

PR 1110

26 October 2009

Top of the crop

Crop farmers from across Yorkshire and Humber celebrated the success of a leading edge and interactive training initiative this weekend (24 October) at Doncaster Rugby Club.

Currently in its third season The Arable Groups (TAG) Fantasy Farmer Project, which is funded by LandSkills Yorkshire and Humber, has challenged farmers to look at and improve their current business practices by taking a real local grain supply opportunity and using it as a backdrop for high level learning.

TAG Consultant, Pat Thornton, said: "Successful market orientation is a key driver in the future of UK agriculture but this will depend on an ability to transfer and increase the appropriate technical skills throughout the supply chain. Together with LandSkills funding TAG has been able to achieve this by utilising arable demonstration sites to carry out training activities that brings together farmers and the end user."

This seasons training activity focused on the export potential of wheat and addressed many aspects of knowledge transfer from business benchmarking to crop agronomy, nutrient planning, cultivation and soil management, grain storage and drying, crop marketing and regional branding. Member of the Fantasy Farming winning group, Will Foers who manages 1,800 acres in Wadworth, Doncaster, said: "Taking part in the Fantasy Farmer project has enabled me to review how I manage my crops from the types of seed I plant to the rates of spraying and fertilising nutrition. I was able to benchmark my accounts, and as a result, sold the livestock I had and concentrated on growing wheat and oil seed rape, which has become more profitable."

This project is one example of how LandSkills can fund innovative activities that take place on site rather than in a classroom setting. LandSkills Yorkshire and Humber Programme Manager, Julie Hamilton, added: "It is great to see so many farmers have taken advantage of this initiative and benefited from their experience. LandSkills is pleased to support such a valuable activity in the region, especially as practical activities such as this are proven to result in faster changes to current business operations as they can be assessed in a safe learning environment before the farmer goes back and starts work at their own farm."

For more information about LandSkills visit www.lantra.co.uk/RDPELandSkills or call 0845 2788800.

ENDS

Issued by: Vicky Brewin, Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator Tel: 02476 858417 or e-mail: England.media@lantra.co.uk.

Picture captions: *(High res images are available on request)* The winning team William Foers, Simon Hinchliffe and Nigel Lee.



LandSkills Programme Manager, Julie Hamilton with Fantasy Farming winning team and TAG Consultant Pat Thornton.



Editor's notes

- The Rural Development Programme is jointly funded by the EU, through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the Government. In England, the programme will also make use of Voluntary Modulation. The RDPE 2007-2013 has a budget of £3.9 billion. This is more than double the budget available for the previous programme which ran from 2000-2006. £3.3 billion of the total budget will be allocated to agri-environment and other land management

schemes. This funding will help farmers to manage the land more sustainably and deliver important outcomes on biodiversity, landscape and access, water quality and climate change. Some £600 million will be made available to make agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable and to enhance opportunities in rural areas.

- LandSkills is managed by Lantra Sector Skills Council on behalf of 6 Regional Development Agencies as part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which is funded by Defra and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
- Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based industries, is licensed by the UK government to drive forward the new skills, training and business development agenda for the sector.
- Lantra represents 17 industries and 1.5 million workers and volunteers in agricultural crops, agricultural livestock, animal care, animal technology, aquaculture, environmental conservation, equine, farriery, fencing, fisheries management, floristry, game and wildlife management, land-based engineering, landscaping, production horticulture, trees and timber and veterinary nursing. For more information see www.lantra.co.uk.



The European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas

