

**DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT,  
FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

**PROJECT DO107  
SCOPING STUDY FOR THE IMPACT EVALUATION OF  
ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY  
AND PROFITABILITY IN AGRICULTURE**

**FINAL REPORT**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In September 2010, Fraser Associates was commissioned by Defra's Farming Performance Theme Group (FFG) to examine the feasibility of undertaking impact evaluation research in relation to measures supported since 2002 under the Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (SSFF). In the course of the study the focus of the Department's interest has evolved to emphasise **actions to improve the productivity and profitability of agriculture and the closely associated food chain**.

The main body of the Report commences in Chapter 2 by considering the nature of SSFF, how it was structured and how it was implemented.

Chapter 3 summarises the findings from analysis of the SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions. It identifies which of these are of greatest relevance to improving agricultural productivity and profitability. It goes on to demonstrate how actions can be brigaded by type for the purposes of joint evaluation.

Chapter 4 proposes a model of qualitative evaluation which can be applied over the lifetime of SSFF from 2002-10 and considers a range of possible approaches to quantitative impact evaluation in 2008-10, the window in which robust impact evaluation can be conducted. Conclusions are drawn on the impact evaluation approach that has best fit with the Department's current needs.

Chapter 5 sets out a framework for evaluating actions to improve the productivity and profitability of agriculture based upon the recommended thematic approach. It sets out objectives for the evaluation, proposes scope, method, timing and resources.

This study has inherited language from a variety of sources, notably from the framing of SSFF itself, from the operations of partner organisations and from economic evaluation culture. The range of terms used is inevitably challenging for the reader. We have endeavoured to address through the provision of a Glossary and in Chapter 2 by explaining the structure and organisation of SSFF.

Annex I reports on a range of work that was carried out to verify the feasibility of different approaches to evaluation, including that which is proposed.

Annex II considers some technical issues important to successful evaluation design.

Annex III reports on a focus group held in November 2010 for stakeholders in SSFF where the added value from the administrative processes surrounding SSFF was highlighted.

## 2 THE SCOPING STUDY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SSFF

### 2.1 Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop a framework for evaluating interventions over the past decade that are likely to have made a contribution to the competitiveness of agriculture. For most of the period since 2002, such interventions have operated in the context of the Sustainability Strategy for Farming and Food (SSFF).

Reflecting policy development taking place in parallel with the scoping study, the focus has become refined during the study:

- **evaluation interest having become concentrated upon agriculture and the closely associated food chain (as opposed to the entire food chain "from farm to fork").**
- **the concept of competitiveness having become concentrated upon productivity as the main dimension of competitiveness that primary producers can influence.**

### 2.2 The Origin of SSFF

SSFF represented the policy response of the Government of the day to a series of highly disruptive events affecting agriculture and rural development, most notably the BSE<sup>1</sup> crisis of the 1990s which saw exports of British Beef banned between 1996 and 2006 and the FMD<sup>2</sup> outbreak of 2001. Developed against this background, SSFF was an **integrated statement of policy** interpreted in the context of the recommendations of the Curry Commission<sup>3</sup> and the growing focus on sustainable development within Government Policy<sup>4</sup>. Characteristics of SSFF with further implications for the feasibility of undertaking evaluation include:

- SSFF was not a conventional strategy aligning resources with objectives and priorities. It introduced some new resources to address a small number of specific Curry recommendations; for the most part it reflected existing resource allocations.
- SSFF was not a programme. While a system of baselines and high-level outcomes was identified and tracked, it did not have an integrated administrative system for monitoring delivery.

### 2.3 The Structure of SSFF

The SSFF had a hierarchical structure which, for the purposes of this assignment we describe in Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1 below.

At the highest level, it may be seen that five **SSFF Priorities** were identified. Underlying each of the SSFF Priorities a set of SSFF Measures and Sub-Measures was proposed. For the purposes of this exercise, we shall refer to these collectively as **SSFF Measures**. As already noted, SSFF was essentially a co-ordinating mechanism with little resource of its own. Delivery of the SSFF Measures (and, consequently, the SSFF Priorities) relied upon the **Implementing Actions**, a

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<sup>1</sup> Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

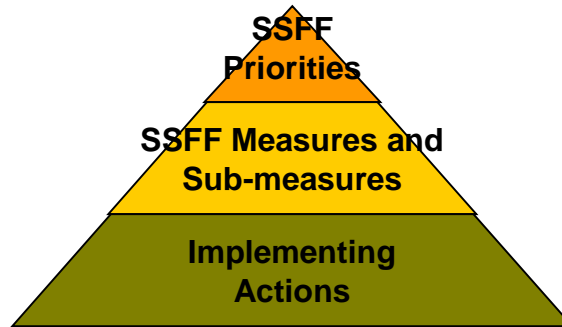
<sup>2</sup> Foot and mouth disease

<sup>3</sup> Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002: Farming and Food: A Sustainable Future

<sup>4</sup> A better quality of life - strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom - 1999

combination of existing initiatives and some bespoke to SSFF, which were carried through by a range of organisations.

**FIGURE 2.1 SSFF STRUCTURE**



<b>TABLE 2.1 THE RELATIONSHIP OF SSFF PRIORITIES AND MEASURES</b>		
<b>SSFF Priorities</b>	<b>SSFF Measures<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>SSFF Sub-Measures</b>
A More Effective Food Chain	<i>Reconnecting with the Market</i>  Cooperation	Adding Value Assurance Schemes Organic Action Plan Export Promotion Improved Efficiency Public Procurement Farm Diversification Business Advice
The Global Context	Trade Liberalisation Decoupling of CAP and Production	
Enhancing our Environment	<i>Reducing Pollution</i>  <i>Agri-environment Schemes</i>	Diffuse Pollution Pesticides Regulation and the Whole Farm Approach Stewardship Schemes Climate Change Adaptation
Investing in the Future	<i>People</i>  Investment, Research and New Technology Food Industry Sustainability Strategy	Improving Skills Skills and Learning Review Safety at Work Demonstration Farms New Entrants Tenant Farmers Agricultural Wages Board
Healthy Communities	Nutrition Food Safety Animal Health and Welfare <i>Rural Communities</i>	Farming and Food Within the Rural Community Diversification Rural Infrastructure and Access

<sup>1</sup> Those SSFF Measures with a set of Sub-Measures are shown in Italics.

## 2.4 The Evolution of SSFF

There was considerable evolution in the implementation of SSFF over its lifetime. The Strategy document identified the pre-existing and planned Implementing Actions. However, many of these actions came to an end within a few years and thereafter, what constituted delivery of SSFF became a matter of interpretation; there is no definitive list of Implementing Actions.

Moreover, implementation of SSFF evolved in response to changes in the institutional landscape over the past 9 years. In its initial stages, implementation was largely through national schemes, in some cases implemented regionally to national rules. From 2005 on, there was much greater delegation to a mix of national and regional agencies and interpretation of SSFF in the context of regional priorities.

## 3 THE FEASIBILITY OF EVALUATING ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY OF AGRICULTURE

### 3.1 General

In this Chapter we present the findings of our research into the feasibility of evaluating interventions with potential to improve agricultural productivity and profitability, noted in Section 2.1 as the refined focus of the study. In particular we:

- correlate Implementing Actions delivered since 2002 with the SSFF Measures.
- establish the focus of evaluation interest by filtering SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions to identify those that are most relevant and those that are capable of qualitative and quantitative impact evaluation.
- consider possible means of brigading the SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions by type to facilitate their joint evaluation.

### 3.2 Analysing the SSFF Measures

#### 3.2.1 Identifying SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions

As noted above, SSFF was an integrated policy statement with limited resource of its own and there is no definitive list of the Implementing Actions that constituted its delivery. Accordingly, as a first step, it was necessary to develop an overview of the delivery of SSFF and this was accomplished from review of the SSFF Strategy document, other desk-based research and ad-hoc discussions with Defra and RDA personnel. For each SSFF Measure, the main Implementing Actions were identified and prioritised for further investigation on the basis of their perceived relevance to agricultural competitiveness.

#### 3.2.2 Analysing SSFF Measures

To facilitate a systematic approach in exploring the SSFF Measures in more detail, a template was developed to guide the collection of information. This was applied to mainly web-based resources, supplemented in some cases with discussions with Defra and RDA personnel.

The level of detail in the material available online varies considerably from action to action and by vintage. Much is descriptive rather than evaluative. More detailed information is available on current actions. While these sources did not allow a complete and consistent set of SSFF Measure analyses to be developed, they have nevertheless provided substantial insight relevant to our purposes.

The main areas investigated were as follows:

- the relevance of SSFF Measures to farming and food chain competitiveness and economic outcomes.
- the existence and quality of logic chains linking the rationale of SSFF Measures with implementation and the resulting outcomes.
- the interventions supported and the possibility of aligning them with a typology.
- the types of beneficiary.
- the location of beneficiary and administrative data.

### 3.3 Establishing the Focus of Evaluation Interest

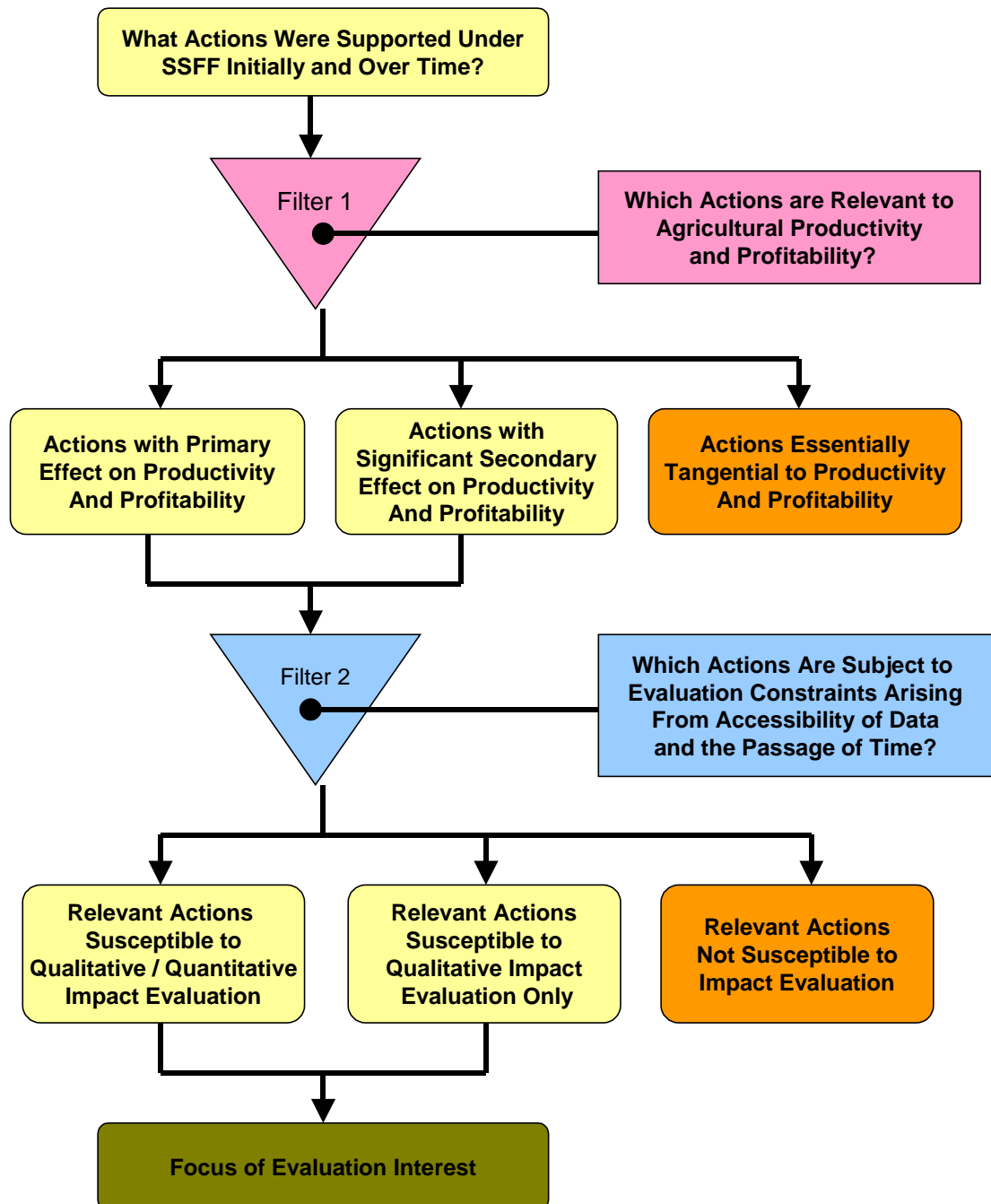
#### 3.3.1 General

The findings from the Analysis of SSFF Measures were used to filter the Implementing Actions on the basis of:

- their relevance to agricultural productivity and profitability (Filter 1).
- constraints to their evaluation (Filter 2).

Figure 3.1 illustrates the process involved.

FIGURE 3.1: ESTABLISHING THE FOCUS OF EVALUATION INTEREST





### 3.3.2 Filter 1: Relevance to Agricultural Productivity and Profitability

SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions were assigned on the basis of a reading across:

- their stated objectives.
- the nature of the interventions described.
- the beneficiaries targeted.
- the types of output and outcomes forecast.

It was found that a relatively limited number of SSFF Measures / Implementing Actions were directly concerned with farm-level productivity and profitability. Prominent among these were actions directed at helping farmers access new markets, to internalise value-added through individual and cooperative investment and to improve process and resource efficiency.

A further class of SSFF Measures / Implementing Actions were found to have other drivers, but to have potential to impact on farm-level productivity and profitability. Examples included strategic initiatives more directed at food processing and distribution and some environmental initiatives that could contribute to diversification in agriculture.

A relatively large number of SSFF Measures / Implementing Actions were considered to be tangential to farm-level productivity and profitability. These included regulatory actions, strategic actions directed further up the food chain, wider rural development and social actions. Some of this group of actions were farm-focused, including environmental stewardship actions that, while having economic outcomes through income support, were considered tangential to agricultural performance. It is possible that some regulatory actions, while assessed as tangential to agricultural performance *in purpose*, might have some unintended negative consequences.

In some instances actions fell into more than one class, most notably business advice which could potentially be very broadly based and human resources actions which may or may not contribute to agricultural performance.

### 3.3.3 Filter 2: Constraints on Evaluation

Having established through Filter 1 the SSFF Measures / Implementing Actions of greatest interest in terms of their potential contribution to agricultural productivity and profitability, the question arises of the type of evaluation that may be feasible. From our work two issues were identified that had a significant bearing on whether a quantitative **impact evaluation** would be possible in addition to a more qualitative evaluation:

- the accessibility and configuration of administrative and beneficiary data.
- the effects of the passage of time since intervention.

The accessibility and form of data is a particular issue for pre-2007 interventions. Administrative data relating to older initiatives has largely been archived and retrieval may be problematic. As we discuss further in Annex I, the accessibility and configuration of data had potential to be a significant impediment even with current interventions, due to its dispersal and diversity across the English regions. However, examination of sample data suggests that the data that exist are capable of being aligned to a large extent, although not without considerable effort.

A more intractable issue is the passage of time. Successful impact evaluation requires research to be carried out at an appropriate point in time relative to the intervention. There are a number of practical issues that arise in relation to interventions from more than three or so years ago:

- there is a loss of institutional memory as projects close down and managers are dispersed.
- beneficiary recollection becomes less acute and more likely to be confused with other support.

For most business support interventions the ideal window is between 1 and 3 years following support as it both covers the period when evaluation is feasible and the period in which benefits from most types of intervention become apparent<sup>5</sup>. SSFF was implemented over a relatively long period. For the reasons outlined above, it would now be difficult to conduct quantitative impact evaluation of many interventions earlier than 2007.

The outcome of the filtering exercise is shown in Table 3.1.

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<sup>5</sup> For certain forms of business support, such as support for research and development, benefits may only be over a longer period and the challenge to attribution is greater as a consequence.

TABLE 3.1: SSFF MEASURES / IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS APPRAISAL PROCESS							
SSFF MEASURE	IMPLEMENTING ACTION	Filter 1			Filter 2		
		Actions with Primary Effect on Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Actions With Significant Secondary Effect on Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Actions Essentially Tangential to Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Relevant Actions Susceptible to Qualitative and Quantitative Impact Evaluation	Relevant Actions Susceptible to Qualitative Impact Evaluation Only	Relevant Actions Not Susceptible to Impact Evaluation
Adding Value	ERDP Processing and Marketing Grant (2002-06)	✓				✓	
	ERDP Rural Enterprise Scheme (2002-06)	✓				✓	
	Woodland Harvesting, Processing and Marketing Grants Scheme (2005-06)	✓				✓	
	RDPE Measures 122 and 123 (2007-)	✓			✓		
Assurance	Agricultural Development Scheme (2002-07)			✓			
Organic Action Plan	Action Plan for Organic Production in England (2002-08)			✓			
	LINK R&D Programme (2003-)			✓			
	See also Stewardship Schemes below						
Export Promotion	Food from Britain (2002-09)			✓			
	IATC (2003-11)			✓			
Improved Efficiency	Agricultural Development Scheme (2002-07)	✓				✓	
	Food Chain Centre (2002-07)		✓			✓	
	OFT Code of Practice (2002-03)			✓			
	RDPE Measures 121, 123 and 124 (2007-)	✓			✓		
Public Procurement	Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (2003-)			✓			
	OGC Collaborative Food Procurement Prog. (2008-11)			✓			
Farm Diversification	ERDP Energy Crops Producer Group Scheme (2002-06)	✓				✓	
	Bio-energy Capital Grants Scheme (2006-)		✓		✓		
	Pillar 1 Energy Crops Scheme			✓			
	RDPE Energy Crops Scheme (2007-)	✓			✓		
	RDPE Measures 121, 221 and 311 (2007-)	✓			✓		
Business Advice	Farm Business Advice Service (2005-07)	✓	✓			✓	
	RDPE Measures 114 and 115 (2007-)	✓	✓		✓		
	General eligibility for Business Link support (2002-)	✓	✓		✓		
Co-operation	Agricultural Development Scheme (2002-07)	✓				✓	
	RDPE Measure 124 (2007-)	✓			✓		
	English Farming and Food Partnerships (2003-10)		✓			✓	
	Food Chain Centre (2002-07)		✓		✓		

SSFF MEASURE	IMPLEMENTING ACTION	FILTER 1			FILTER 2		
		Actions with Primary Effect on Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Actions With Significant Secondary Effect on Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Actions Essentially Tangential to Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Relevant Actions Susceptible to Qualitative and Quantitative Impact Evaluation	Relevant Actions Susceptible to Qualitative Impact Evaluation Only	Relevant Actions Not Susceptible to Impact Evaluation
Trade Liberalisation	WTO negotiations (2002-)			✓			
Decoupling of CAP and Production	CAP Reform (2002-)			✓			
	Agri-environment Measures - See Stewardship Schemes						
Diffuse Pollution	Review underway at time of SSFF (2002)			✓			
	ERDP Rural Enterprise and Agri-environment Schemes (2002-06)			✓			
	RDPE Measures 111, 121, 122, 125, 214, 216, 221 and 223 (2007-)			✓			
	Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative (2006-)			✓			
Pesticides	Pesticides Voluntary Initiative (2002-)			✓			
	Crop protection management plans (2002-)			✓			
	National sprayer testing scheme (2002-)			✓			
	Pesticides Forum (2002-)			✓			
Regulation / Whole Farm Approach	Environmental Management Systems (2006-)			✓			
	Environmental Auditing (2006-)			✓			
Stewardship Schemes	Amendment to ERDP Organic Farming Scheme (2003-05)		✓			✓	
	Environmental Stewardship Pilots (2005-07)			✓			
	Environmental Stewardship (2005-)			✓			
	Farming Futures (2007-)		✓			✓	
Improving Skills	Environmental Transformation Fund (2008-)		✓		✓		
	ERDP Vocational Training Scheme (2002-07)	✓	✓			✓	
	RDPE Measure 111 Vocational Training and Information Actions (2007-)	✓	✓		✓		
Skills and Learning Review	RDA / LSC initiatives varying by region (2002-)	✓	✓		✓		
	Skills and Learning Review (2002)			✓			
Safety at Work	Forms part of Pillar 1 cross-compliance			✓			
Demonstration Farms	Pilot network of demonstration farms (2002-)		✓			✓	
New Entrants	New Entrants Advice Scheme (2003)		✓				
Tenant Farmers	Promotion of tenancy reform (2002-)			✓			
Agricultural Wages Board	Review of Agricultural Wages Board (2002)			✓			

SSFF MEASURE	IMPLEMENTING ACTION	FILTER 1			FILTER 2		
		Actions with Primary Effect on Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Actions With Significant Secondary Effect on Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Actions Essentially Tangential to Farm-level Productivity and Profitability	Relevant Actions Susceptible to Qualitative and Quantitative Impact Evaluation	Relevant Actions Susceptible to Qualitative Impact Evaluation Only	Relevant Actions Not Susceptible to Impact Evaluation
Investment, Research and New Technology	Teaching Company Scheme (2002-03)	✓	✓			✓	
	Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (2003-)	✓	✓		✓		
	Regional Technology Transfer Centres		✓				
	LINK R&D Programme (2003-)		✓	✓	Partial		
	GMO Farm-scale Trials (2001-05)			✓			
Sustainable Food Industry Strategy	Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (2006)			✓			
	Pioneers Programme (2002-)			✓			
	Ethical trading initiative (2002-)			✓			
Nutrition	Healthy Start / Welfare Food Scheme Reform (2002-)			✓			
	Food and Health Action Plan (2002-)			✓			
	Local Delivery Plans (2002-)			✓			
Food Safety	Range of FSA initiatives (2002-)			✓			
Animal Health and Welfare	Animal Health and Welfare Strategy (2005)			✓			
	Illegal Imports Programme (2002)			✓			
Farming and Food Within the Rural Community	No measures articulated						
Diversification	ERDP, Rural Enterprise Scheme (2002-06)	✓				✓	
	ERDP Woodland Grants / Premium Schemes (2002-06)		✓	✓		✓	
	RDPE Energy Crops Scheme (2007-09)	✓			✓		
	RDPE Measures 221 First Afforestation of Agricultural Land. 311 Diversification into Non-Agricultural Activities (2007-)	✓	✓	✓	Partial		
Rural Infrastructure and Access	Elements of ERDP (2002-07)		✓	✓		✓	
	RDPE Measures 125, 312, 313, 321, 322, and 323 (2007-)		Partial	Partial	Partial		
	RDA development initiatives in rural areas - market towns, sites and premises, training establishments (2002-)			✓			

Note: Implementing Actions highlighted in red are eliminated by the filtering process

### 3.4 Developing a Typology of Actions

From the outset of the scoping study it was appreciated that the large number of discrete interventions within the scope of SSFF was likely to preclude impact evaluation research on an intervention-by-intervention basis on grounds of cost and proportionality. Accordingly, the scope for brigading interventions and their joint research was a key consideration in the analysis of SSFF Measures.

Our work examined two main bases for grouping interventions:

- firstly, a typology based upon techniques of intervention (advice, technical support, investment support, etc.).
- secondly, a thematic typology based upon the objective of interventions (enhancing business performance, diversification, developing business capacity, etc.).

A third potential typology based upon beneficiary groups (farm enterprises, food producers and distributors, food industry managers and workers, etc) was considered initially but is rendered redundant by the client's increased focus on farm-level productivity and profitability.

Table 3.2 shows, for the filtered set of SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions, their potential alignment with intervention types.

#### Technical Typology

It may be seen that all of the Implementing Actions could be aligned with one or more types of intervention from a list of 20 types, comprising:

- nine intervention types focused on individual farm and food businesses.
- eight intervention types focused on groups of farm and food businesses.
- three classes of strategic added value.

Although a large number of types, there is scope for amalgamation, for example, consolidating the different forms of consultancy support or investment support.

#### Thematic Typology

From work in analysing the SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions and later confirmed through analysis of recent sample project data, it was found that most relevant actions could be allocated to one of four themes:

- **Adding Value** (potential sub-themes: Development of new food products / markets and Development of processing and handling capacity).
- **Operational Efficiency** (potential sub-themes: Process efficiency and Resource efficiency).
- **Diversification in Agriculture** (potential sub-themes: Development of energy crops / markets, Development of forestry crops / markets and Organic conversion).
- **Strengthening Management and Skills** (potential sub-themes: Skills for farm enterprise / management, Skills for diversification, Assimilation of knowledge and good practice).

SSFF MEASURE	IMPLEMENTING ACTION	Technical Type																		Thematic Type		
		A 1	A 2	A 3	A 4	A 5	A 6	A 7	A 8	A 9	B 1	B 2	B 3	B 4	B 5	B 6	B 7	B 8	C 1		C 2	C 3
<b>Adding Value</b>	ERDP Processing and Marketing Grant																					AV
	ERDP Rural Enterprise Scheme																					
	Woodland Harvesting, PMG Scheme																					
	RDPE Measures 122 and 123																					
<b>Improved Efficiency</b>	Agricultural Development Scheme.																					OE
	Food Chain Centre																					
	RDPE Measures 121, 123 and 124																					
<b>Farm Diversification</b>	ERDP Energy Crops Producer Group Scheme																					DiA
	Bio-energy Capital Grants Scheme																					
	RDPE Energy Crops Scheme																					
	RDPE Measures 121, 221 and 311																					
<b>Business Advice</b>	Farm Business Advice Service																					Cross-Theme
	RDPE Measures 114 and 115.																					
	General eligibility for Business Link support																					
<b>Co-operation</b>	Agricultural Development Scheme																					AV
	RDPE Measure 124																					
	English Farming and Food Partnerships																					
	Food Chain Centre																					

SSFF MEASURE	IMPLEMENTING ACTION	Technical Type																		Thematic Type		
		A 1	A 2	A 3	A 4	A 5	A 6	A 7	A 8	A 9	B 1	B 2	B 3	B 4	B 5	B 6	B 7	B 8	C 1		C 2	C 3
<b>Stewardship Schemes</b>	Amendment to ERDP Organic Farming Scheme																					DiA
	Farming Futures																					OE / SMS
	Environmental Transformation Fund																					OE
<b>Improving Skills</b>	ERDP Vocational Training Scheme																					SMS
	RDPE Measure 111 Vocational Training / Information																					
	RDA / LSC initiatives varying by region																					
<b>Demo Farms</b>	Pilot network of demonstration farms																					SMS
<b>Investment, Research / New Technology</b>	Teaching Company Scheme																					SMS
	Regional Technology Transfer Centres																					AV / OE / SMS
	LINK R&D Programme																					AV / OE
<b>Interventions focused on individual farm and food businesses</b>		<b>Interventions focused on groups of farm and food businesses</b>										<b>Strategic Added Value</b>										
A1 Access to Basic Advice and Information A2 Consultancy / non-financial support with improving products and processes A3 Consultancy / non-financial support with improving market access A4 Consultancy / non-financial support with non-agricultural diversification A5 Income support – agriculture related A6 Income support – agri-environment related A7 Investment support - Agricultural and agri-environmental A8 Investment support - Non-agricultural diversification A9 Vocational training		B1 Joint basic advice and information actions B2 Joint marketing actions B3 Joint research actions B4 Joint good practice actions B5 Joint vocational training actions B6 Support for capacity building for joint initiatives of farm and food businesses B7 Joint Investment support - Agricultural and agri-environmental B8 Joint Investment support - Non-agricultural diversification										C1 Strategic Leadership C2 Strategic Research and Information Actions C3 Strategic Influencing  <b>Thematic Type</b> AV Adding Value OE Operational Efficiency DiA Diversification in Agriculture SMS Strengthening Management and Skills										
Note: There is some limited consolidation in the Implementing Actions retained here over those shaded green in Table 3.1. This reflects overlap and duplication in some of the SSFF Measures.																						



The Business Advice SSFF Measure and underlying Implementing Actions potentially apply across any of the Themes and, indeed, this was acknowledged in the SSFF document.

Considering the more strategic character of the Themes, and their alignment with existing policy orientations, we consider that evaluation via thematic typology is likely to have greater value in informing policy than evaluation via the technical typology.

### 3.5 Conclusions on the Feasibility of Evaluation

From our examination of the feasibility of conducting evaluation of interventions with potential to improve agricultural productivity and profitability, we conclude:

- a subset of SSFF Measures and associated Implementing Actions can be identified as having greater relevance to improving agricultural productivity and profitability.
- a combination of the accessibility and configuration of data, together with the effects of the passage of time limits the scope for evaluation. However, all of the interventions of interest should be capable of at least qualitative evaluation and those since 2007 are generally capable of quantitative impact evaluation.

## 4 APPRAISAL OF POSSIBLE EVALUATION APPROACHES

### 4.1 General

In this Chapter we consider possible approaches to evaluating interventions that are likely to have made a contribution to the competitiveness of agriculture. This appraisal draws upon:

- knowledge of evaluation theory and practical experience in undertaking economic evaluations of a wide range of thematic and area based interventions.
- our conclusions at the end of Chapter 3 on the feasibility of undertaking thematic research and accessibility of the necessary data.

Our appraisal takes account of the possibility of undertaking qualitative evaluation in situations where impact evaluation is impractical due to data issues and the effects of the passage of time. Thereafter we go on to consider the available models of impact evaluation prior to considering the approach that best meets Defra's needs.

### 4.2 A Model of Qualitative Evaluation

#### 4.2.1 General

The approach we posit here is for a model of evaluation where the inaccessibility of beneficiary data and or the effects of the passage of time render the research of impact problematic. It is not wholly non-quantitative. Moreover, it consists of elements that will accompany impact evaluation where this is possible.

We envisage that qualitative evaluation will be carried out at the level of Implementing Actions and that the findings and learning may be synthesised at a higher level, potentially at the level of the Themes proposed in Chapter 3 or at a global level.

#### 4.2.2 Rationale and Continuing Relevance

This element will involve establishing the basis for the intervention in policy and analysis. Public interventions are generally justified as a response to a perceived failure which may be a market failure, a distributional failure or a public policy failure. The aim in this element is to identify the specific failures that the architects of the intervention had identified, the evidence upon which they had reached a conclusion and the extent to which the analysis continues to hold true.

The sources and methods that are likely to be used are:

- review of relevant background policy documents.
- review of documents relating to the establishment and allocation of resources to the intervention.
- analysis of baseline and current position in relation to evidence of failure, using socio-economic data.
- review of any prior evaluation.

This may be supplemented by exploring related issues with stakeholders.

### **4.2.3 Review of Financial and Physical Progress**

This element will involve analysis of progress encompassing:

- the resources that were allocated to the initiative and the extent to which they were absorbed.
- the outputs that were forecast and the extent to which these were delivered on time and budget.
- the outcomes that were forecast and the extent to which they were achieved against any established milestones.

The main method will be desk-based research using administrative data. This may be supplemented with review of administrative reports, any prior evaluation and stakeholder consultations to identify evidence and / or perceptions on factors contributing to or inhibiting financial and physical progress.

### **4.2.4 Review of Objectives and the Extent to Which Met**

This element will consider whether there were concrete objectives laid down at the outset and the extent to which these may be seen to have been met. A key building block in the design of initiatives is a clear statement of objectives in terms that are susceptible to future evaluation. This will normally require adherence to SMART principles: that the specification of objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound. However, it is not uncommon to find documents relating to the establishment of interventions that set out objectives that are vague and, indeed, our Analysis of SSFF Measures identified numerous instances.

The method and sources will be:

- review of documents relating to the establishment and resourcing of the intervention.
- reference to monitoring data and updated baseline data to the extent that objectives are stated in these terms.
- review of any prior evaluation.
- exploration of stakeholder perceptions on the "success" of the initiative, the likely counterfactual and factors contributing to or impeding success.

### **4.2.5 Review of Administrative Implementation**

This element is concerned with the mode of intervention, how it was promoted, how it was accessed, how it was managed, the administrative processes and the extent to which these had a bearing upon achievement.

The method and sources will be:

- review of documents relating to the establishment and resourcing of the intervention.
- review of administrative reports.
- review of any prior evaluation.
- exploration of stakeholders' perceptions on the success of the mode of intervention, what appeared to work well / less well and why, the effectiveness of processes and any strategic added value associated with these, good practice and transferable learning.

### 4.3 The Spectrum of Available Impact Evaluation Approaches

A variety of impact evaluation approaches is available and they have different potential, depending upon the level at which the evaluation is undertaken, for example at policy or programme level as distinct from project level.

The validity of different approaches is the subject of academic and professional debate. However, it is fair to say that there is no perfect approach and all involve an interpretation of the truth based upon interlocking assumptions.

It is important that those using evaluation evidence to support policymaking and programme development should understand the limitations of economic evaluation and the substance of the numbers produced. In our judgement the quantitative findings should be seen as indicative. We would also emphasise the importance of the process and other learning that is identified through evaluation research.

Table 4.1 summarises our appreciation of the main evaluation approaches that could potentially be applied to actions to improve agricultural productivity and profitability.

### 4.4 Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs

Experimental and quasi-experimental approaches (sometimes misleadingly referred to as counterfactual designs) involve comparison of a treatment group (i.e. beneficiaries) with a non-treatment group (non-beneficiaries). This approach depends upon either:

- the ability to identify a non-beneficiary group which is only different in its orientation and development potential from the treatment group in having not participated in the intervention.
- the ability to control for identified differences between the treatment group and the non-treatment group.

The *gross* outcome from the intervention is normally estimated through regression analysis of econometric data relating to the treatment and non-treatment groups. Experimental and quasi-experimental models still depend upon input-output data in order to estimate the *net* economic impact.

Experimental and quasi-experimental approaches have not commonly been used in economic impact research in the UK until recently<sup>6</sup>. Such econometric approaches have more commonly been used on the Continent for research at policy or programme level, notably in efforts to quantify the impact of cohesion policy.

Experimental and quasi experimental approaches are considered by some as a gold standard in methodological terms. However, some question their realism when applied in the context of complex interventions and business environments, and their ability to control selection-bias - the possibility that organisations that participate in business support programmes may be significantly different from those that do not (for example, - more entrepreneurial, more innovative) - and question whether these differences are reflected in econometric data, or susceptible to mathematical control.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Universities of Kingston, Aston and Warwick for DBERR, 2008: Evaluation of Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) and its successor, Selective Finance for Investment in England (SFIE)

<b>TABLE 4.1: THE SPECTRUM OF APPROACHES TO IMPACT EVALUATION</b>				
<b>EXPERIMENTAL</b>		<b>NON-EXPERIMENTAL</b>		
<b>Econometric - Usually Policy / Programme Level</b>	<b>Programme Level (Beneficiary Research)</b>	<b>Programme Level (Monitoring Data based)</b>	<b>Thematic or Project Level (Beneficiary Research)</b>	<b>Case Study (Beneficiary Research)</b>
Involves estimating economic impact of interventions by comparing economic performance of assisted and unassisted groups.	Involves beneficiary research using large and stratified samples drawn from a wide range of constituent projects.	Involves interpretation and manipulation of project and programme administrative data.  Economic impact may be estimated by application of benchmarks to outcome data.	Involves beneficiary research using stratified samples drawn from a single or a limited number of constituent projects.	Involves beneficiary research among a severely restricted subset of beneficiaries.
<b>Pros and Cons</b>				
Realism of counterfactual hypothesis and ability for practitioners to control for differences between assisted and unassisted groups open to question.  Practitioners unable to explain findings.	Aggregation of findings involves compounding of assumptions.  Rigour of sampling provides illusion of robustness. However, use of volume, low cost primary research risks the generation of findings that are an artefact of process.	Useful approach to assist management during the life of programmes.  Reliability of monitoring data is not tested through systematic research.	Better quality and more reliable research will use expert researchers.  Provides a good opportunity to capture process learning.  Representativeness of findings may be open to question where a pragmatic approach to sampling taken.	Good for illustrating ground-level application and transferable learning.  Normally benefits from implementation by expert researchers.  Representativeness of findings open to question due to small number of cases
<b>Practical Issues in Relation to Evaluation of Farming and Food Chain Competitiveness</b>				
Difficulty in identifying overall populations of beneficiaries.  Non-availability of unassisted population for some interventions.  Spillovers to non-beneficiaries.	Difficulty in identifying overall populations of beneficiaries from which to construct samples.  Complexity range of interventions supported requires complex sampling.	Monitoring data for many pre-2007 implementing actions only developed at the level of outputs, where available.  No substantive body of evaluation evidence presently available.	Some difficulty in identifying overall populations of beneficiaries remains.  May be possible to adopt a pragmatic approach focusing on selected projects or subsets of beneficiary populations.	No particular issues.

In producing an estimate of differential outcomes, experimental and quasi-experimental approaches do not necessarily lead to an understanding of why an intervention is successful, or not, as may be the case. RSA researchers identified some differences in the performance of grant-assisted businesses between England and Wales, but noted the limitations of the available methods in explaining these<sup>7</sup>.

## 4.5 Non-experimental Designs

### 4.5.1 General

The approaches most commonly used in the UK for evaluating economic impact fall into the category of non-experimental designs.

Most of these approaches involve comparison of observed outcomes with a counterfactual scenario - what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. However, rather than using a comparison group, the counterfactual is developed through exploratory research with the beneficiary group only. In its crudest form, the responses of beneficiaries to set questions concerning alternative outcomes may be accepted at face value. More sophisticated approaches may involve a subject expert making a judgement on the basis of exploring data and a probing interview.

Non-experimental approaches are available for use at different levels of evaluation and vary in their degree of abstraction.

### 4.5.2 Programme and Policy Level Studies

The simplest form of non-experimental design used at programme and policy level involves the use of administrative data on outputs and gross outcomes and applying benchmark evaluation findings. This approach (also used in quantifying programme targets ex-ante) depends upon the availability of a suitable body of evaluation evidence.

Other approaches used at Programme and Policy level involve beneficiary research, and either:

- employ bespoke primary research, potentially involving a highly stratified sampling approach to differentiate the contribution from different interventions, or;
- aggregate the findings of lower-level evaluations based on beneficiary research.

There are a number of difficulties associated with these approaches, particularly where the aim is to produce a global measure of impact.

In the case of aggregating findings from different projects (whether based on monitoring data or primary research) there is a risk of double counting of benefits. This is potentially a significant issue where programmes and other integrated interventions are concerned.

The construction of economic impact estimates makes use of both research findings and assumptions. Depending upon the nature of the intervention, the influence of the

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<sup>7</sup> London School of Economics for Welsh Assembly Government 2008: Longitudinal Micro Data Study of Regional Selective Assistance in Wales

research-based findings, as opposed to assumptions, may be less than 50% of the resultant impact figure. When findings of this nature are aggregated, to programme level, for example, a significant compounding of assumptions occurs and raises questions about the meaning of the impact estimates created.

Aggregation of discrete evaluation findings requires a high degree of commonality in approach and assumptions employed. This was a major issue in the RDA National Impact Evaluation<sup>8</sup>. Assumptions used in an attempt to harmonise the sources were themselves a significant source of bias. Many practitioners have been concerned at the suitability of this material as a basis for strategic decision making.

### 4.5.3 Thematic and Project Level Research

Most intermediate and project-level evaluation involves a similar approach using primary research among samples of beneficiaries.

Project-level evaluation allows findings to be developed across a sample of similar interventions implemented in a reasonably consistent fashion. In addition, it can enable close consideration of process and contextual issues and the potential leverage that these may have on outcomes and impact. A portfolio of project level evaluations, covering interventions of similar type, provides insight to relative good practice - those approaches that work well and those that work less well. Portfolios of project-level research take time and are relatively expensive to develop.

Intermediate and thematic studies use a similar approach - but tend to draw their sample from across a set of projects. There may also be a greater challenge to sampling as a result of differences in the support provided. This approach results in an averaging of findings where outcomes and impact are concerned. Compared with a portfolio of project evaluations, there is a loss of resolution on the range of outcomes and less learning about approaches that are more or less successful.

Case study research usually provides the most detailed understanding of interventions at the point of delivery. However, the portfolio of case studies rarely provides adequate coverage to support conclusions on the general effectiveness and efficiency of interventions. Case studies are powerful as a supplement to project or intermediate level research and are valuable in communicating delivery on-the-ground and in illustrating transferable learning. In these ways they provide additional perspective to the abstract picture that emerges from composite findings.

## 4.6 Selection of Impact Evaluation Approach

As discussed above, no impact evaluation approach is perfect. The best approach for Defra is one that that will best deliver against the Department's needs which, in dialogue with the client, have been articulated as:

- a requirement to deliver findings in the short term.
- facility to distinguish the relative success of different interventions.
- facility to provide economic impact data at the level of different interventions.

Table 4.2 summarises our appraisal of the extent to which the different evaluation approaches described in Sections 4.4 and 4.5 meet the Department's needs.

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<sup>8</sup> PWC for DBERR, 2009, Impact of RDA Spending, National Report.



However, the appraisal has not been informed by knowledge of resource availability and constraints.

<b>TABLE 4.2: APPRASAL OF RELATIVE SUITABILITY OF IMPACT EVALUATION APPROACHES</b>				
<b>Impact Evaluation Approach</b>	<b>Desirable Characteristic</b>			<b>Overall Assessment of Fit</b>
	<b>Deliver Findings in the Short Term</b>	<b>Distinguish the Relative Success of Different Interventions</b>	<b>Provide Economic Impact Data at the Level of Different Interventions</b>	
Programme level evaluation (Experimental)	moderate-poor	poor	poor	poor
Programme level evaluation (Beneficiary Research)	moderate	poor	poor	poor
Programme level evaluation (Monitoring Data)	poor (due to absence of evaluation benchmarks)	poor	poor	poor
Set of Theme level Evaluations	moderate	moderate - good	moderate - good	best
Portfolio of Project level Evaluations	poor	good	good	fair
Portfolio of Case Studies	poor	moderate	moderate	poor

None of these approaches can be accomplished very quickly. The integrated approaches (Programme and Theme level) are likely to require a lead-time of 6-9 months excluding procurement. The lead-time for developing project or case study portfolios and then integrating findings is liable to be even longer.

Programme level approaches tend to be poor in differentiating the contribution from different types of intervention. Theme-level studies are better than programme level studies in this respect, but not so good as project-level evaluation.

Case studies provide the highest level of detail but questions over their representativeness limit their value in generating policy lessons. They may nevertheless play a useful role when combined with other evaluation approaches.

Taking account of these different characteristics, we conclude that theme-level evaluation has best fit with the Department's needs.



## 5 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 General

This Chapter sets out a framework for evaluating interventions over the past decade that are likely to have made a contribution to the competitiveness of agriculture. Its specification reflects:

- our conclusions on the relevant range of SSFF Measures and Implementing Actions identified in Chapter 3.
- our conclusion in Chapter 4 that theme-level evaluation is most appropriate to the Department's current needs.

Drafting of the framework reflects the possibility of commissioning by single or multiple themes.

### 5.2 Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation are to clarify the range of interventions designed to increase added value (substitute increase operational efficiency; promote diversification *in* agriculture; strengthen management and skills) at farm-level and in the food chain directly linked to farm businesses supported across England in the period 2002-10, and in particular:

- to confirm their continuing relevance by reference to evidence on market, distributional and public policy failures.
- to evaluate qualitatively, and where possible quantitatively at the gross level, relevant support for individual and collaborating producers in the period **2002-07**.
- to evaluate qualitatively and quantitatively the gross economic and other outcomes and the net economic impact associated with relevant support for individual and collaborating producers in the period **2008-10**.
- to evaluate the contribution of relevant strategic initiatives and their articulation with support for individual and collaborating producers, in terms of strategic added value and in terms of quantifiable outcomes and net economic impact, where appropriate.
- to identify the relative effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions supported and the value-for-money represented.
- to evaluate the implementation of relevant initiatives both from the perspective of delivery agencies and beneficiaries, identifying obstacles to successful implementation, perceived gaps in support, learning and good practice with potential for wider application.
- to make recommendations on future public policy and actions to increase added value (substitute increase operational efficiency; promote diversification *in* agriculture; strengthen management and skills) at farm-level and in the food chain directly linked to farm businesses. Recommendations should relate to the focus of activity, the associated allocation of resource, and methods of delivery.

### 5.3 Evaluation Timing

The evaluation will commence in Summer 2011 and will require 6-9 months. Design and the timing of fieldwork should take account of peaks in the agricultural cycle.

### 5.4 Evaluation Scope and Method

The evaluation will comprise the following tasks.

#### **Context and Rationale**

The researchers will review the relevant policy context and its evolution over the period of evaluation to clarify the rationale for intervention and the evidence underpinning it. The continuing relevance of the intervention will be tested by updating the relevant socio-economic and / or industrial analysis.

#### **Gross Measures of Progress**

For each of the relevant Implementing Actions, the researchers will compile the existing data in relation to forecast and out-turn:

- expenditure.
- take-up by beneficiaries (by type where available) and other **outputs**.
- **outcomes**.
- strategic added value.

The researchers will investigate the extent to which forecasts were realised and the factors that contributed to or inhibited progress.

#### **Impact Evaluation**

For Implementing Actions in the period 2008-10, the researchers will investigate **impact** in terms of the additionality of beneficiary outcomes *and* in estimating the net economic impact and the value for money obtained from public investment.

The impact evaluation will be undertaken via research among beneficiaries, using a method and conducted on a scale that balances the need for quality, rigour and proportionality.

The beneficiary research will also explore and will analyse:

- contextual issues surrounding involvement in public support for enhanced competitiveness, for example: type of farm business and any evolution; size of farm business; trend in income and profitability.
- beneficiary perceptions potentially including: freedom to change direction, the significance of public support for competitiveness in the context of market and non-market forces; what forms of public support are more or less effective; gaps in support; how beneficiaries became involved with public support; impressions of the quality and relevance of the support provided; likelihood to engage in further business development projects; quality of the customer journey.

Consideration may be given to the use of case studies to illustrate implementation on-the-ground.

## Stakeholder Consultation

Research among stakeholders - relevant statutory bodies, sector representatives, delivery agencies - using appropriate methods, will explore perceptions including in relation to:

- the effectiveness of public support designed to increase added value (substitute increase operational efficiency; promote diversification *in* agriculture; strengthen management and skills) relative to other interventions.
- the strengths and weaknesses of current actions designed to increase added value (substitute increase operational efficiency; promote diversification *in* agriculture; strengthen management and skills) relative to previous similar Implementation Actions.
- the reasons behind the pattern of forecast and out-turn expenditure, outputs and outcomes identified through desk-based research.
- the effectiveness of management and systems associated with the relevant Implementing Actions and any associated process strategic added value.
- synergies between support designed to increase added value (substitute increase operational efficiency; promote diversification *in* agriculture; strengthen management and skills) and other interventions.
- examples of good practice and key learning for future actions.

## 5.5 Data Sources and Sampling Issues

The main sources of information and data to support the evaluation will be:

- relevant policy documentation - public domain.
- secondary data evidencing rationale - Office for National Statistics; Defra; Rural Payments Agency.
- existing evaluation research - Defra.
- administrative and monitoring data relating to Implementing Actions - 2002-07 - Defra; 2007-10 - RDAs / successor arrangements.
- beneficiary data for impact research - RDAs / successor arrangements.

Where impact research covering 2008-10 Implementing Actions are concerned, it will be necessary to construct both population and sample from administrative and beneficiary data held at regional level principally (but not exclusively) by RDAs / successor arrangements.

The researchers should propose a sampling strategy having regard to the need to balance quality, rigour and proportionality in the research. Consideration may be given to focusing the research on a subset of regions and / or years.

## 5.6 Evaluation Resourcing

The evaluation framework, covering qualitative evaluation spanning 2002-10 and quantitative impact evaluation spanning 2008-10 is estimated to require resources in the range £60-75k per theme depending upon primary research method and sampling. The overall requirement for the four themes is estimated at £250-300k.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

BSE - Bovine spongiform encephalopathy - a disease affecting the brain and spinal cord in cattle.

Counterfactual - the situation that would have obtained in the absence of an intervention.

Competitiveness - the capacity, in the context of open markets, to sustain or expand market share.

Crowding In an increase in private consumption or investment that occurs because of an increase in government spending.

Crowding Out - a reduction in private consumption or investment that occurs because of an increase in government spending.

Deadweight - gross effects of an intervention that would have occurred in its absence.

Defra - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Displacement - an offsetting and negative effect on non-beneficiary arising from public support having been provided to the beneficiary of an initiative.

FMD - Foot and Mouth Disease, an infectious viral disease affecting cloven-hoofed animals.

IATC - the International Agri-technology Centre, a sectoral internationalisation initiative supported by Government and Regional Development Agencies between 2003 and 2011.

Impact - the net effect of an intervention.

Impact Evaluation - evaluation designed to capture the net effect of interventions.

Implementing Actions - the projects and schemes through which SSFF was delivered.

Income Multiplier - a second round spending effect arising from the direct expenditure of resources, for example through public expenditure.

Leakage - the extent to which benefits occur outside their target area and should be discounted in estimating impact.

LINK - a Government-funded programme for collaborative research and development in the fields of farming and food science.

OGC - Office of Government Commerce.

Outputs - a measure of what project and programme expenditure buys directly.

Outcomes - the observable gross benefits from an intervention.

RDA - Regional Development Agency.

RDPE - Rural Development Programme for England.

RIPS - the Regional Implementation Plans developed for RDPE.

SAV - Strategic added-value - usually benefits of an intervention over and above those commonly captured as outputs, outcomes or impacts.

SSFF - the Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food.

SSFF Priorities - the highest level in the SSFF strategic structure

SSFF Measures and Sub-Measures - the intermediate level of in the SSFF strategic structure.

Substitution - a distortion in behaviour that occurs because of the availability of a subsidy.

Supply Linkage Multiplier- a second round spending effect arising from the direct expenditure of resources, for example through public expenditure.

Sustainable Development - resource use that meets social needs while preserving the environment.

## ANNEX I

### VERIFICATION OF EVALUATION FEASIBILITY

## A1.1 General

Annex I reports on a range of work undertaken to verify the evaluation approach proposed in Chapters 4 and 5. This was carried out on an ad-hoc rather than a set-piece fashion, reflecting the exploratory nature of the study.

## A1.2 Review of Existing Evaluation Material

We considered the potential of existing evaluation material as a source of benchmarks that could be applied to monitoring data to construct estimates of the net economic impact of current initiatives to improve agricultural productivity and profitability.

### **Defra Evaluations**

The source material for our review of SSFF Measures included a limited number of evaluation studies, identified in Table A1.1.

Most of these studies were motivated by drivers other than an interest in economic impacts and none researched the net economic impact of the interventions covered. At best, they identify (some) gross outcomes and, to this extent, provide a potential source of benchmarks linking financial inputs and gross outcomes.

<b>TABLE A1.1: REVIEW OF DEFRA EVALUATIONS OF SSFF MEASURES</b>					
<b>Evaluation Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Farm Competitiveness</b>	<b>Food Chain and Primary Processing</b>	<b>Notes.</b>
The Mid-term Evaluation of the England Rural Development Programme.	SQW / ADAS	2003	✓	✓	Mainly review of progress against monitoring data. Some analysis of efficiency in terms of gross employment formation.
Economic Evaluation of the Agriculture Development Scheme	Drew / Westley	2007	✓	✓	Examines "impact" (essentially gross outcomes net of deadweight) through a limited set of case studies.
Review of Food Chain Initiatives	Defra	2007	x	✓	Summary evaluation presenting monitoring data for schemes, but no economic impact analysis. Covers strategic contribution of schemes, but does not analyses strategic added value.
Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative: An Evaluation	Deloitte	2009	x	✓	Mainly qualitative evaluation examining take-up of PSPFI; economic impact not covered.



## **RDA Evaluations**

From a search of the OffPat evaluations database, which holds evaluations submitted by all of the Regional Development Agencies, we identified a total of 16 evaluations with a rural development focus. We reviewed each of these to establish they provided data or learning relevant to farming and primary processing competitiveness. The review findings are summarised in Table A1.2.

While some evaluations were found to contain relevant material, their value is limited either because they cover modest levels of investment or adopt case study approaches. Others cover relevant sectors (such as food and drink) but report results at a regional level and do not separately assess the outputs and outcomes based on the geographic location of the assisted businesses.

The example most relevant to the purposes of this study is the evaluation conducted by NWDA of their implementation of SFSS in the NW of England. This provides an analysis, by SFSS theme, of net additional impacts assessed using a method which is compliant with the Impact Evaluation Framework.

<b>TABLE A1.2: REVIEW OF EVALUATIONS EXTRACTED FROM OFFPAT DATABASE OF RDA EVALUATION REPORTS</b>						
<b>Evaluation Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Commissioning Body</b>	<b>Farming Competitiveness</b>	<b>Food Chain and Primary Processing</b>	<b>Notes.</b>
An Evaluation of the West Midlands Market Town Programme	Ecotec	Mar-08	AWM	x	x	
A Mid-term Evaluation of the Cumbria Rural Action Zone Plan	SQW	Mar-06	Rural Regeneration Cumbria	✓	✓	Two of programme objectives and 18% of approved project spend related to the criteria.
Cumbria Vision Final Evaluation of Cumbria Rural Action	Genecon	Mar-09	Cumbria Vision	✓	✓	Two of programme objectives and one significant project (Farming Connect) related to the criteria. Evaluation has outputs/outcomes for FC Project.
Mid-term evaluation of Lancashire Rural Recovery Action Plan	SQW	Dec-05	Lancashire County Council	✓	✓	Limited activity and allocation of budget to core farming activity and primary processing.
EEDA Rural Business Support	SQW	Aug-08	SEEDA	x	✓	Two food chain projects (EFRA and FRED) were subject to interim evaluation as part of this exercise
NW Clusters	PWC	Aug-08	NWDA	x	✓	16 SMEs assisted in the Food Cluster. No analysis in report on size, position in food chain or location of companies in the cluster
NW Market Towns	ERS	Jan-08	NWDA	x	x	Evaluation of rural towns - based on consultations with stakeholders, town centre managers and Partnership Chairs
NW Regional Rural Programme	SQW	Aug-08	NWDA	✓	✓	Three of four interventions evaluated in this report are potentially relevant. North West Food Alliance (Rural) Spend of £1m. North West Farm Tourism Initiative (£2.2m). North West Speciality Food Group (£2.2m). IEF Compliant results for each intervention are presented.
NW SSFF	SQW	Jun-08	NWDA	✓	✓	Evaluation of the implementation of SFSS by NWDA in the NW of England. Provides IEF compliant analysis of Outputs and Outcomes by SFSS Theme.

Evaluation Title	Author	Date	Commissioning Body	Farming Competitiveness	Food Chain and Primary Processing	Notes.
SEEDA RED	TRIBAL	May-07	SEEDA	✓	x	Concise evaluation of grants used largely for the conversion of farm buildings to alternative (non farming) end uses.
Somerset Rural Business Support	Shaw Planning	May-08	South Somerset District Council	x	x	Derivation and application of findings constrained by lack of monitoring data for project.
SWRDA Rural Renaissance	Roger Tym & Ptns	Jul-08	SWRDA	x	x	Not focused on farm business or primary processing. Programme is capacity building in skills, and physical business infrastructure for rural based businesses.
WY Entrepreneurship	SQW	Feb-06	W Yorks Economic Partnership	x	x	Research amongst entrepreneurs to identify barriers and shape future interventions - not an evaluation.
YF Clusters	DTZ	Sep-08	Yorkshire Forward	x	✓	Food and Drink is one of Clusters evaluated. IEF compliant assessments are included but not disaggregated to rural area or primary processes.
YFMRD	York Consulting	Dec-07	Yorkshire Forward	x	x	Interim evaluation of the Modernising Rural Delivery Programme with focus on process issues. Case studies of 4 projects not relevant to SFSS priorities.
YF Renaissance Market Towns	Genecon	Jun-08	Yorkshire Forward	x	x	RMT evaluation based on consultation with town team chairs, communities and stakeholders. Projects largely PBI and no direct relationship to Farm businesses or primary processes.

## A1.3 Examination of Relevant Initiatives Implemented by RDAs

### A1.3.1 General

Chapter 3 documents work carried out in the early stages of the study to establish which Implementing Actions would be capable of evaluation. It was found that impact evaluation would mainly be possible in the period 2008-10, a period when relevant actions were mainly implemented by RDAs, and largely under Axis I of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The apparent diversity in the implementation of RDPE at regional level raised questions including whether regional activity and related data.

- could be unpacked and aligned with SSFF Measures, Implementing Actions and possible themes of interest.
- could be brought together to permit sampling at the England level.

Accordingly investigation of these issues was central to verifying the feasibility of evaluation.

### A1.3.2 Review of Regional Implementation Plans

The scope of the eight RDPE Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) was reviewed, using the most recent version available to the consultants.

The implementation arrangements for RDPE provide substantial delegation and regional partnerships developed Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) setting out their investment priorities and how these would be resourced from the various RDR Measures. The intention was to allow flexibility within a national Programme to respond to distinctive regional needs.

Each of the eight RIPs identifies regional thematic priorities and each proposes that these priorities will be delivered using a cocktail of funding drawn from multiple RDR Measures.

The apparent diversity of the RIPs is reinforced by the different number and titles of regional priorities. Moreover, as can be seen from Table A1.3 there is wide variation in the regional weighting of RDR Measures.

	NW	NE	WM	EM	EE	SW	SE & LON	Range
111 Vocational Training and Information Actions	35	20	39	8	18	43	17	8-43
114 Advisory Services (Forestry only)	5	2	1		4	1		0-5
115 Farm Management, Relief and Forest Advisory Services	5		3	<1	1	1	1	<1-5
121 Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings	5	10	17	23		22	21	0-23
122 Improving Economic Value of Forests	5	4	1	<1	7	2	13	<1-13
123 Adding Value to Agriculture and Forest Products	20	54	21	40	44	20	28	20-54
124 Co-operation for Development of New Products, Processes, Technologies	20	3	18		8	9	10	3-20
125 Infrastructure Related to Development and Adaptation of Agriculture and Forestry	5	2		28	18	2	9	2-28
214 Agri-environment Payments	70	88	85	82	90	78	n/a	70-90
216 Support for non-productive investments	2		5	10	4	3	n/a	2-10
221 First Afforestation of Agricultural Land.	5		4	4	3	5	n/a	3-5
223 First afforestation of non-agricultural land		3		<1		1	n/a	0-3
225 Forest environment payments	5	3	5	1	2	5	n/a	1-5
227 Support for non-productive investments (forestry)	2		1	<1	2	3	n/a	<1-3
311 Diversification into Non-Agricultural Activities.	28	20	14	51	50	17	43	14-51
312 Micro Enterprises	26	30	14	11	14	18	6	6-30
313 Tourism Activities	13	7	12	10	16	13	14	7-16
321 Basic Services	11	2	10	14	3	7	7	2-14
322 Village Renewal and Development			10	1		1	5	0-10
323 Conservation of Rural Heritage	2		15	4	3	6	5	0-15

Note: The RIP for Yorkshire and the Humber was unavailable.

On the surface, this apparent diversity would appear to present a further challenge to evaluation - both in terms of grouping activity thematically and in terms of developing a coherent picture of the overall pattern of support.

However, further examination, with a particular focus on farming and food chain competitiveness actions reveals a rather different picture. Table A1.4 considers the substance of the interventions supported and finds that Actions to improve the

<b>TABLE A1.4: FARMING COMPETITIVENESS: COVERAGE BY RIP PRIORITY / THEME</b>									
<b>Theme</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>NE</b>	<b>Y&amp;H</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>EM</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>London &amp; SE</b>	
<b>Adding value</b>									
<b>Development of new food products / markets</b>	More competitive & sustainable agriculture	Sustainable farming	New rural enterprises, Rural business improvement	Food & drink		Competitiveness, collaboration & diversification	New markets & products	Developing the supply chain and adding value	Stimulate enterprise and innovation
<b>Development of processing and handling capacity</b>		Sustainable farming	New rural enterprises, Rural business improvement	Food & drink		Competitiveness, collaboration & diversification	Business efficiency	Developing the supply chain and adding value	Stimulate enterprise and innovation
<b>Operational Efficiency</b>									
<b>Improved Process Efficiency</b>		Sustainable farming	Rural business improvement	Environmental technologies			Business efficiency and transformation	Livestock sector efficiency, competitiveness & environmental management	
<b>Improved Resource Efficiency</b>	More competitive & sustainable Agriculture	Sustainable farming	Rural business improvement	Food & drink, Environmental technologies		Competitiveness, collaboration & diversification	Business efficiency, Business efficiency and transformation, Developing the supply chain and adding value, Managing resources efficiently	Encourage improved management of water resources	
<b>Diversification in Agriculture</b>									
<b>Development of energy crops / markets</b>	More competitive & sustainable Agriculture	Biofuels	New rural enterprises, Rural business improvement, Enhancing value of countryside	Environmental technologies		Competitiveness, collaboration & diversification	New markets & products, New businesses and enterprises	Developing the supply chain and adding value	Stimulate enterprise and innovation
<b>Development of forestry crops / markets</b>	Conserve / enhance environment & countryside		New rural enterprises, Rural business improvement, Enhancing value of countryside			Competitiveness, collaboration & diversification	New markets & products, New businesses and enterprises	Developing the supply chain and adding value	Stimulate enterprise and innovation

	NW	NE	Y&H	WM	EM	EE	SW	London & SE
<b>Diversification Outside Agriculture</b>								
<b>Tourism</b>		Tourism and recreation	New rural enterprises	Tourism				Rural tourism activities
<b>Leisure</b>		Tourism and recreation	New rural enterprises			Access and recreation		
<b>Strengthening Management and Skills</b>								
<b>Skills for Farm Enterprise / Management</b>	More competitive & sustainable Agriculture, Skills, knowledge transfer, capacity	Micro-enterprises, Sustainable farming	Rural business improvement	Food & drink, Environmental technologies, Livestock	Skills development	Business efficiency	Business efficiency and transformation. Managing resources efficiently	Competitiveness and sustainability through technology transfer and skills development, Livestock sector efficiency, competitiveness & environmental management
<b>Skills for Diversification</b>	Skills, knowledge transfer, capacity	Micro-enterprises, Sustainable farming	New rural enterprises, Rural business improvement		Skills development	New businesses and enterprises	Business efficiency and transformation	Competitiveness and sustainability through technology transfer and skills development
<b>Assimilation of knowledge and good practice</b>				Environmental technologies, Livestock		Business efficiency	Business efficiency and transformation, Managing resources efficiently	Competitiveness and sustainability through technology transfer and skills development

productivity and profitability of agriculture fall within a limited number of themes:

- adding value (often related to supply chain development).
- enhancing operational efficiency.
- diversification within agriculture.
- diversification outside agriculture.
- strengthening management and skills.

Although undertaken within regional priorities with different titles and weighting, our analysis identifies a much greater consistency in the thematic coverage of interventions supported than is suggested by the diverse presentation in the RIPs.

### **A1.3.3 Consultation with RDAs**

Consultations were undertaken with three Regional Development Agencies<sup>9</sup> (RDAs) in order to explore how the RIPs are delivered in practice and how beneficiary and administrative data are configured:

- RDAs are not delivery bodies and most of their activity is undertaken through delivery partners in the public, private and third sectors. In many cases RDAs only hold the aggregated data required to administer the contract with the delivery partner; it is necessary to go to project level in order to obtain detailed information, including beneficiary data.
- the RIPs suggested that activity at regional level may be highly integrated. It was important to clarify whether project data, held at RDA or at delivery partner level, could be unpackaged into our themes of interest.

Discussions with the RDAs were followed up with summary review of sample data provided.

While we encountered some variations in approach; the general picture that emerges from this work is as follows.

Axis I of RDPE is mainly supporting grant payments to farmers and food chain organisations. RDAs have used their Single Programme to support complementary activity, including:

- stimulation and facilitation activities that complement RDPE support.
- diagnostic and consultancy support to individual businesses under their eligibility for national solutions for business provisions.
- strategic activities, such as network / cluster facilitation, market-making and supply chain development.

Accordingly, evaluation focusing on Axis I of RDPE alone will not capture all activity relevant to farming and food chain competitiveness and might produce misleading findings were the costs and strategic added value associated with complementary actions not taken into account.

There is less dispersal of data than might have been expected. RDAs are delivering the relevant aspects of RDPE through a mix of discrete grant applications and schemes. In many cases the schemes are administered directly and so the RDAs hold much more administrative and beneficiary data than they do for mainstream

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<sup>9</sup> Advantage West Midlands, East of England Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward.



business support. In each of the regions reviewed, it would be necessary to engage with a small number of third party organisations (mainly training providers) in order to access all relevant data.

Implementation is generally less complex than the impression provided by the RIPs. Most assists are based upon a single RDR Measure - a minority are multi-Measure.

From our review of sample data provided, RDAs are able to generate reports relating to RDPE showing for each farm or business beneficiary:

- beneficiary type.
- beneficiary contact details (anonymised in sample data provided).
- project type.
- RDR Measure(s).
- financial details.
- forecast (and in one case out-turn) output and outcomes data.

The sample data provided were adequate to allow individual support cases to be assigned thematically.

#### A1.4 Consultation on the RDPE Mid-term Evaluation

A further possible source of relevant evidence considered was the Mid-term Evaluation of RDPE. The MTE was required to assess progress within the framework of RDR Measures and EC Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework indicators (which include impact indicators). However, it was considered possible that the primary research findings could have been recut a thematic basis, thereby providing an economical means of meeting some of FFD's evaluation interest.

The RDPE MTE was undertaken in 2010 and based upon activity committed up till the end of 2009. From discussions with the MTE contractor we understand that a conventional approach tracking intervention logic was adopted. Although a substantive programme of beneficiary research was undertaken for Axis I, the focus was mainly at the level of outputs and to some degree results, reflecting the early stage of implementation. While the research identified indications of deadweight in some areas, all of the factors involved in the gross-net adjustment were not researched and no estimates of impact were attempted.

Thematic analysis was limited to social, economic and environmental themes.

The MTE contractor confirmed that most of FFD's interest was covered by Axis I. A minority of RDAs may also be supporting relevant activity through Measure 311. This is consistent with our analysis of sample data from the RDAs.

The experience of the MTE contractors essentially confirms our findings on the accessibility of beneficiary and administrative data reported above from the consultations with RDAs.

A representative of Defra's RDPE team confirmed their interest in pursuing further work on impact from Axis I actions as part of the Ongoing Evaluation of the Programme and which would be informed by this research for FFD.

## A1.5 Conclusions From Work to Verify the Feasibility of Evaluation

Although there is considerable diversity in the presentation of RDPE Regional Implementation Plans and the financial weightings by RDR Measure, there are considerable similarities in the underlying activity. From sample RDA data reviewed, most activity related to farming and food chain competitiveness appears to be capable of being assigned to the thematic typology shown in Section 3.4.

Within the themes identified a cocktail of activity operates in two vectors:

- support for individual and collaborating producers where the gross economic outcomes and net economic impact should be capable of evaluation. Most recent activity has been supported by RDPE.
- strategic initiatives where the contribution is most likely to be strategic added value rather than quantifiable economic outcomes and impact. Most recent activity has been supported by RDAs (from Single Programme) and Defra (food chain initiatives) outside RDPE.

Examination of sample data suggests that it will be possible (but still demanding) to develop beneficiary population data by theme from RDA and delivery partner records. It appears that beneficiary data related to training may be more dispersed than for other interventions.

Review of Defra and RDA evaluations has confirmed that there is not a substantive body of existing evaluation evidence from which benchmarks can be derived to support the development or evaluation actions to improve the productivity and profitability of agriculture.

ANNEX II  
ISSUES IN IMPACT EVALUATION

Annex II documents some issues for evaluation design highlighted in the course of the study.

## A2.1 The Sampling - Implementation Trade-off

A notable recent trend in evaluation has been the move towards large sample sizes, typically those which aspire to produce findings with high levels of statistical representativeness, typically, at the 5% error / 95% confidence interval. In the context of large programmes, such as Defra's support for farming competitiveness, this would require large sample cells to facilitate findings that can meet this statistical criterion.

However, using a proportionate level of evaluation resource, these large sample sizes may only be achieved through use of a diminished research method - most usually interview by non-expert with no prior review of case papers. While this approach may be adequate for simple interventions (for example, researching individual experiences and outcomes from training interventions), its suitability for researching support that interacts with a complex business system and where there may be multiple interventions at play is questionable. In these circumstances understanding of the questions posed and capacity to recognise significance in responses provided and to challenge beneficiary assertions may be key to quality even if it means trading off sample size.

## A2.2 Indicative Sampling

In order to estimate costs of impact evaluation based upon statistically representative sampling, we developed assumptions concerning the population of beneficiaries. In doing so, we consider the relevant population to be that covering a rolling two-year window in which impact evaluation can be conducted successfully.

In the absence of up-to-date monitoring data, we have estimated the population for two years of beneficiaries using the RDPE programme targets as shown in Table A2.1.

<b>TABLE A2.1: POPULATION ASSUMPTIONS</b>				
<b>Agricultural Productivity and Profitability Theme</b>	<b>Assumed Population of 2009 and 2010 Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Basis of Assumption</b>	<b>Single Stratum Sample for 5% error and 95% confidence interval</b>	<b>Two Stratum Sample for 5% error and 95% confidence interval</b>
Adding Value	1345	Measures 123, 124 plus 50% of 331	299	490
Operational Efficiency	480	Measure 125 plus 50% of 121	213	296
Diversification in Agriculture	1135	Measure 221 plus 50% of 121	287	458
Strengthening Management and Skills	38000	Measure 111	380	754

## A2.3 The Gross-Net Adjustment

Both experimental and non-experimental impact evaluation approaches have to take into account a range of issues in adjusting from gross observable outcomes to net economic impact. Table A2.2 identifies the adjustments recognised by theory, how they may be researched and where assumptions may be applied from input-output data.

While theory recognises the possibility of all of the issues in the Gross-Net adjustment, our practical experience emphasises the importance of deadweight and displacement from a policy point of view. These tend to be the most significant adjustments in scale to gross outcomes, and they are the two that can be influenced by policy or project design. The others are mainly a function of economic structure and / or location.

While necessary to produce a technically correct estimate of net GVA, we would question the value added by researching and incorporating adjustments beyond deadweight and displacement.

The crux of evaluation is a judgement on the attribution of benefits to an intervention. If there is no attributed gross benefit (i.e. only deadweight) the rest of steps in the gross-net adjustment become redundant.

<b>TABLE A2.1: RESEARCHING IMPACT THROUGH THE LOGIC CHAIN</b>		
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Key Research Questions</b>	<b>Source</b>
Establishing the Attributed Gross Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent businesses engaged with support prior to project?</li> <li>What support provided / action taken as a result of engagement with project?</li> <li>What outputs / gross outcomes are associated with this support / action?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of case papers.</li> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>
Deadweight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent would action, outputs and gross outcomes have been different in the absence of project, in absolute, qualitative and temporal terms?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>
Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is the beneficiary business is serving local / national / international markets?</li> <li>To what extent are the competitors local / national / international?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>
Leakage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the beneficiary business operations located in locally / nationally?</li> <li>To what extent are its employees local residents?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>
Substitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the beneficiary business substituted public sector support for its own / private market resources in taking forward action?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>
Unexpected / Unintended effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were there any quantifiable or qualitative effects arising from the supported action, positive or negative? Examples might include, effect on staff morale, environmental externalities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>
Crowding In / Crowding Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was the opportunity cost of the resources allocated to the project?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defra / Delivery Partners</li> </ul>
Income Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the proportion of the wages of beneficiary businesses employees in total costs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> <li>Regional input-output data.</li> </ul>
Supply Linkage Multiplier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the value of beneficiary business non-labour inputs and to what extent are these inputs sourced locally / nationally?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> <li>Regional input-output data.</li> </ul>
Wider Effect on Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there wider economic, social and environmental consequences from project, arising from through individual cases of assistance or in aggregate?</li> <li>Is there strategic added-value arising from project?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Defra / Delivery Partners</li> <li>Beneficiary interview.</li> </ul>

ANNEX III

PROCESS ADDED VALUE



In November 2010 a focus group was held with a range of national and regional stakeholders. This group was particularly helpful in drawing out the strategic added value:

- firstly, from having an integrated sectoral strategy for the farming and food chain.
- secondly from the management and delivery processes surrounding SSFF.

### **The Contribution of the Strategy**

The context of the strategy - recovery of the industry from FMD - was noted as important in galvanising support for an integrated approach.

Participants in the focus group noted that awareness of the Strategy varied by level and that communication of its overall purpose could have been stronger. It was suggested that SSFF may have had very low visibility where ultimate beneficiaries are concerned. Farmers may be wholly unaware of markets having been created for them or that Business Link was prepared to engage with them in a more responsive way as a result of SSFF.

It was observed that the degree of integrated approach varied across the country. The economic contribution of farming was seen as the main driver in some regions (e.g. WM) and that sustainability had rather less weight.

The flexibility of SSFF over time and between regions was seen by some as having contributed to its durability.

Other benefits from the Strategy were seen as:

- initially the encouragement of private sector groupings which were argued to have been “crushed” by the Haskins Review.
- the identification and closing of gaps between agendas, e.g. in the NW, those between food and human health.
- the promotion of Leadership, Language, Ownership (by farmers), and the breaking down of silos.

### **Delivery**

Participants in the focus group argued that the value of SSFF lay not so much in expenditure on implementing actions but in:

- **policy leverage.** Don Curry's rolling visits to the regions and meetings between the Regional Chairs and National Champion four times a year highlighted blockages and led to pressure for resolution; officials were put on the spot and this was seen as leading to shifts in policy or interpretation of it.
- **influencing.** The roll out of the work of the Curry Bodies - e.g. development of biomass demand map - raised awareness of a market outside volume / low price consumers. Without this, it was suggested that farmers wouldn't have put the crops in the ground.
- **capacity.** SSFF brought people together at regional level with time and a brief to promote agendas and joining-up. Chair (one day a week) and co-ordinator in each region, plus around 25 partners.
- **levering resources.** The drawing in of partner resources, including the private sector.

It was argued that there was not only leadership from the National Champion and from the Regional Committee - leadership could be horizontal e.g. health became involved in the Year of Food and Farming.

Some level of monitoring of implementation took place - monthly progress reports submitted by regional co-ordinators to the centre. However, the development of indicators at a regional level was reported to have been resisted.

It was noted that a framework of high-level outcomes provided a basis for strategic linkage, for example, by showing how detailed decisions at regional level would contribute to sustainable development.

## **Implementation**

The importance of distinguishing between outputs and outcomes and the pitfalls of evaluating within silos was highlighted. It was suggested that the full outcomes of SSFF could not be captured through evaluation of the underlying interventions in isolation. For example, a discrete evaluation of the Farm Crisis Network project in SW may not capture the role of SSFF in stimulating the partnership between FCN and others and which is now delivering nationally.

It was argued that SSFF was about changing behaviour, for example, encouraging connections with new markets such as biomass and public sector food. This required farmers to engage with different market contacts.

Differing views were expressed on the link between competitiveness and SSFF:

- economic imperatives have driven scale efficiencies and factory farming separately from the influence of SSFF.
- at the same time, market adaptation has been helped and / or accompanied by SSFF support, e.g. for waste management.

The feasibility of evaluating the contribution of SSFF in a volatile environment questioned:

- change in commodity prices.
- change in fuel price.
- climate change adaptation.
- CAP reform.
- Sterling / Euro exchange rate.
- rising prosperity (till 2008 at least).

## **The Future**

It was argued that loss of momentum may result in politicians wanting to reproduce the process benefits of SSFF in the context of localism. In this context it would be valuable for an evaluation to document what worked, even if only in a qualitative fashion, for example:

- there are many good ideas / practice that would never have emerged without being highlighted by chairs during visits from the National Champion.
- steering with a light touch from the centre - making the regions believe they owned the strategy, or at least its delivery / implementation in their region.

- the process through which a high profile for SSFF was maintained at a strategic level - monthly contact with Ministers.