



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

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Farmers in danger of scoring environmental own goal

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) has today (Tuesday) expressed serious concerns that 40 per cent of farmers do not intend to participate in the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) [1], set up to retain the environmental benefits of the abolished set aside scheme [2], according to the latest Defra survey [3].

CPRE recognises that great efforts have been made by CFE partner organisations [4], including Government agencies, to provide advice, guidance and encouragement to farmers to contribute to the campaign's goals but disappointingly many farmers still seem reluctant to participate.

The charity believes that unless there is a significant improvement in the farmer participation figures, the Government will need to start considering implementing compulsory measures to deliver the environmental benefits the campaign has promised, and which new Ministers have been very clear they want to see.

Ian Woodhurst, Senior Farming Campaigner for CPRE, says: "No one wants more regulation but unless more farmers start doing their bit for the campaign we believe the Government will have no choice but to consider introducing compulsory measures. Ministers have been clear that they want food production and environmental protection to go hand in hand – now farmers need to show that they understand this message. Their participation is vital if landscape scale conservation is to become a reality."

End

Notes to Editors

1. The Campaign for the Farmed Environment aims to encourage farmers to sign up to options in the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ELS), and implement additional voluntary actions that aim to recapture the environmental benefits associated with former set-aside land. It will provide advice, support, and training to farmers and their advisers to facilitate the implementation of voluntary measures on the farms of those who choose to participate in the Campaign. In July 2009 the Government opted for a voluntary approach following a Defra consultation on two alternatives for retaining the

environmental benefits of set aside. One was a voluntary approach devised by the farming industry. The other was a mandatory approach that would require farmers who are in receipt of the Single Payment to put a small percentage of their land into environmental management.

2. Set aside was introduced in 1988 to prevent over production of food by taking agricultural land out of production. Set aside land could then be managed to produce environmental benefits. For example, by providing areas of feeding habitat for wildlife and by preventing water courses becoming contaminated by agricultural sprays. Areas of set aside also added to the diversity of the landscape by creating patches of non-cultivated land. In recent years around 500,000 hectares of land has been left fallow or put into set outside making it England's third largest land use. CPRE agreed set aside should be phased out, now the CAP no longer requires farmers to produce particular crops to receive farming payments, but called for mandatory measure to be introduced to prevent the loss of the environmental benefits accrued while set aside existed.

3. Table 3.2 (page7) of the Defra 'Survey of land managed under the Campaign for the Farmed Environment 2009/10 crop year' – England released on 26 May asks: '*Do you INTEND to take any action or further action in direct response to the Campaign?*' – Of all farm holdings surveyed: 57% said yes, 40% said no and 3% were not sure. For further details see - <http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/foodfarm/enviro/landenvmanage/documents/CFEfeb10.pdf>

4. CFE partner organisations include: NFU, CLA, FWAG, GWCT, LEAF, and CAAV, working in partnership with [Defra](#), [Natural England](#), the [Environment Agency](#) and the RSPB. For further details see <http://www.cfeonline.org.uk/x42296.xml>

CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, is a charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. Founded in 1926, we have 60,000 supporters and a branch in every county. President: Bill Bryson. Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. www.cpre.org.uk