for information;
- allow the targeting and coordination of risk based inspections;
- provide an evidence base for the streamlining of regulation;
- enable farmers to recognise where there is a regulatory requirement and help them to plan for compliance;
- provide targeted advice to individual farmers.

#### **Progress to date**

2. The Whole Farm Approach has been developed in close contact with a range of key stakeholders and partners including the Rural Payments Agency, the Environment Agency, the Food Standards Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and the National Farmers’ Union.

3. We have also been working with industry and other stakeholders to establish the most effective means of delivery to maximise its availability, including the use of intermediaries and a range of different channels.

4. Our development process has involved a series of interactive pilots with industry followed by usability testing and feedback. The evidence gathered in this way has been fed back into the design and development of the Approach.

5. The CD version of the Appraisal is well developed and has received positive feedback from stakeholders. A prototype portal has been developed and has been tested by a number of farmers as part of the development process. Feedback from these review groups is being used to further enhance the look and usability of the portal prior to release in the Autumn.

6. The programme of work underwent a Gateway 1 review by the Office of Government Commerce in April and received an Amber assessment with no significant problems identified.

### **Timetable for delivery**

7. Phased delivery of the Approach will begin with a controlled system preview from September 2005 which will help us to deliver a positive experience for participants and ensure that WFA provides real benefits for farmers. We will be inviting farmers to participate by inputting core data into the new system, providing evidence of compliance with a range of requirements and obtaining targeted guidance and help linked to cross compliance and other key areas of interest to them.

8. There will be further releases beginning in February 2006 which will add new functionality. Our vision is that the Approach includes more transactional benefits to farmers, such as the ability to notify the Environment Agency in order to register an exemption from waste licensing, registration under food and feed hygiene regulations and application for the Single Payment Scheme. Over time the service is expected to provide a channel to access the full range of Defra services. This will include a Farm Advisory System, which is linked to cross-compliance standards and will provide both on-line and face-to-face advice on how farmers might adapt their practices to meet them. The system will be in place by 1 January 2007.