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The Wider Social Impacts of Changes in the Structure of Agricultural Businesses

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The wider social impacts of changes in the structure of agricultural businesses

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Executive Summary

Background

E1 Agricultural restructuring is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, recent decades have seen substantial changes, not only to the number and types of farmers and farm businesses, but also to ownership structures and to the relationship between land holding and management control. The Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), together with the UK Countryside Agencies, has commissioned a body of research in recent years which, taken together, offer important insights into the nature, speed and extent of restructuring in the UK and of the potential for further, accelerated change in the years to come. From this body of work it is clear that a prolonged and difficult process of disengagement from agriculture as a mainstream income source is beginning to take place, with evidence of both adaptation and resistance to change by a land management community which is becoming increasingly diverse in its social composition and behaviour

E2 The adjustment to farming practice, living standards and lifestyles which all of this implies is not without personal cost and, while media claims of an agricultural crisis may be exaggerated, it is clear that large numbers of farmers are finding they have to make difficult adjustments against a shifting background of policy reform and market change. Moreover, given the traditional centrality of farmers in rural communities, both as employers and as participants in many of the key institutions of rural life, there may be wider social implications of agricultural restructuring which now deserve to be more closely investigated. What, for example is the nature, extent and wider significance of the personal costs and social implications of agricultural restructuring?

E3 Against this background the present study was commissioned by Defra to examine the current and likely future restructuring of England's agricultural businesses and to consider the wider social implications of these changes. The specific objectives of the research were to:

- consider the impact of structural change on the quality of life of farmers and their families

- consider the impact of structural change on employment
- consider the impact of structural change on local communities
- explore implications for policy development in the sphere of social sustainability

E4 The approach adopted for this research builds directly on our earlier work exploring the environmental and economic implications of agricultural restructuring (Lobley et al. 2002). In order to examine the links between different trajectories of restructuring and the wider economic and environmental implications, six study areas indicative of different types of countryside were purposively selected. The selection framework was based on two characteristics - dominant farming type and degree of accessibility to major metropolitan centres, as follows:

	Upland pastoral	Lowland pastoral	Arable
Accessible	The Peak District: ***Bakewell area***	The High Weald: ***Heathfield area***	East Midlands: ***Newark area***
Remote	Cumbria: ***Orton Fells area***	Mid Devon: ***Witheridge area***	North Norfolk: ***Fakenham area***

E5 In the current project, these six areas again formed the focus for primary data collection through a series of face-to-face interviews with members of farming and non-farming households; written consultations with Parish Councils and study area based discussion groups convened to bring together a range of stakeholders including individual farmers, representative of farming organisations, District and County council staff, etc. In addition, two national stakeholder panels were convened at the start and towards the end of the project.

E6 The target number of farm interviews for each study area was 15 with an additional 8 non-farm household interviews. In the event, a total of 115 interviews were conducted (of which 35 were with non-farmers and 80 with farmers). By comparing responses from the current survey to those recorded for **the same farms** in 2001/02 we are able to explore the extent to which the restructuring trends identified in the earlier report are continuing or being deflected and the nature of the social implications. At the same time, the selection of interviews with non-farmers enabled us to begin to explore some of the wider community dynamics of agricultural restructuring.

Patterns and trends in agricultural restructuring

E7 For the individual farm business, restructuring involves the recombination or reallocation of resources (principally land, labour and capital) to economic activity either within or off the farm. For example, it may involve expansion or contraction of the farm business itself, significant enterprise change or diversification into non-farming activities. The main impression from the survey is one of consolidation of existing trends rather than the development of any significant new trends or the shake out of farmers or land. That said, there has been a continuing, marginal decline in the number of dairy farms (falling from 21% to 17of the same sample of farms between 2001/02 and 2005) and an increase in the proportion of very small lifestyle farms (rising from 17% to 20%) At an aggregate level, the trend of labour shedding has continued and there has been some substitution of salaried non-family labour for family labour.

E8 In order to move beyond individual indicators of restructuring towards an analysis of the pattern of restructuring, the 2002 report introduced the concept of the *restructuring spectrum* in order to capture the variety of ways in which farmers were deploying and re-deploying the assets at their disposal: land, labour and capital. The spectrum described a number of categories of restructuring response ranging from those making little or no change (*minor change* and *static businesses*) through to those diversifying their income base (*agricultural integrators*, *on-farm diversifiers*, *off farm diversifiers*) and those surviving by consuming capital assets (*capital consumers*). The position of the current sample of farmers on the restructuring spectrum has been analysed using the latest survey information to give an illustration of the types of restructuring undertaken in the recent past (previous five years) and intentions for the near future (next five years).

E9 The dominant type of restructuring for the current sample in the recent past continues to be farm focused, *traditional restructuring* (cost cutting, expansion, switches between agricultural enterprises), accounting for 37% of all recorded instances of restructuring compared to 46% of the 2002 sample. A significant minority of farmers in the current sample (25%) are re-orientating their business through up/down stream integration with the wider agricultural sector or through on or off farm diversification. Overall, there is little sense of *significant* movement between categories of restructuring since the original survey, and thus of a shift along the restructuring spectrum, with 50% of the 2005 sample following the same trajectory as in 2001/02. Where there has been movement between categories this is largely between *traditional restructuring* and the *minor change* or *static* categories. In other words, movements between restructuring categories reflect marginal changes rather than a radical realignment of the trajectory of the farm business. Indeed, on the basis of these results it appears that the near future will see little change to a broad picture of farm-business-centred restructuring, although it seems likely that there will be a small increase in the numbers of on- and off-farm diversifiers and a proportionally similar increase in the number of 'static' businesses. The latter group are often attempting to absorb market trends or policy changes by 'standing still', typically by reducing household consumption and accepting a declining standard of living.

E10 Where disengagement from mainstream agriculture is taking place, this is proceeding along a number of pathways and, at this stage at least, seems rarely to lead to complete farm businesses being given up. Alongside a continuing, if unspectacular, move to diversify the income streams coming into the farm household the increasing incidence of retirement and lifestyle holdings means that a growing proportion of agricultural land is no longer being farmed by those who actually occupy it. The rise of contract farming and other, more provisional, land rental and letting arrangements, is partly explained by reluctance on the part of many disengaging and retiring farmers to actually give up their farms, even in the face of declining returns and policy uncertainty. Indeed there is evidence that the effect of the uncertainty surrounding the SPS and market conditions more generally has been to delay widespread change rather than hasten its implementation. So far as farmers themselves are concerned, few appear to be planning to leave the industry in the next five years, with 60% of respondents to the survey reporting that they still expect to be managing their current farms in five years' time (this proportion rises to 76% if those planning to retire in favour of a successor are included). Only 6% currently plan to sell their farm, while a further 6% plan to retire or semi-retire and let their land. Despite an apparent determination to continue, however, the survey hints at the heavy personal costs being shouldered by some farmers and farming families at this point in the policy transition.

The social implications of agricultural restructuring

E11 The link between restructuring activities and social impacts is a complex one and thus not amenable to straightforward analysis using the restructuring spectrum. While the spectrum remains a useful means of analysing the farm level implications of restructuring, it is less valuable, for obvious reasons, as a predictor of the social consequences, as experienced by families and individuals. Much depends here on the personal background, economic status and social engagements of individual farmers and farming families. For the purposes of the analysis, we classified respondents into two broad but distinct groupings viz: 'active adapters' or 'passive absorbers', each with distinctive characteristics and systematically different restructuring profiles. These two groupings are more helpful in understanding the manner and extent to which farmers are experiencing and internalising (both as individuals and households) the social impacts of restructuring and offer an initial basis on which to further analyse the implications of restructuring for rural communities.

E12 Active adaptors and passive absorbers are distinctly different in terms of their socio-economic and farming profiles. They are not easily defined in terms of a single variable (such as age) but rather a clustering of characteristics: they tend to be younger, more highly educated, operate larger farms and have frequently reduced their dependency on agricultural income – often through developing a portfolio of business interests. In contrast, passive absorbers tend to be older, less educated (in a formal sense), managing smaller farms and frequently still highly dependent on agriculture as an income source. Looking to the future, active adaptors are the most bullish with 77% stating their intention of remaining in charge of their business in the near future compared to just 49% of passive absorbers.

E13 The social implications of the actions (and inactions) of the two groups are complex. Many farming respondents displayed low levels of self worth associated with their perceptions that they were not understood and were unwanted by both the general public and Defra. Delays and uncertainties surrounding the SPS reinforced this perception. Compounding these issues, a number of respondents were suffering from isolation as a result of changes in their business (typically labour shedding) and also due to the changing position of farmers' wives. Where farmers' wives are working away from the farm, farmers are often alone for much of the day and lack social contact. Many pointed to the detrimental impact on personal relationships of long working hours, speaking of limited contact with spouses and children and, for passive absorbers in particular regarding declining contact with other farmers. The reasons for declining farmer-to-farmer contact vary but a dwindling infrastructure (such as the closure of markets) can mean fewer places to meet, while there was also some agreement that it was often 'too depressing' to meet and talk to other farmers.

E14 At the same time, those who have actively restructured their business and frequently stepped off the agricultural treadmill identified benefits in terms of reduced stress, more time for family activities and the opportunity to get away from the farm. For the more actively engaged, entrepreneurial farmers, a new set of relationships with customers and suppliers is opening up at the very moment that traditional, more agri-centric ones are being closed down.

Farmers in the community

E15 It is part of conventional wisdom that farmers and farmers' wives supply the core membership of various key institutions of rural life such as the parish council and the WI. One of the hypotheses of this research is that the isolation, stress and increased time demands being experienced by individuals and farming families will ripple out into the rural community as farmers reduce their participation in village and community life or even disengage completely. Despite being socially embedded in their communities (that is living very near their place of birth and most of their close family and friends) the results of the household survey suggest that farmers are less socially active than non-farmers. The reasons for this vary but are associated with a desire to avoid exposure to criticism (of farming/being a farmer), the lack of time associated with excessive working hours and, more straightforwardly, the declining number of main occupation farmers in rural areas. Active adaptors though are more likely than others to be involved in community based organisations and are likely to have seen their contacts with non-farmers to have increased in recent years – often a direct consequence of their diversified activities.

E16 To some extent it appears that non-farmers, frequently in-migrants, are ‘taking up the slack’ and moving in to take up positions vacated by farmers. In turn, this can make them easy targets for the criticism that they are attempting to ‘take over’ (although in-migrants are equally criticised for not taking part) even though there was some recognition of the socially important role played by newcomers. Despite the common assertion by farmers that there is little public support for them, non-farmers were more likely to think that farmers played an economically and socially important role in the community. However, when pressed for more details of how changes in agriculture were impacting on the community and local economy, few non-farming respondents were able to answer in any depth. This reflects the lack of regular contact between many farmers and non-farmers and a consequent lack of knowledge and understanding.

The implications for policy

E17 The implications for policy which flow from all this are necessarily broad and to an extent must be addressed to the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of agricultural restructuring. It is worth observing at this point, however, that while the personal and social costs of agricultural adjustment are presently largely being internalised within farm families, the long term prospect is for the wider social repercussions of agricultural change to be more widely felt and to be recognised as an important social policy concern. Our first recommendation, therefore, is that the nature, magnitude and distribution of these social costs needs to be more fully weighed in the balance as part of any public debate concerning the future of the countryside. While the current project has advanced understanding of some of the key social implications of recent agricultural restructuring that are now in progress, further work is needed in order to explore more fully the likely future direction that any restructuring will take, the magnitude of the social costs incurred and thus to define limits to acceptable change in terms of the impacts for farmers, farming families and rural communities. In particular, further research is required to explore the impacts which are currently hidden from view within farm households (e.g. substance misuse, domestic violence, etc). In addition, it is recommended that a repeat study of the current research is conducted in 2-3 years time to gauge the impact of the SPS on restructuring, retirement and succession decisions, once this and other recent policy innovations have become more fully embedded. In the meantime, there are several implications for policy delivery and understanding, farmer support networks and long term policy strategy itself which need to be explored.

E18 **Delivery and policy promotion:** clarify the role and purpose of the SPS and the mission of agriculture post the MTR. Despite an early commitment by Defra staff and stakeholders to clear and transparent implementation of the 2003 CAP reforms, it is evident from the survey that there is considerable confusion surrounding the purpose and rationale of the SPS and a lack of confidence by farmers generally in the commitment of government and its agencies to long-term policy development in the rural field. The survey has not uncovered evidence of the best way to 'get the message across' but it is clear that the lack of clarity and understanding (on the part of farmers) alongside delays in delivery is compounding a feeling of negativity amongst many (though not all) members of the agricultural community – that they are unwanted, unvalued and not understood. In turn, this kind of mind set is not conducive to business restructuring and adaptation. There is a clear need therefore to promote confidence and self-respect amongst farmers as members of a newly emerging (multifunctional) land management community. A clear and shared vision of the role and value of farming should be developed. It should be shown that there are ways to remain viable as a manager of the land and to be a valued member of the community although equally, escape routes should be made available for those who need them via early retirement schemes. One option would be a fully funded, time limited, national roll-out of the *FreshStart* scheme (as currently implemented in Cornwall). Not only would this help relieve some of the pressure for those who feel they are a victim of (policy and market) circumstances, it could also provide a vehicle for introducing new blood and a more entrepreneurial and dynamic spirit into the sector. Such a scheme should be designed to speed up the process of restructuring and to bring about environmental gain.

E19 **Promote and support the social benefits of diversification:** the original policy rationale for farm diversification was concerned with diverting resources from production to help ease concerns regarding surpluses and the cost-price squeeze. This research has confirmed the employment dividend associated with diversification but also hints at the social benefits in terms of drawing farmers into a wider set of social networks and customer relations. While diversification and the new developments it brings with it is not without controversy in rural areas, there is scope here for a fresh look at the way diversification is regulated through the planning system and promoted under the next ERDP, with more and better training for farmers concerning the importance of good marketing, networking and sensitive design in the development of new diversification schemes and projects. These issues are further explored in the review of the diversification measures and impacts being undertaken by the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth.

E20 **Farmer support and advice:** while there is a need for further in-depth research in to the well-being of farm family members, continued support for the Rural Stress Action Plan (RSAP) is also required to assist the farming help charities in seeking to address the symptoms and consequences of restructuring. At the same time, those delivering advice (such as FBAS and demonstration farms) should be aware of the social reconnection effect associated with stepping off the agricultural treadmill (through diversification, for example) and, in particular, the personal well-being dividend.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary		**i**
Chapter 1	**Project background, aims and methodology**	**1**
Chapter 2	**Patterns and trends in agricultural restructuring**	**6**
Chapter 3	**The social implications of agricultural restructuring**	**24**
Chapter 4	**Farmers in the community**	**40**
Chapter 5	**Conclusions and policy observations**	**50**
References		**55**
Appendix 1	**Methodology**	**58**
Appendix 2	**Parish Council consultation**	**61**
Appendix 3	**Household survey questionnaire**	**69**

Tests of Statistical Significance: A Note

On a number of occasions in this report comparisons are made between characteristics of sub-groups of respondents using bivariate tabular analysis. In these cases Chi^2 has been calculated to test the statistical significance of the independence between two categorical variables. A 'significant' association between variables is taken to be one where there is less than a 5% probability of the difference arising by chance ($p < 0.05$).

This report also notes statistical significance regarding the comparison of means between sub-groups of respondents. For these, the t-tests procedure compares the means for two groups of cases. A 'significant' difference between means is taken when there is a less than 5% probability of the difference arriving by chance ($p < 0.05$).

Tables with total rows may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Chapter 1: Project background, aims and methodology

Introduction and literature review

1.1 Agricultural restructuring is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, recent decades have seen substantial changes, not only to the number and types of farmers and farm businesses, but also to ownership structures and to the relationship between land holding and management control. The Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), together with the UK Countryside Agencies, has commissioned a body of research in recent years which, taken together, offer important insights into the nature, speed and extent of restructuring in the UK and of the potential for further, accelerated change in the years to come (Lobley and Potter, 2004; Lobley et al., 2002; Reed et al., 2002; Turner et al., 2003; Savills, 2001). While the pattern of change is complex and geographically differentiated, it is clear that a long and rather difficult process of disengagement from agriculture as a mainstream income source is beginning to take place, with evidence of both adaptation and resistance to change by a land management community which is becoming increasingly diverse in its social composition and behaviour (Potter and Lobley, 2004). The adjustment to farming practice, living standards and lifestyles which all of this implies is not without personal cost and while media claims of an agricultural crisis may be exaggerated, it is clear that large numbers of farmers are finding they have to make difficult adjustments against a shifting background of policy reform and market change. Moreover, given the traditional centrality of farmers in rural communities, both as employers and as participants in many of the key institutions of rural life, there are likely to be wider social implications of agricultural restructuring which now deserve to be more closely investigated.

1.2 Despite the existence of a significant body of research into the changing social structure of rural areas, the extent to which contemporary agricultural restructuring may now be bringing about wider social change is under researched. Compared to the situation which prevailed during the 1950s and 60s, when agriculture was widely assumed to be synonymous *with* rural society, the emphasis in recent years has been on the declining economic (and by implication, social) importance of agriculture in the wake of counterurbanisation and the socio-cultural transformation of rural areas that this brings in its wake

(Champion, 1989; Champion and Townsend, 1990). Anxious to challenge the traditionally somewhat agri-centric view of the rural economy and the framing of rural policy more or less exclusively in terms of 'the farm problem', researchers and commentators have been much more interested in stressing the social diversity of rural space and the need for public policy to serve the interests of a much wider community of disadvantaged individuals and families than farmers alone. In these analyses, the deep structural roots of rural poverty and the phenomenon of counterurbanisation, with its implications for affordable housing and community participation, take centre-stage (see Buller et al., 2003; Blackburn et al., 2003; Countryside Agency, 2003). The motivations behind decisions to move to the countryside and the consequences of the resulting significant increase in population for rural society have been the subject of a number of large scale studies (see, for instance, Cloke et al., 1998; Cloke 2004). Conflicts between 'locals' and 'incomers' and the implications for affordable local housing and rural services of an influx of affluent, mobile residents is a particular focus for research investigating rural social change (see Phillips, 1993), with a long line of empirical studies looking at what Phillips calls the 'gentrification' of rural areas. At the same time, there have been many studies investigating the changing nature of rural labour markets and employment (Green and Hardill, 2003; Hodge, 2004). Monk et al. (1992) for example, point to the low pay that is prevalent in rural areas and to specific barriers to wider participation in the jobs market.

1.3 Agriculture is implicated in much of this work, of course, even if the drivers of social change are largely located outside the industry. The classic study by Newby et al., (1978) explored the impact of counterurbanisation and a declining agricultural workforce for the position of farmers in the class structure of rural areas, a subject returned to in a recent review undertaken by Winter and Rushbrook (2000). At the same time there is an extensive literature which has focused on the changing social relations of farming families and the need to recognise the agricultural household as an important social unit in the countryside (Bryden et al., 1992; Gasson et al., 1988; Gasson and Errington, 1993). This work began in the 1980s with the realisation that it is the farm household rather than farm businesses which is the key unit of economic decision making and social organisation so far as agriculture is concerned, with off-farm employment, income pooling and the labour input of family members explaining the persistence and apparent survivability of family farms at a time of declining agricultural returns. Most commentators would argue that the survival strategies of farming families have been severely tested in the decade or more since these studies were completed. A combination of factors, including movements in exchange rates, falling world prices and continuing reform of the CAP have eroded incomes from agriculture and exacerbated a cost-price squeeze. With a fresh round of CAP reforms now in process, and a growing sense that agriculture faces a new but as yet unclear set of market challenges in an increasingly global agri-food system, attention is beginning to return to the predicament of many farming families and the economic hardship and personal stress which appears to accompany the restructuring process. Moreover, this interest is not confined to the UK, with studies in Australia and Canada, for instance (Dibden and Cocklin, 2005, Smithers and Johnson 2004) re-focussing policy debate on the personal and social costs of the economic adjustments necessitated by agricultural liberalisation and market reform.

1.4 Recent work in the UK on rural stress (Lobley, 2005; Lobley et al., 2004) has emphasised the contribution of economic uncertainty, time pressures, disease crises (such as FMD and Bovine TB) and increased paperwork on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, while there is growing recognition of the physical, personal and social isolation which accompanies a farming way of life. A reduction in the number of hired workers on farms means that farmers find themselves working alone, or with members of their immediate family, rather than as part of a team. Meanwhile, the requirement for farmers' wives to go out to work leaves the farmer in isolation for large parts of the working day. Interest is also growing in the wider social and community repercussions of agricultural change. Studies by Burton et al. (2005) and by Appleby (2004), for instance, have pointed to the decline of 'social capital' in UK farming due to an erosion of community ties and collective working arrangements. Although a study by Williams (2002) on changing patterns of community participation does not focus on farmers as such, it suggests some potentially significant linkages between agricultural restructuring and the willingness and ability of farmers to contribute to community life.

1.5 Questions nevertheless remain concerning the nature, extent and wider significance of the personal costs and social implications of agricultural restructuring. The present study was commissioned by Defra to examine the current and likely future restructuring of England's agricultural businesses and to consider the wider social implications of these changes. The specific objectives of the research were to:

- consider the impact of structural change on the quality of life of farmers and their families
- consider the impact of structural change on employment
- consider the impact of structural change on local communities
- explore implications for policy development in the sphere of social sustainability

Approach

1. 6 The research reported here builds directly on earlier work (Lobley et al., 2002) exploring the environmental and economic implications of agricultural restructuring. In order to examine the links between different trajectories of restructuring and the wider economic and environmental implications, six study areas indicative of different types of countryside were purposively selected. The selection framework was based on two characteristics - dominant farming type and degree of accessibility to major metropolitan centres, as follows:

	Upland pastoral	Lowland pastoral	Arable
Accessible	The Peak District: ***Bakewell area***	The High Weald: ***Heathfield area***	East Midlands: ***Newark area***
Remote	Cumbria: ***Orton Fells area***	Mid Devon: ***Witheridge area***	North Norfolk: ***Fakenham area***

1.7 In the current project, these six areas again formed the focus for primary data collection through a series of face-to-face interviews with members of farming and non-farming households; written consultations with Parish Councils and study area based discussion groups convened to bring together a range of stakeholders including individual farmers, representative of farming organisations, District and County council staff, etc.

1.8 The target number of farm interviews for each study area was 15 with an additional 8 non-farm household interviews. In the event, a total of 115 interviews were conducted (of which 35 were with non-farmers and 80 with farmers). By comparing responses from the current survey to those recorded for **the same farms** in 2001/02 we are able to explore the extent to which the restructuring trends identified in the earlier report are continuing or being deflected and the nature of the social implications. At the same time, the selection of interviews with non-farmers enabled us to begin to explore some of the wider community dynamics of agricultural restructuring. Throughout the report, where relevant, we report on differences between upland and lowland areas. However, caution must be exercised when interpreting the implications of these results as the small sample size (there are 26 farms in the upland sample and 54 in the lowlands) and more qualitative approach does not easily lend itself to a comparison between the uplands and lowlands.

1.9 The structure of the remainder of this report is as follows: Chapter Two considers evidence of recent restructuring in the study areas; Chapter Three explores the social implications of restructuring at the farm level, while Chapter Four addresses the wider social implications of restructuring at the community level and Chapter Five presents the conclusions and a number of recommendations for policy.

Chapter 2: Patterns and trends in agricultural restructuring

Introduction

2.1 Following on from our earlier report on the economic and environmental implications of agricultural restructuring (Lobley et al., 2002), the empirical element of this project focused around six study areas selected to reflect different types of countryside situation found in England (e.g. different degrees of remoteness/accessibility, different farming systems - (see Table 2.1). A sample of 188 farms that had participated in the earlier study of 255 farms was selected and structured to reflect a cross section of different types of restructuring (weighted in favour of the dominant type of restructuring in a study area where appropriate). A target of 15 farm household interviews was set for each location, along with 8 non-farm household interviews. The non-farming sample was selected by identifying initial contacts through a consultation exercise with Parish Councils (see Appendix 1 for further information). These contacts were not necessarily members of the Parish Council but were people identified as potentially helpful informants. The remainder of non-farming interviews were selected through a process of 'snowballing' and random selection[1] within each study area.

2.2 In total 80 farm household interviews were successfully conducted (a response rate of 43%), along with 35 non-farm household interviews. On average, the number of both types of interview achieved was slightly below target. This, in part, reflects the less than ideal time to be conducting a farm survey[2] (delayed by four weeks due to the General Election). For non-farm households, while the snowballing approach was generally successful in generating a diverse sample, it was not always possible to interview respondents at a time that was convenient within the time constraints of the project. In addition to face-to-face interviews, a stakeholder meeting was

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[1] Although the non-farm household sample was very small and designed to be informative rather than representative of all non-farming rural residents, it enabled us to recruit a broad mix of respondents. The snowballing approach – asking each interviewee to identify further potential interviewees – carries with it the risk that the sample will comprise individuals with similar socio-economic characteristics who are known to each other or who are at least members of a wider social network. In an attempt to address this concern, individuals were also approached at random to request an interview. This approach ensured that the non-farm household sample, while ultimately self-selecting, contains a cross-section of individuals in terms of age, employment status, length of residency in the area, etc.

[2] For instance, silage making in the grassland areas meant that it was particularly difficult to arrange interviews with farmers.

convened in each area in order to explore some of the social implications of restructuring for local farmers and the local community.

Table 2.1: Case study areas

	Upland pastoral	Lowland pastoral	Arable
Accessible	The Peak District: ***Bakewell area***	The High Weald: ***Heathfield area***	East Midlands: ***Newark area***
Remote	Cumbria: ***Orton Fells area***	Mid Devon: ***Witheridge area***	North Norfolk: ***Fakenham area***

The respondents

2.3 The survey captured a range of respondents of different ages, gender and educational background with different degrees of connection to the local area. The farming respondents were predominantly (88%) male compared with 65% of the non-farming respondents. The average (mean) age of farming respondents was 55.5 compared to 59.6 for non-farmers. As can be seen from Table 2.2, 39% of farming respondents were aged 56-65 while a further 20% were aged over 65. This compares to 34% and 40% respectively for non-farming respondents. It is important that these differences in age structure are borne in mind when considering the implications of the findings reported below. The implications of the age structure of the non-farming sample are illustrated in Table 2.3 which shows that 54% were retired. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that the non-farming sample contains a cross-section of people who are employed and self-employed as well as retired (see Table 2.3). Comparing the age structure of upland and lowland farmers reveals some interesting differences and similarities. The mean age of both groups of farmers is 55, although the age structure differs markedly, with 50% of the upland farmers being aged 55-65 compared to 33% of lowland respondents. On the other hand, while 22% of lowland farmers were aged over 65 only 15% of upland farmers were in this age group.

2.4 Considering the educational profile of the respondents, Table 2.4 indicates that both the farming and non-farming samples represent a cross-section of educational experiences. It is apparent that non-farmers are more likely to have gained a professional qualification while farmers are more likely than non-farmers to have ended their formal educational experience when they left school. Upland farmers are more likely to have left school without any qualifications (50% compared to 11% of lowland farmers) and are also much less likely to have gained a higher education qualification (4% compared to 23% of lowland farmers).

Table 2.2: Age profile of respondents[3] (numbers given in brackets)

	Percentage of farming household	Percentage of non-farming household	Percentage of all households
Under 35	5 (4)	6 (2)	5 (6)
35-45	18 (14)	9 (3)	15 (17)
46-55	19 (15)	11 (4)	17 (19)
56-65	39 (31)	34 (12)	37 (43)
66 and over	20 (16)	40 (14)	26 (30)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 2.3: Employment status of non-farming households

Employment Status	Number	Percentage
Self-employed	8	23
Employed	7	20
Retired	19	54
Unemployed	1	3
Total	35	100

Source: Farm Survey

Table 2.4: Education status of non-farming households

	Non-farmers		Farmers	
Education Status	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Left School with no qualifications	6	18	17	22
Left School with qualifications	3	9	16	20
Further Education	10	29	30	38
Higher Education	7	21	15	19
Professional Education	8	24	1	1
Total	34	100	79	100

Source: Farm Survey

2.5 The survey utilised a series of proxy indicators of the degree to which respondents can be said to be embedded in their local community and locality, and the results clearly reveal the extent to which farmers are deeply socially embedded in their local community (though this is not to say that they are socially active or engaged – see further discussion below). For instance, 43% of farming respondents have always lived in the parish in which they currently farm, while 57% have moved into the parish since birth. On the other hand, over 80% of non-farmers have moved into the parish from outside (see Table

[3] In all tables where percentages are presented, the number of respondents is indicated in the brackets. Furthermore, percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and therefore may not always sum to one (or one-hundred, as represented in the tables).

2.5). To some extent, this is not unexpected given the physically fixed nature of farm businesses (Reed et al., 2002 and 2003) and the low turnover of agricultural land. Of those farmers who have migrated into their current parish, close to half (46%) moved 10 miles or less. Often this was an opportunistic move, undertaken when “land came available in the neighbouring parish” or “father took on the tenancy in the next parish”. Non-farmers, by comparison, were likely to have moved greater distances; although half had only moved from within 25 miles of their present residence (however, some may have previously moved further)[4]. Relatively short distance migration is not uncommon though. For example, research on migration in rural Scotland (Findlay et al., 2000) identified a large number of short distance moves (less than 15km from destination).

2.6 A further indication of the local connectedness of farmers is that most (59%) were either born in the same location they now live in or within 10 miles. This compares to just 26% for non farming respondents (see Table 2.5). In addition to distance from place of birth, distance from most close family and distance from most close friends can be used as proxy measures for degree of local embeddedness. Combining these into a proxy index of local embeddedness, farming respondents may be regarded as being very locally embedded with 50% being born, and having most of their relatives or friends in the same location or at most within ten miles of their farm. If this is extended to within 25 miles of where they farm, over three quarters (78%) of farmers have their main social networks within their immediate locality. Combining the three proxy measures of local embeddedness (distance from place of birth, location of most close family and location of most close friends) clearly indicates that farming respondents are much more locally embedded in social networks than are their non-farming counterparts (see Table 2.6). Using this measure, and focusing on farmers only, it apparent that farmers in the uplands are even more

[4] While the relative immobility of farmers may be explained by the physical rootedness of the occupation which, in turn, is linked to some of the earliest expositions of the social benefits of family farming, it may also be associated with differences in the age profile of the farming and non-farming samples. The non-farming sample is, on average, older and, all other things being equal, the likelihood of an individual having moved residence at some point in their life increases with age. However, if the age of those who have migrated to their current parish is considered, then there is no statistical difference between migrants (mean age of 58) and non-migrants (mean age of 55). This suggests that in this sample the probability of someone having moved into a particular parish does not increase with age.

closely embedded, with 69% being born, and having most of their relatives or friends in the same location, or at most within ten miles of their farm, compared to 41% of lowland farmers.

Table 2.5: Distance from place of birth: farmers and non-farmers compared

Distance from place of birth	Percentage of farming household	Percentage of non-farming household	Percentage of all households
Same Location	38 (30)	17 (6)	31 (36)
Within 10 miles	21 (17)	9 (3)	17 (20)
Within 25 miles	8 (6)	11 (4)	9 (10)
Within 50 miles	15 (12)	14 (5)	15 (17)
Within 100 miles	6 (5)	6 (2)	6 (7)
Over 100 miles	13 (10)	43 (15)	22 (25)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 2.6: Local embeddedness index: farmers and non-farmers compared

Distance from current residence	Percentage of farming household	Percentage of non-farming household	Percentage of all households
Same Location	6 (5)	6 (2)	6 (7)
Within 10 miles	44 (35)	14 (5)	35 (40)
Within 25 miles	28 (22)	20 (7)	25 (29)
Within 50 miles	9 (7)	14 (5)	10 (12)
Within 100 miles	10 (8)	17 (6)	12 (14)
Over 100 miles	4 (3)	29 (10)	11 (13)

Source: Farm Survey

The farms

2.7 The farms in the survey are responsible for managing 12,425 ha (23% of the total farmed area covered by the 2002 survey). In terms of farm type, livestock farms account for a third of the sample (see Table 2.7), while 24% and 20% respectively are arable and mixed farms. Interestingly, compared with the entire 2002 sample of 255 farms, the proportion of farms classified as dairy has fallen whilst livestock and mixed farms have increased. The decline in dairy farms reflects the well established trend of smaller dairy enterprises closing (but not exiting farming) while larger dairy enterprises have often grown further, although Colman and Zhuang (2005) note that a greater number of larger dairy herds have ceased production since 2003 than had been expected.

2.8 Turning to farm size, as Table 2.8 indicates, the survey captured a good cross-section of farm sizes. The increase in small farms since 2002 reflects the growing importance of 'lifestyle'[5] occupiers (see further discussion below). However, further analysis of changes in farm size structure reveals that while the average size of farm in all size categories has increased since 2002 (see Table 2.9), the largest farms (>200 ha) have seen their share of total farmed area squeezed from 60% in 2001/02 to approximately 55% in 2005.

Table 2.7: Farm types in 2002 and 2005 compared[6]

Farm type	Percentage of farm type in 2002	Percentage of farm type in 2005
Dairying	21 (17)	17 (13)
Livestock	28 (22)	32 (25)
Pigs & Poultry	6 (5)	3 (2)
Arable	27 (21)	24 (19)
Mixed	11 (9)	20 (16)
Other	6 (5)	5 (4)
Total	100 (79)	100 (79)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 2.8: Farm size in 2002 and 2005

Farm size	Percentage of respondents 2002	Percentage of respondents in 2005
Less than 50 ha	17 (13)	20 (16)
50<100 ha	25 (20)	29 (23)
100<200 ha	29 (23)	27 (21)
=>200 ha	29 (23)	24 (19)
Total	100 (79)	100 (79)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 2.9: Mean farm size in 2002 and 2005

Farm size	Mean area farmed in 2002	Mean area farmed in 2005
Less than 50 ha	34	46
50<100 ha	76	77
100<200 ha	137	143
=>200 ha	328	362
Total	160	155

Source: Farm Survey

Table 2.10: Distribution of farmed land by farm size

Farm size	Total area farmed in 2002	% of total farmed area	Total area farmed in 2005	% of total farmed area
Less than 50 ha	438	3	777	6
50<100 ha	1510	12	1767	14
100<200 ha	3152	25	3004	24
=>200 ha	7553	60	6878	55
Total	12653	100	12425	100

Source: Farm Survey

[5] In the context of the farm survey "lifestyle" farmer has a specific definition as someone where 10% or less of the household income comes from agriculture.

[6] The comparison is between the same 79 farms interviewed in 2002 and 2005 as one farm in the 2005 survey is a new agricultural business.

Trends in agricultural restructuring

2.9 The results of the parish council consultation exercise portray a picture of polarisation in farm size alongside increasing complexity of farm businesses with a steady shift in favour of non-agricultural enterprises. Responses indicate that larger specialised farms are continuing to grow, with economics driving the shedding of labour and an increase in the use of contract services while the remaining smaller farms are occupied by retired farmers, part time farmers who have sought income away from the farm (for many following the spouse who also works away from the farm) or incomers attracted to rural areas for residential reasons.

2.10 Evidence from the farm survey points to a wide spread of farm business and farm family responses to restructuring pressures, but little sign of any significant shake-out either of farmers or land from the sector in the recent past (or of such a shake-out being at all likely in the near future). Indeed, in the sample of 79 farms there has only been a 228 ha reduction in their land holdings since 2002. The 2002 report introduced the concept of the restructuring spectrum in order to capture the variety of ways in which farmers were deploying and re-deploying the assets at their disposal: land, labour and capital (Lobley and Potter, 2004). The spectrum described a number of categories of restructuring response (see Box 2.1), ranging from those making little or no change through to those diversifying their income base and those surviving by consuming capital assets. Clearly, an individual farm business may exhibit evidence of more than one type of restructuring. Farm businesses are assigned to a category on the restructuring spectrum based on the predominant restructuring trajectory. The position of the current sample of farmers on the restructuring spectrum has been analysed using the latest survey information[7] to give an illustration of the types of restructuring undertaken in the recent past (previous five years) and intentions for the near future (next five years).

2.11 As Figure 2.1 illustrates, the dominant type of restructuring for the current sample in the recent past continues to be farm focused, ‘traditional

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[7] As with the original survey, each farm was categorised based on a close and careful reading of questionnaire responses by two members of the research team.

restructuring' (cost cutting, expansion, switches between agricultural enterprises), accounting for 37% of all recorded instances of restructuring compared to 46% of the 2002 sample. Farms undertaking traditional restructuring manage 34% of the land area on survey farms. A significant minority of farmers in the current sample (25%) are re-orientating their business through up/down stream integration with the wider agricultural sector or through on or off farm diversification. Together, these farms account for a further 33% of the farmed area captured by the survey. At the farm level, different types of restructuring are associated with particular impacts. For example, traditional restructuring and agricultural integration are associated with increasing farm size, while on-farm diversification is frequently associated with stable or reduced farm size but also increased employment (see section 2.16 below).

Box 2.1: Restructuring spectrum definitions

Static businesses: no change other than usual changes to rotation practice, occasional investment in replacement machinery

Minor change: businesses carrying out a range of marginal changes (to inputs for example) and some limited investment.

Traditional restructuring: Resources are (re) deployed within farm business, frequently involves movements between enterprises, specialisation and sometimes-significant capital investment.

Agricultural integrators*: Resources are (re) deployed within wider agricultural business such as whole farm management businesses, agricultural consultancy, input supply businesses and some upstream businesses.

On-farm diversifiers*: Resources (re)deployed within wider farm-based business such as a tourist enterprise or other farm based business.

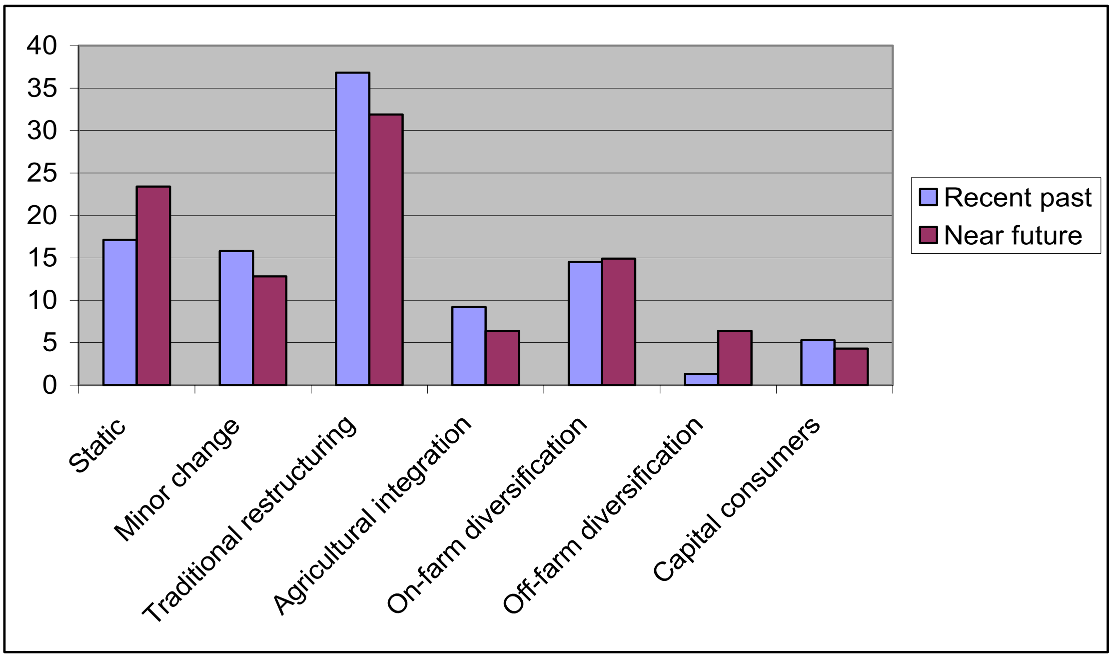
Off-farm diversifiers*: Labour and possibly capital re-deployed in off farm business or off farm employment

Capital consumers*: Agricultural assets and resources liquidated to provide income.

Leavers*: Exit from agricultural activity with or without a successor

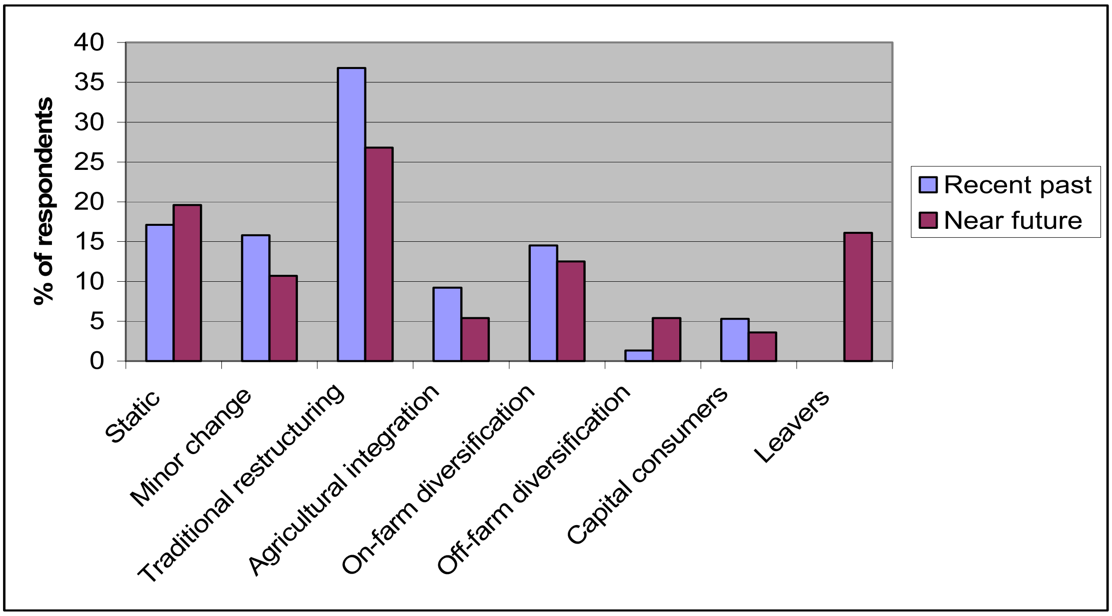
*These categories can include those who have disengaged from active farming by either letting their land or having it contract managed as part of a long process of retirement and exit or to facilitate the ability to concentrate on other business interests.

Figure 2.1 Patterns of restructuring in the recent past and near future (excluding leavers)



Source: Farm Survey

Figure 2.2 Patterns of restructuring in the recent past and near future (including leavers)



Source: Farm Survey

2.12 Overall, there is little sense of *significant* movement between categories of restructuring since the original survey, and thus of a shift along the restructuring spectrum, with 50% of the 2005 sample following the same trajectory as in 2001/02. Where there has been movement between categories this is largely between traditional restructuring and the minor change or static categories. In other words, movements between restructuring categories reflect marginal changes rather than a radical realignment of the trajectory of the farm business. Leaving aside for a moment those who expect to leave farming in the next five years (most of whom have a successor – see section 2.21 and 2.22 below), it is clear that the near future will see little change to a broad picture of farm-business-centred restructuring. It seems likely that there will be a small increase in the numbers of on- and off-farm diversifiers (either taking up off-farm employment or starting up/expanding an off-farm business) and a proportionally similar increase in the number of 'static' businesses. The latter group are often attempting to absorb market trends or policy changes by 'standing still', typically by reducing household consumption and accepting a declining standard of living. When those planning to leave are taken into account (see Figure 2.2), the proportions in the other categories obviously change but the overall pattern remains the same. Although respondents to the Parish Council consultation reported increasing agri-environmental management as an important feature of recent farming change, few farming respondents saw agri-environmental schemes or other ERDP schemes as particularly significant in terms of changes in the recent past or plans for the near future. Only ten percent planned on applying to ELS (Entry Level Stewardship) and 6% expressed an intention to apply to HLS (Higher Level Stewardship)[8].

2.13 All this being said, the divergence between farmers maintaining their reliance on income from agricultural businesses, and those diversifying their income base, can be expected to increase as individuals and farming families move along systematically different restructuring trajectories. Respondents following the minor change or traditional restructuring patterns remain highly dependent on the farm as a source of income, gaining 71% and 72% respectively of household income from the farm. Those that have diversified their income earning activities are (not surprisingly) less dependent on farming as an income source, with agricultural integrators gaining on average 53% of household income from the farm[9] while the equivalent figure for on-farm diversifiers is just 31%. Significantly, those least dependent on farming as an

[8] There was no specific mention of ERDP project based schemes in connection to past or future restructuring plans although this is an issue that is addressed more fully in the review of support for diversification being undertaken by the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth.

[9] It should be noted, however, that for this group of farm households, household income is still highly dependent on the fortunes of the wider agricultural sector. That is, they have reduced their dependency on farm income but remain closely coupled to the wider agricultural sector.

income source tend to be managing economically ‘static’ farms which generate an average of 24% of household income. This is explained by the finding that many respondents in this group occupied ‘lifestyle’ farms of one type or another (e.g. hobby farms, retirement farms).

2.14 The future will see a continued disengagement from mainstream farming, both because of diversification and increasing proportions of household income coming from rental income, private pensions and investments. There is a strong retirement effect at work here but also a large measure of uncertainty amongst younger farmers, with 11% of respondents being unable to predict future income because of perceived uncertainty surrounding market conditions, the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and/or because of family circumstances. Indeed, the role of CAP reform generally, and the SPS in particular, in driving future restructuring was frequently unclear owing to the uncertainty felt by farmers surrounding the timing of the payment and its likely longevity:

> Interviewer: *Will the single farm payment[10] affect you?*
>
> Farmer: *“I’ve no idea. Do they know themselves? It will in the end because they will just phase that out and we won’t have anything, eventually, in the long term beyond our farming life. I think this is one of our problems because they can’t, decided the government, or whoever in their wisdom. It’s very difficult to plan anything anyway. I know a few farmers who actually want to retire and* ***they’ve put off retirement*** *because of the uncertainty of everything. I don’t know whether that’s a wise move or not now.” (emphasis added)*
>
> Interviewer: *Will the single farm payment affect you?*
>
> Farmer: *“The problem I’ve got with, the problem I’ve got with answering that is that we really don’t know yet, with this single farm payment, exactly what is going to happen. And we don’t even yet know when we are going to get any money for it. We think that we will be better off. We have the ideal farm to … perhaps move towards more of the environmental side of things. ….. The only thing that worries us … we’re, our whole farm is classed in the less favoured area. The less favoured area has been penalised on the single farm payment. .. So our problem is that no one actually has told us exactly what is going to happen yet, really”.*

[10] The Single Farm Payment is the common terminology used by farmers when referring to the Single Payment Scheme introduced in 2005.

2.15 Meanwhile, the level and nature of employment and farm-family engagement on farms continues to undergo gradual change. The downward trend in farm employment has been long established and employment change is one of the most notable and widely recognised impacts of agricultural restructuring, with the most direct social consequences for those involved. This was clearly recognised in the Parish Council consultation exercise with a good degree of appreciation amongst the councillors of the negative impacts of restructuring on the farm worker in particular. The process of labour shedding was reported to be continuing, with less demand for full time farm labour. Low margins have moved the farmer to rely more seriously on contracting as a means of dealing with the more mechanised operations on the farm. For the farmer, this means, in many cases, much less in the way of contact with employees than in the past (also see section 3.18). At the same time, there was evidence from some of the discussion groups that labour shortages could be a problem either in terms of finding suitably skilled labour or large numbers of workers at key times. In turn, this leads to issues surrounding the use of immigrant labour, particularly in intensive systems:

> *"I mix and match, I have, a good clear example is with gang-masters and gang-labour, which is a pretty crucial part of our region in terms of the quantities we produce, you know, there's nobody else around to pick it, harvest it. And ... I've obviously had a central interest in that my growers need to have labour in large quantities at certain times of the year for seasonal production, you know, harvesting. Now it used to come out of the inner-city centres, I suppose people drawing the dole or whatever and looking for a couple of quid here and there each day, now it's supplied by migrant workers, and we've no idea in South Lincolnshire how many there are (They have a), very clear role though, I need to make sure that people who are getting interested in that subject, like local authorities, health service and everything knew that they shouldn't denigrate the use of migrant labour because it's an important economic asset to the region, without it it wouldn't be where it is today".*

2.16 Forty percent of surveyed farms reported a change in employment levels since 2002 and of these a majority (63%) recorded a reduction in absolute employment (a mean loss of 1.3 employees per farm – including family members), while 38% reported an increase (a mean increase of 1.67 employees per farm). The net effect of these changes is a 2.1% reduction in employment across the whole sample, or 0.075 employees per farm. However, the total number of individuals working on farms in the sample has increased by

18 since 2002, reflecting the substitution of salaried by family labour, often as part of a tried and tested cost-cutting strategy.

2.17 Given the differences in the composition of the total labour force within the survey (i.e. a mixture of full-time, part-time and casual workers), a more meaningful comparison is to standardise labour into Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)[11]. In these terms the surveyed farm businesses employ 216 FTEs, of which 63% represents family labour and 37% salaried, non-family labour. Fifty-three percent of the sample are family run farms employing no non-family labour, and this figure rises to 73% for upland farms. Analysis of labour trends in terms of FTEs reveals the pattern of labour shedding more clearly. Over the last five years, there were 12.7 FTE jobs created yet 20.8 were lost creating a net loss of 8.1 FTEs across the whole sample, a reduction of 3.6%[12]. The reasons for changes in employment levels are both complex and diverse. Taking employment creation/increases first, some farmers were employing their sons or grandsons as they left school, although having a son joining the family businesses was not always regarded as the best strategy:

> *"I did try to talk my eldest son out of working at home … getting a proper job but he wanted to do it so home he is ... But if you enjoy doing it, but it's dirty and smelly and wet."*

2.18 Over half of the FTE jobs created were connected to farm diversification (see Table 2.11) with seven women workers moving from part-time to full-time employment in a cheese processing enterprise and two new part-time workers being employed in a farm shop. Only in a minority of cases was employment created as a result of traditional agricultural restructuring, such as organic conversion:[13]

> *"the organic farming technique demands more labour intensive practice, in terms of weed control and attention to detail."*

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[11] The calculation of FTEs was based on the definition from Errington and Gasson (1996) where full-time = 1 worker, part-time = 0.5 of a worker, casual = 0.33 of a worker, and seasonal = 0.125 of a worker.

[12] Changes in labour inputs may also be associated with changes in productivity but that was beyond the remit of the research.

[13] It may of course be argued that organic conversion does not represent traditional restructuring. However, to the extent that it does reflect a farm centred approach to restructuring it fits with the definition of traditional restructuring.

2.19 Agricultural restructuring was a much more common factor behind the reduction in FTE jobs (see Table 2.12), particularly those of non-family employees, with respondents commenting that they had simplified the farming system, made routines easier or, for example, gone out of dairying and consequently reduced employment levels. Some of these restructuring decisions, however, were more complicated than merely economic decisions:

"We used to employ three people on a regular basis, two part-time people. Since my divorce, we don't employ anybody on a regular basis. It's as simple as that. You know, we've changed our business completely … Well there was two changes … one … both men were over 45, one was 53 and the other one was 45/46 and I wanted to go into ducks … a business but they didn't want to work weekends going duck business so we had an agreement. We had an amicable agreement that the farm couldn't survive just on what we were doing."

"Basically, retirement. When I went out of contract farming, I kept him on. He'd been with me for 20/22 years and he did three years on the pigs and he retired, well was due to retire, and I didn't like the idea of getting rid of him. He was good with stock."

Table 2.11: Reasons for gains in labour

Reason for gains in labour	FTE family	FTE non-family	Total FTE gained	% of total FTE
New/expansion of diversification	0.0	7.0	7.0	55%
Personal/family changes	4.0	0.0	4.0	32%
New agricultural expansion/restructuring	0.5	1.2	1.7	13%
Total	4.5	8.2	12.7	100%

Source: Farm Survey

2.20 The reduction in family labour use was still more complicated. One respondent reported that their spouse had committed suicide, while another reported that his brother became ill with cancer so was unable to work as much. Others reasons for a reduction in family labour were frequently connected with alternative economic opportunities, with one farmer reporting his farm had gone from full-time to part-time as his carpentry business making kitchens was expanding, while another reported that his son had left the family farm to secure a better future:

"My son was working on the farm but now he owns a business – welding and fabricating. He was at an agricultural college for two to three years and as he said, 'farming is going to be crap so I'm going to get a job'.

He's keen on farming but it was the financial side … and he was getting married. He could see no future in it."

Table 2.12: Reasons for losses in labour

Reason for loss of labour	FTE family	FTE non-family	Total FTE lost	% of total FTE
Personal/family changes of farmer	2.0	2.0	4.0	19%
Retirement plans	1.0	2.5	3.5	17%
Illness/death	1.5	0.0	1.5	7%
Agricultural restructuring	2.7	4.0	6.6	32%
Taken non-farming (self) employment	2.2	3.0	5.2	25%
Total	9.3	11.5	20.8	100%

Source: Farm Survey

Future Plans

2.21 Looking to the future, so far as farmers themselves are concerned, few appear to be planning to leave the industry in the next five years, with 60% of respondents to the survey reporting that they still expect to be managing their current farms in five years' time (this proportion rises to 76% if those planning to retire in favour of a successor are included). Many popular accounts of the current state and likely future of English farming argue that the industry is on the brink of major change and that evidence for this can be found in low rates of succession. However, 56% of farming respondents in the current survey reported having identified a successor for their farm and this figure increases to 80% for farmers aged 65 and over. The 2002 survey conducted in the wake of FMD and therefore during a time of great uncertainty about the future, recorded a figure of 35% of the same farms with an identified successor. The increase in the rate of expected succession partly reflects the ageing of the respondents (rates of succession increase with farmer age), although as rates of anticipated succession have risen for all age groups it also seems to indicate a strengthening of commitment on the part of the farmers themselves to remain on the land. To what degree this sentiment is shared by their children and potential successors is less clear. This contributor to a stakeholder discussion group was unusually frank:

"I can't help feeling that the current generation of people who are working on the farms will sort of go. I'm 55 and that great flush of people who were really enthusiastic …about agriculture...And my sons aren't, I've got three sons under eighteen and they aren't really interested, they see the farm as somewhere to get a bit of pocket money from but they don't see it as a way of life"

2.22 When asked about their plans for the next five years, the majority of respondents (60%) intend still to be in control of their current farm, while a further 18% plan to semi- or fully retire in favour of a successor (see Table 2.13). Only 6% plan to sell their farm, while a further 6% plan to retire or semi-retire and let their land. There are some subtle differences here between upland and lowland farmers and, while similar proportions expressed the intention to still be in control of their farm and actively farming it in five years time (58% of upland farmers and 61% of lowland farmers), upland farmers were more likely to be planning to retire in favour of a successor (35%), compared to 9% of lowland farmers. The lower proportion of lowland farmers planning to hand the farm to a successor in the next five years may be a reflection of the wider range of opportunities for both farm land and farmers and their families in the lowlands. For example, a national survey of farmers conducted by the Nat West bank in 1991 found that rates of succession were higher in the uplands. One explanation for this was that there is few alternative income earning activities in upland areas for these who wanted to continue to live near or on the family farm. Overall, the retirement/semi-retirement intentions of the current sample are not dissimilar to those reported in the ADAS et al. (2004) research on “Entry to and Exit from Farming in the United Kingdom”. The authors suggested that, “around 18% of farmers have retired or left the industry over the past five years and another 20% intend to retire or semi-retire in the next five years” (p.53).

Table 2.13: Future intentions (5 years+)

	Frequency	Percent
Retire/semi-retire in favour of successor	14	18
Retire/semi-retire & sell farm	2	3
Retire/semi-retire & let buildings/land	5	6
Sell farm & start new career	3	4
Hand over management to someone else	2	3
Still in control and farming here	48	60
Other	6	8
Total	80	100

Source: Farm Survey

2.23 Of course, not all of these plans will be fulfilled and there is evidence that the proportion of ‘retirement farms’ is increasing. These are holdings occupied by farmers near to or past retirement age in the absence of a successor, or in the (often unrealistic) expectation that one will eventually take over. Typically small, economically marginal businesses, such farms may be managed under contract or rented out under short-term grazing agreements by people unable or unwilling to leave their farms. At the other end of the spectrum are those 'lifestyle farmers' who enter the industry from outside to occupy, but rarely directly to farm, holdings being given up by mainstream farmers. Again, contractors may be brought in to farm the land, with the implication that land is increasingly managed under contract by people who do not occupy it. Taken together, these represent subtle, but cumulatively significant, examples of disengagement from mainstream agriculture which are already altering the nature of farming and its relationship to the land.

Summary

2.24 As this chapter has shown, farmers are deeply embedded in their localities, generally living very close to where they were born and close to most of their family. Compared to the non-farming sample, they are more likely to have completed their formal education when they left school, although a significant minority have a higher education qualification. In terms of agricultural restructuring, the main impression is one of existing trends being consolidated with a continuing (albeit marginal) decline in the proportion of dairy farms, and increase in the proportion of small 'lifestyle' farms and on-going labour shedding. That said, the *pattern* of agricultural restructuring revealed through the restructuring spectrum suggests little movement in the recent past or in the near future. Indeed, the majority of farmers interviewed for this research intend to remain in control of their farm in the near future and there is some evidence from interviews with farmers that CAP reform is actually slowing down the process of exit from farming[14]. This potential distorting effect was also identified in the CAAV Tenanted Farm Survey for 2004 which showed a marked reduction in all forms of activity in the let sector and noted that "at least until qualifying for entitlements and the first payments in 2005, there is a premium for many farmers in keeping the continuity of their business to command the value that may derive from their subsidy history". (CAAV, 2005) The implications of

[14] This echoes the findings of as yet unpublished research undertaken amongst predominantly smaller farmers for local authorities which reveal significant proportions, generally more than 70% of respondents, either "waiting and seeing" the practical outcome of SPS reform (in most cases receipt of the payment) before testing any further action or dissuaded from action by the administrative complexities associated with the transfer of land

such tenacity for farmers and members of their households are considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The social implications of agricultural restructuring

Introduction

3.1 The link between restructuring activities and social impacts is a complex one and thus not amenable to straightforward analysis using the restructuring spectrum. While the spectrum remains a useful means of analysing the farm level implications of restructuring, it is less valuable, for obvious reasons, as a predictor of the social consequences, as experienced by families and individuals. Much depends here on the personal background, economic status and social engagements of individual farmers and farming families. For the purposes of this analysis, we have classified respondents into two broad but distinct groupings viz: 'active adapters' or 'passive absorbers', each with distinctive characteristics and systematically different restructuring profiles. It is our contention that these two groupings are more helpful in understanding the manner and extent to which farmers are experiencing and internalising (both as individuals and households) the social impacts of restructuring and offer an initial basis on which to further analyse the implications of restructuring for communities and social capital.

Active adaptors and passive absorbers

3.2 Farming respondents were recognised as 'active adapters' or 'passive absorbers' on the basis of their responses to a range of questions regarding past changes and future intentions[15]. The categories reflect an attitude of mind as much as a particular approach to the farm business. In total, 39% of the farming sample can be described as active adapters and 61% as passive absorbers[16]. Comparing upland and lowland farmers, 31% of the former are

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[15] Respondents were classified as either active adap5tors or passive absorbers based on a careful reading of their responses to questions regarding the changes their had made to their business in the recent past and their plans for the near future as well as their attitudes towards being a farmer, CAP reform and the role of farmers in the community and local economy. Information relating to age, education, farm size, enterprise mix, dependency on farm income, etc was not used in the classification.

[16] There are many other empirically derived typologies of farmers in the body of research on agricultural restructuring. Sucksmith and Herrmann (2002), for instance, identified 'hobby farmers' and 'pluriactive successors' who had reduced their income dependency on agriculture to the extent that they were largely disengaged from farming as a primary income source. 'Potential diversifiers' and 'agribusinessmen' has also either taken or were contemplating steps that would reduce their dependency on agricultural income, viewing their farms as a collection of resources that could be deployed and redeployed in search of maximum profit". In their study of structural change in British agriculture, Savills (2001) identified a number of distinct groupings of 'farmer types' including 'debt accumulators' (those whose overdraft requirements had increased in previous five years – 37% of sample), 'expanders' (those increasing the scale of their farm business -21%), 'diversifiers' (those with *any* diversified income sources – 21%) and 'multi-activists' (those with an average of 505 of income from non-farm sources – 33%). Earlier work

active adaptors compared to 43% of lowland farmers. Overall, active adapters tend to be younger (and are significantly younger in a statistical sense) with a mean age of 52 compared to 58 for passive absorbers, have smaller families (mean of 2.2 compared to 2.6 for passive absorbers) and are less likely to be very locally embedded (most family & friends located within 10 miles) than passive absorbers. In addition, active adapters are more likely to have a higher level of education with 23% attaining a higher education qualification (compared to 13% of passive absorbers) and 45% gaining a further education qualification compared to 33% of passive absorbers. Indeed, passive absorbers are more likely to have no qualifications - 31% compared to 13% of active adapters. Active adaptors are also associated with distinctive farming and farm business characteristics. On average, they operate farms of 247 ha compared to 103 ha for passive absorbers, and are more likely to have expanded their land holdings in recent years. Thirty-three percent report that their farm size has increased compared to just 12% of farms under the management of passive operators. Moreover, 23% of active adaptors have expanded their land holdings through contract farming arrangements whereas 18% of passive absorbers have had their own land contract managed. They are also much more likely to employ non-family labour (74% compared to 31% of passive absorbers).

3.3 Given these differences it is perhaps not surprising that patterns of recent restructuring between the two groups are so different. As Table 3.1 indicates, passive absorbers are much more likely to be associated with static or minor change whereas active adaptors are disproportionably likely to be found in the agricultural integration and on-farm diversification categories. As a result, in terms of household income, active adaptors are more likely to derive income from non-agricultural sources (see Table 3.2). They have decoupled their dependency on farming as an income source and also gain proportionately much less household income from letting land and from private pensions or investments (on average 5% and 4% respectively). On the other hand, one

(Potter et al. 1999), informed by an approach developed by Bryden et al. (1992) identified distinctive groupings of ‘engagers’ ‘stabilisers’, ‘disengagers’ and ‘withdrawers’. More recently, our previous research on agricultural restructuring (Lobley et al. 2002) identified distinct groupings of ‘embracers’, ‘reactors’ and ‘resistors’ (31%, 51% and 15% of the sample respectively). All of these typologies are based on different variables, different criteria and involved different samples of farmers interviewed at different times, making direct comparisons difficult. That said, the ‘embracers’ identified by Lobley et al. 2002 share certain characteristics with the active adaptors in the present study. For instance, while found at all ages embracers were more likely to be younger, they were more likely to be highly educated.

quarter of passive farmers' household income comes from letting land and from private pensions or investments (14%) and (11%).

3.4 Fewer than 20% of all active adapters are dependent on agriculture for 90% or more of their household income compared to 33% of passive absorbers. Few (7%), however, are lifestyle or residential farmers, gaining 10% or less of household income from farming. In contrast, 25% of passive absorbers gain 10% or less of their income from farming. These are likely to be farmers that have semi-retired but still retain an interest in agriculture.

Table 3.1: Restructuring in the recent past: active and passive adaptors compared

	Percentage of active adapters	Percentage of passive adapters	Percentage of all farmers
Static	0 (0)	28 (13)	17 (13)
Minor Change	7 (2)	22 (10)	16 (12)
Traditional Restructuring	40 (12)	35 (16)	37 (28)
Agricultural integration	17 (5)	4 (2)	9 (7)
On-farm diversification	30 (9)	4 (2)	15 (11)
Off-farm diversification	3 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Capital Consumers	3 (1)	7 (3)	5 (4)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 3.2: Agricultural income dependency of active and passive farmers

	Full Time (90% or more of income from farm)	Class I Part-time (90% to 50% of income from farm)	Class II Part-time (50% to 10% of income from farm)	Lifestyle/ residential (10% or less income from farm)
Active adaptors	19 (6)	48 (15)	26 (8)	7 (2)
Passive adaptors	33 (16)	31 (15)	12 (6)	25 (12)
All farmers	28 (22)	38 (30)	18 (14)	18 (14)

The association between household income dependency and active/passive farmers is significant using Chi-square.

Source: Farm Survey

3.5 Active adaptors and passive absorbers are distinctly different in terms of their socio-economic and farming profiles. They are not easily defined in terms of a single variable (such as age) but rather a clustering of characteristics: they tend to be younger, more highly educated, operate larger farms and have frequently reduced their dependency on agricultural income – often through developing a portfolio of business interests. In contrast, passive absorbers tend to be older, less educated (in a formal sense), managing smaller farms and frequently still highly dependent on agriculture as an income source. Looking to the future, active adaptors are the most bullish with 77% stating their intention of remaining in charge of their business in the near future compared to just 49% of passive absorbers. Although we are unable to offer any simple arguments in terms of causality, these differences are associated with differences in social interaction and personal well-being (see below).

3.6 In addition, active adaptors were also much more likely (a statistically significant difference) to have identified a training need associated with their plans for the future. While 25% of the entire farming sample had identified a future training need, this rose to 34% for active adaptors compared to just 4% of passive absorbers. In many cases this was more of a recognition of a need for training rather than the identification of a specific training need, although where a specific need had been identified these spanned a wide range of topics as the examples below illustrate:

> *"Don't need training for HLS but I will if working off the farm, such as for my chain saw or HGV licence."*
>
> *"Things like marketing and business management, and computer skills."*
>
> *"I want to do an MBA at Harper Adams or possibly a Nuffield Scholarship."*
>
> *"We could become trainers in dry-stone walling, building, welding, woodwork or garden design."*
>
> *"Always training, for example, rat baiting, fire fighting, first aid: it's a requirement of the contract and the farm assured scheme."*

Stress and isolation

3.7 Looking first at the implications for individual well-being, it is clear from the survey that the way farmers see themselves and their profession profoundly affects their sense of individual self-esteem. A feeling that farming and farmers are misunderstood and undervalued by incomers to the rural community, by the urban majority and by government was widely expressed. Personal well-being and self worth are influenced by a complex range of factors including not only personal economic success but also social and psychological factors that affect the subjectivity of an individual's opinion of his or her well-being. In particular, on the basis of Cummins' (2002) model of subjective well-being it can be argued that inputs from a farmer's environment such as the type of farming system he or she manages, the level of family support, the intensity of familial and non-familial social networks, perceived attitudes of the public and officialdom towards farmers, etc., will impact upon feelings of well-being but in a different way for every farmer depending on his or her underlying genetic disposition.

3.8 In order to explore how farmers see themselves, along with some reasons behind their subjective well-being, farming respondents were asked to supply three words or phrases to describe “what it’s like being a farmer in 2005”. The most common descriptor (occurring 16 times) was “hard work”. While this was not always meant in a negative sense, it was sometimes simply accepted as an integral facet of the job and was frequently combined with the other most common response of “depressed/depressing”, “anxious” and “isolated”. The other common responses were “paperwork” (9 occurrences), “unwanted/ unappreciated” (8 occurrences) and “frustrating” (7 occurrences)[17]. There was a perception that the ‘real’ meaning of farming was being undermined and that, in the words of one lowland farmer:

> *“Well you don't need to be a farmer you just need to do the paperwork and fill out the forms … So I think farming really is just an on-going joke - park keeping really”*

3.9 A participant at a study area stakeholder discussion summed his feelings up as follows:

> *“they’re feeling persecuted, they’re feeing vulnerable, they’re feeling unwanted and they’re feeling as if the whole world doesn’t want farming”.*

3.10 In some instances this was directly associated with perceptions of ‘negative press’ relating to farming and farmers as the following farmer (a passive absorber) reported:

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[17] Clearly, farmers are not alone in having frustrations regarding their profession. Although not directly comparable, job satisfaction surveys (e.g. Rose, 2003, 1999) indicate that factors associated with lower levels of job satisfaction include a high level of human capital (including work experience), long working hours, financial worries and household problems which affect work. Rose (2003) indicates that Nursery nurses have higher job satisfaction levels than secondary school teachers who, in turn, score slightly higher than Civil Service Executive Officers. Farm workers (not farmers), on the other hand are in the ‘top five’ highest job satisfaction scores.

"Well, because of the publicity on the television, they don't trust us any longer. If you're working in a farm building with livestock, de-horning cattle or something, and people walk past on the footpaths, they immediately think you're being cruel to the animal, you know, that's their first thought. ….. If they see you with a tractor with a sprayer on the back they immediately think you're doing something illegal rather than just spraying a few thistles and docks, you're up to mischief, you know. This is because of the programmes they've watched on television, I guess."

3.11 In contrast, Milbourne et al. (2001) suggest that while contentions are made in the farming media that farmers are the constant butt of media criticism, the coverage in national non-faming media is generally sympathetic or neutral regarding farmers and farming. Nevertheless, these feelings of media and public criticism can lead to uneasiness with identifying one's self as a farmer: *"This alienation has been going on for quite a long time. ….farmers actually don't feel that they want to stand up and show themselves in the community as being farmers"* (rural clergyman).

Farmer 1: *"I don't like telling people very much that I'm a farmer"*

Farmer 2: *"no, you tend to shut up with that now. A few years ago, …."*

Farmer 1: *"You do. Twenty years ago you were a farmer and you were proud of it, and now, just like you say, you go there and you just keep your head down, you don't, well, unless you wanna annoy 'em."*

3.12 Another farmer (a passive absorber) recognised a change in attitudes towards the farming profession over a period of time:

"Well, because I know now the profession is, years ago everybody had quite a good feeling about farms, a good opinion of farmers, they would say, you know, you'd be working away and people would come past and they'd say, 'Well, I dunno, you might get that hay in before, you know, it's gonna rain tonight, you know, you'd better get them bales up.' They really couldn't give tuppence now, and what we do, we always, I always feel that you're under suspicion. Erm .. there's never a positive attitude from them, it's always a negative, it always appears to be a negative attitude with the new people to the village."

3.13 Even those who do not share the same feelings recognise that they exist for other farmers:

“If you go and say you’re [an] organic farmer you are more accepted than you would be if you say you are a conventional farmer. If you just say 'we're farming, we're organic' suddenly their whole face lights up 'Oh you're organic oh' and they all want to know the whys and wherefores and it's wonderful. It does make a difference being organic so ... you are more accepted because you are seen as not destroying the countryside, which we all do as farmers, but it's perceived a little better …. We like to be liked. We like to think we are doing an important job …… we like to think we actually do look after the countryside, we are needed and yeah. Because it is a very lonely profession we like to think we're liked outside. ... but there is animosity against farmers but we don't see it as much”.

3.14 In part, these negative attitudes derive from farmers perceptions of the changing population of their communities (in particular, the perception that “townies”[18] do not understand or appreciate them – see below). In addition, they reflect a sense that their relationship with Defra is frequently perceived to be antagonistic.

3.15 Furthermore, for some farmers with wives working off the farm, the changing balance of economic power represented a further erosion of self-worth as the following exchange from a study area discussion group illustrates:

F[19]: *I think it’s an emasculation for some farmers that I’ve spoken to at length.*

Q: *In what way?*

F: *Because they feel, they think the farm should jolly well be making an income, and if it’s not, if the wife is .. mid-professional, so she’s a teacher, physiotherapist, nurse, you know, so a mid-professional and earning twenty five thousand or something, then he feels dreadful, cos he’s working sixteen hours a day and earning tuppence.*

M: *I fit into that category exactly.*

M: *Well, your wife works?*

M: *My wife works, I feel extremely guilty that I don’t earn as much as I should. My wife goes out to work, she works nearly full time, and we fit that in with bringing up two children, and she’s run social events in the village as well, as well as doing all this”*

[18] This was just one of the many words and phrases often used to describe in-migrants to rural areas. Others include ‘incomers’, ‘newcomers’, ‘people from off’, ‘off comers’ and ‘interlopers’.

[19] F= female, M= male, Q= questioner

3.16 Positive responses to “what is it like being a farmer in 2005” were less common, although 21 respondents (27%) used words and/or phrases that were, on balance, positive. The most common (6 occurrences) was “challenging”. Others used words such as “rewarding”, “satisfying”, “interesting” and even “enjoyable”. In group situations this type of attitude was often submerged under the general tenor of ‘doom and gloom’. In face-to-face interviews however, on occasion, this more positive outlook was clearly in evidence as the following example indicates:

> *“We are actually organic farming so we find it quite challenging, quite exciting as farmers, which I don't expect you've heard very much. … I think we've in a way enjoyed the last three or four or five years more than the other 25 in a way. ... Father, he's older and in the end he let us take it on and do what we like and it has been quite interesting, yes basically on the whole, yes its been very good. ... To be quite honest we get a bit more for our milk which makes life more easier. ...we are actually making ... we’re making money but we don't say that very much. It makes life a lot easier, a lot ... because it takes that pressure off basically. I think that's why it’s easier in a way. We haven't got that thinking all the time, can I afford this can I do that. So it's made life a lot easier. It's been good”.*

3.17 While the typically negative feelings about being a farmer influence feelings of ‘doom and gloom’ frequently expressed by farming respondents and stakeholders, they also influence feelings of isolation. It is possible to identify a range of different types of isolation such as physical isolation, social isolation and cultural isolation. Leaving aside the experience of FMD and the associated physical isolation, for many in the sample isolation is essentially a state of mind and is linked to quite profound changes in farming situation, social networks and family relationships. Feelings of isolation were most frequently expressed by younger individuals who are finding themselves having to respond to, or attempt to absorb the effects of, market trends and policy change. Hence, although 56% of farming respondents said they had felt isolated at some point in the past five years[20], 60% of the passive absorbers said they had experienced isolation during this period compared to 55% of the actives[21].

[20] Forty percent of non-farming respondents reported experiencing isolation during the last five years.

[21] There are no simple and systematic explanations for the experience of isolation and farm or farm household variables. For example, while full time farmers (>=90% of household income from farm) are most likely to have experienced isolation in the last five years (71%), 50% of those gaining between 10-50% of their household from the farm also reported experiencing isolation. Lifestyle farmers gaining less

These results are likely to be influenced by the experience of FMD which many respondents spoke of in relation to isolation. Amongst livestock farmers in particular, the experience of the recent FMD outbreak was still very vivid, when the ability to move off the farm, socialise and compare notes with other farmers was severely curtailed. There are other, more enduring, reasons for the increasing isolation being felt by many farmers, however, which are connected to phenomena such as the closure of local livestock markets and a decline in the number of personal visits to the farm from 'farmers' friends' such as feedstuff reps and machinery salespeople. As this participant in the Heathfield stakeholder meeting put it:

> *"You're also seeing changes because whereas you (once) had a large number of local markets and a large number of local abattoirs, the market place was a point farmers would go and exchange information about crops and about the weather and about a whole range of things, and that's been taken away from them, so they're even more isolated back on their farms"*

3.18 When asked to list the five most important personal relationships, it was significant that farmers were more likely than non-farmers in the sample to include 'business contacts' such as accountants, sales reps and feed merchants alongside family and friends and to acknowledge the importance of these relationships in discussing personal as well as farming-related issues (see Tables 3.3 and 3.4). In part, this may be a reflection of the lower proportion of the non-farming sample that were self employed or in employment although comparing farmers with non-farmers in employment/self employment indicates that business contacts are still more important to farmers. The role that family performs in a farmer's personal network may be multiple, ranging from talking about emotional and personal issues to being discussants in more formal roles within the farm business and frequently involved in fundamental in decision-making (Meert, 2005; Butler et al., 2005; Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Tigges et al., 1998; Warriner and Moul, 1992). However, familial associations do not necessarily imply either positive relationships or symmetry in the power possessed between family members (Butler et al., 2005).

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than 10% of their income from the farm were the least likely to have experienced isolation (36%) although the result is not statistically significant.

3.19 As well as the importance of relationships within the family, Tables 3.4 and 3.5 also point up differences between farmers and non-farmers in terms of their willingness generally to talk about emotional and personal issues and indicate that farmers are less likely to discuss their emotions or family matters in general. Further analysis suggests that the older generations are less likely to engage in talk about how they feel whereas those under 35 have twice as many people that they discuss their emotions with. Similarly, women are more likely to talk to more people about how they feel (see Table 3.5)

Table 3.3: Type of contact forming part of core social network

Type of contact/relationship	Farmers (mean score)[1]	Non-farmers (mean score)	All respondents (mean score)
Spouse/partner	0.80	0.80	0.80
Children	1.36	1.37	1.37
Parents	0.39	0.23	0.34
Grandchildren	0.04	0.11	0.06
Siblings	0.28	0.43	0.32
Other relations	0.20	0.29	0.23
Friends	0.98	1.29	1.07
Neighbours	0.23	0.14	0.20
Business contacts*	0.24	0.03	0.17

[1] Mean score is the quotient of the sum of type of relationship divided by all relationships.
* The difference between the mean score for farmers and non-farmers is significant using t-test ($p<0.05$)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 3.4: Issues discussed with members of core social network

Issues discussed	Farmers (mean score)	Non-farmers (mean score)	All respondents (mean score)
Most issues & emotions	0.79	1.11	0.89
Most issues but NOT emotions	1.51	1.29	1.44
Family matters and general issues*	0.80	1.29	0.95
Farming/business/work*	1.13	0.43	0.28
Other specific issues**	0.19	0.49	0.15
Refused/no response	0.13	0.20	0.91

* The difference between the mean score for farmers and non-farmers is significant using t-test ($p<0.05$)
** The difference between the mean score for farmers and non-farmers is significant using t-test ($p<0.1$)

Source: Farm Survey

Table 3.5: Issues discussed with members of core social network by gender (mean score)

	Male respondents	Female respondents	All respondents
Most issues & emotions	0.83	1.29	0.92
Most issues but NOT emotions	1.39	1.52	1.41
Family matters & general issues	0.94	0.95	0.95
Farming/business/work	0.99	0.67	0.93
Other specific issues	0.26	0.24	0.25
Refused	0.13	0.24	0.15

Source: Farm Survey

3.20 Farming has been a solitary occupation for some time, but it is clear that the rationalisation of farmers' traditional social networks that is underway for largely economic reasons means that farmers find themselves increasingly alone in their working lives. In part, this stems from farmers' own actions to restructure and streamline their businesses through labour shedding, as the following quote illustrates:

> *"One thing I miss is dealing with the men I've had for forty years. You know, I've known them man and boy as they say and I miss that. The day to day working with the men, with people."*

3.21 Meanwhile, the growing numbers of farmers' wives finding employment off the farm means that the working day for many may be spent with very little human contact:

> *"I think you see stupid things like farmers' wives going off and working in Tesco's. That's a new social community but it's only women and actually can leave their husbands feeling terribly isolated because they all go off and make friends and they talk about their twenty new friends and he's left completely on his own"*

> *"In farming, on a day to day basis you don't see many people. It's not like working in an office where you see the same crowd of people every day and you know them in and out and you see them five days a week when you are at work…… you don't see people socially every day."*

3.22 Increasing numbers of farmers' wives working off the farm was also perceived by some to be contributing to family breakdown as this rural outreach worker noted during a discussion group meeting:

> *" One thing I've actually seen quite a bit of is the fact that because farming isn't paying very well any longer the farmers' wives had to go out to work, and in a few cases the farmer's wife, because she's gone out and worked somewhere else and met someone else the marriage has actually split up. A chap who works within the shop or in the office, don't smell of cows and don't work seven days a week, (laughter) and you know, it's a big attraction. And that has caused a problem in a few cases I've been dealing with, and you know, that is a social implication and I think it's quite a serious one, to be honest with you. And that's purely because there isn't enough income to maintain that family farm as it used to maintain it."*

3.23 The very long hours worked by many farmers who are committed to the farm as their main source of income, leads, in turn to stress, illness and impacts on interpersonal relationships:

> *"… Wife gets fed up of it really a bit, you know when we get to the end of the season. I get a bit feed up of not seeing all three of them, you know, the kids and the wife. I'm very tied at times, I make myself ill sometimes."*
>
> Husband: *I think increasing cow numbers probably puts more strain on the buildings*
> Wife: *Makes more work and causes stress. He'll say no and I'll say yes.*
> Husband: *More stress.*
> Wife: *Very stressed"*

3.24 While these impacts were frequently couched in terms of personal well-being and spousal relationships there was also some evidence of the impact on other household members, viz children:

> *F1: We spent a fair bit of time talking to a range of Young Farmers' groups about social and health issues and ... quite a number of them talked about the guilt they felt if they didn't work twenty four hours a day farming with Dad, because if, the work would still have to be done, so if they came out for a night that meant double the amount of work for Uncle or Dad or someone else, and there was a very poignant story of a young lad who very much wanted to go to college but felt he couldn't ever leave his dad to carry on and do what had to be done so he'd given up that opportunity. So they carried a lot of angst, a lot of guilt and a lot of worry about the welfare of their parents and their grandparents, cos these farms are supporting not just the parents but Granny and Grandpa, Uncle and all the rest of it, so (...) a tough time for some of these youngsters really.*
>
> *M2: Yeah. It. is.*
>
> *M1: Yeah.*

3.25 Others recognised the issue of impacts on farm children but displayed a more ambivalent attitude:

> *F: Can I just say it's really not that bad being a farmer's daughter or son, it's, you know, you don't see your parent, if you want to see them you have to go out on the farm and do work, but I would much rather have worked on a farm being slave labour for them than being in a town watching TV.*

F: And at least they are there, whereas you know, if the father goes off to a factory he is actually gone for those long hours and not anywhere to be seen.

(murmurs of agreement)

M: I don't think the long hours themselves aren't necessarily detrimental, although they are more detrimental now because the long hours are involved sat on a tractor or something like that, which means that the youngsters are less able to work with their parents, but it's the lack of money that goes with it.

3.26 Moving beyond the farm household, there is evidence that in some cases farmers' contact with other farmers is in decline. While 29% of farmers reported that their level of contact with other farmers had declined in recent years, this rose to 38% for passive absorbers compared to just 16% for active adaptors. Indeed, the latter were much more likely to have seen their contact with other farmers increase in recent years (42% reported an increase compared to 10% of passive absorbers). Upland farmers emerged as those with the most stability in terms of frequency of contact with other farmers with 72% reporting no change over the preceding five years compared to 37% of lowland farmers. Overall, the reasons for declining farmer-to-farmer contact vary but a dwindling infrastructure (such as the closure of markets) can mean fewer places to meet, while there was also some agreement that it was often too depressing to meet and talk to other farmers:

M: People don't want to go to market anymore.

M: No, they don't want to go.

F: No.

M: That's a big social change in the farming community, a huge social change.

M: Because it's depressing talking to the others, they'd sooner not go and do something else.

3.27 Previous research suggested that such withdrawal can lead to a downward spiral of depression and lack of social contact (Lobley et al. 2000) and this was borne out by stakeholder discussants in the current project:

F: Well, I think part of it, do you think it links into the stress? Cos I think the general doom and gloom, that someone said earlier, if you're gonna go to an evening meeting where everyone's gonna be really, really depressed and it's miserable and you all talk about how bad farming is, why go? You know, and also I think, you know, people feeling quite shy about going into meetings, once you've got out of the business of going to meetings, and you know that you'll see five faces where you can actually say, 'Hiya, I know you.' Then I think once you've started to drop out of the social network then it's a vicious circle, you drop further and further.

3.28 Conversely, for the more actively engaged entrepreneurial farmers, a new set of relationships with customers and suppliers is opening up at the very moment that traditional, more agri-centric ones are being closed down. Diversification brings with it a need to interact, in often quite sophisticated ways, with new types of customers for farm products and services, while business success requires dealing regularly with government inspectors, auditors and planners. It may also require new, and perhaps more equitable, working partnerships to be forged between farmers and their spouses, with implications for the family dynamic, although, as indicated above, this can be a difficult and painful experience. According to Meert et al. (2005), social interaction can be a critical factor in farmers' decisions to start a new diversified enterprise. Furthermore, in Meert et al.'s survey of farmers in the Netherlands, for family members that were employed off the farm, a primary reason to maintain these off-farm links were the social contacts that they provided. In the current project, when asked how their contacts with non-farmers had changed over the last 5 years, 45% of respondents said they had increased, with only 6% saying they had declined (see Table 3.6). Active adaptors were the most likely to have experienced an increase in contact with non-farmers (58% compared to 36% of passive absorbers). Again, it was upland farmers who appeared to have experienced the most stability in their contact with non-farmers with 72% reporting no change compared to 38% of lowland farmers. In contrast, 59% of lowland farmers reported an increase in contact with non-farmers compared to 16% of upland farmers.

3.29 Often, it is the farming family which takes the strain as farming partners find managing an expanding business, working off the farm and/or dealing more directly with new sorts of customers leaves less time for their children or leisure activities. For livestock producers, particularly dairy farmers, the heavy commitments of personal time have long since become a way of life, though there is evidence that those at either end of the age spectrum – those starting out and those nearing retirement – are taking decisions to disengage from their main occupation in farming in order to release time for themselves and their families:

"you can get up on a Sunday morning & read the Sunday paper without worrying about feeding livestock. And you can go and see your friends for the weekend ... You can have holidays when you want them rather than being dictated by the weather or your business"

3.30 One of the major reasons that the farmer quoted above restructured his business and began to disengage from active farming was the impact it was having on his family relationships and the experience of friends who had been in similar situations:

"…. and we used to do contract farming for other people and we had four full time people and part-time. We used to do a lot of work for other people on a contract basis. I cut all that out because my present wife said 'well I don't want to know you if you are working every weekend', so that was a conscious decision as well. Because I've had three of my friends get divorced in the last two years because they've actually got busy and they're working every weekend. You know, on a tractor, or feed pigs or doing, you know, doing something every weekend and therefore, they never saw their children."

3.31 Another farmer who has dramatically restructured his business and now lets his land while earning a living as an agricultural and agri-environmental contractor simply reported that "*well, the kids have got their dad back*". He went on to discuss the impact on his own personal well-being:

"I can go out on a Friday night and not worry about getting home because I've got to get up for milking at 5.30. I can lay in bed on a Saturday morning. I can go out with my family on a Sunday. I can watch football and cricket. I can have a day off when I want; I haven't got to get back for milking. Never have to get up to calve a cow in the middle of the night, like. That's brilliant. I don't stink of sour milk and cow shit. I had five days holiday in fifteen years I think. I had five days off. Other than that I was here milking and feeding".

Table 3.6: Farmers' changing pattern of social contact over the last five years

	Contact with other farmers	Contact with non-farmers
Increased	23 (18)	45 (35)
Unchanged	48 (38)	49 (38)
Decreased	29 (23)	6 (5)

Source: Farm Survey

Summary

3.32 Two distinct groupings of farmers have emerged from this analysis: active adaptors and passive absorbers. The former are younger, more highly educated and frequently manage larger farms alongside diversified enterprises. They are also the most optimistic about the future. Passive absorbers, on the other hand, are less likely than average to intend to remain in farming. The social implications of the actions (and inactions) of the two groups are complex. Many farming respondents displayed low levels of self worth associated with their perceptions that they were not understood and were unwanted. Delays and uncertainties surrounding the SPS reinforced this perception. A number of respondents were suffering from isolation as a result of changes in their business (typically labour shedding) and also the changing position of farmers' wives. Where farmers' wives are working away from the farm, farmers are often alone for much of the day and lack social contact. Many pointed to the detrimental impact on personal relationships of long working hours although those who had restructured their business and stepped off the agricultural treadmill identified benefits in terms of reduced stress, more time for family activities and the opportunity to get away from the farm.

Chapter 4: Farmers in the community

4.1 It is part of conventional wisdom that farmers and farmers' wives supply the core membership of various key institutions of rural life such as the parish council and the WI. One of the hypotheses of this research is that the isolation, stress and increased time demands being experienced by individuals and farming families will ripple out into the rural community as farmers reduce their participation in village and community life or even disengage completely. At the same time, according to this broad reading, the apparent readiness of newcomers with different 'cultural competences' (Cloke et al., 1998) to take their place and assert their values means that country living increasingly becomes suburban territory, the resulting social transformation bringing in its wake new types of cultural conflict in the countryside. While an analysis of the impact of gentrification on the social composition of rural areas is beyond the terms of reference of this study, it is obviously important to recognise, at the outset, the rather complex interaction between the likely social consequences of agricultural restructuring in terms of changing patterns of farmer participation and commitment and the much wider social transformation of rural society which is being brought about by population in-movement to the countryside.

4.2 So far as the more straightforward question of farmer participation in rural life and what might be described as their 'social connectivity' is concerned, there is already some evidence from previous studies to suggest that a process of withdrawal and rationalisation is in progress. Parry et al. (2005, p.65), for instance, contend that "*the traditional mainstays of rural and farming life – the pub, the church and markets (are) in widespread decline, partly because of competing time pressures on farmers, and partly because of the changing nature of the rural population.*" Meanwhile, Appleby (2004) goes further in pointing '*to a decline in the extent of social networks … caused largely by a lack of time for social contact, but also due to the loss of natural links between farms and between farmers and local people. Trust had declined in many cases and this was most marked in the relationship between farmers and government agencies'*. The extent to which changes in the nature of farming are eroding social capital has been investigated in some detail in the context of Cumbrian hill farming by Burton et al. (2005), who comment that '*there is little doubt from* *the interviews that there has been a decline in the levels of social capital generated through the communal sharing of tasks in the local community*' (p. 41), pointing to a range of causal reasons including from in-migration and increasing house prices as well as constraints on farmers' time.

4.3 While echoing many of these findings, the picture revealed through the current social impacts survey is complex suggesting for instance that while community participation by farmers overall is on average lower than for the non-farmers surveyed[22], active adapters are increasingly active off the farm through networking in local organisations, albeit still mostly linked to farming. For example, 39% of active adapters reported being actively involved in at least two community organisations, compared to 22% of passive absorbers. There are hints here of a growing polarisation between those farmers who are disengaging from community life, for a variety of economic, life cycle and/or personal reasons and those becoming active in new social networks, though not necessarily ones that are locally based. Forty-seven percent of the sample overall described themselves as 'very actively involved' in local community organisations although only 35% of farmers described themselves as 'very active' compared to 69% of non-farmers. Breaking down farmers into their distinctive groupings of active adapters and passive absorbers, reveals that the former are more likely to be very actively involved in community organisations - 42% compared to 30% of passive absorbers. On average farmers were involved with four locally based groups, although when farming groups were excluded this figure fell to two compared to an average of three for non-farming respondents. Similarly, while many farming and non-farming respondents reported a reduction in the amount of time they devoted to community activities over the last five years, non-farmers nevertheless spend an average of 38% more time on such activities compared to farmers.

4.4 Further evidence of changes in farmer participation in community life was revealed through the parish consultation. The decline in numbers of farmers and farm workers and the high average age of farmers was reflected in

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[22] It is important to note here that a source of potential bias in the non-farming sample may influence these results. Given that some of the non-farming interviewees were suggested by Parish Council members, it may be possible that they identified more 'community active' individuals. To an extent, this was controlled for by also randomly selecting non-farming interviewees.

the feedback from the parishes with some referring to the loss of 'sense of community' as a result. As a tangible measure of farmer activity and influence in the community, Parish Council/ Meeting membership and farmer involvement was recorded. Table 4.1 reports the size of Parish Councils as a baseline.

Table 4.1: Size of Parish Councils

	Number of parishes	%
Parish meeting	7	14
Parish Council -under 7 members	10	20
Parish Council -7-10 members	25	50
Parish Council -above 10 members	8	16

Source: Parish Council Consultation

4.5 Just over 25% of the parish councils (and parish meetings) reported that they had no farmer members. This was highest for the Fakenham (38%), Newark (40%) and Bakewell (33%) study areas. Although significant, this was unusual when compared with other parishes where one or two farmer members (58%) and three or more farmer members (16%) were reported. Nearly two thirds (63%) of representatives commented that there had been no change in this in the last five years, whilst 14 of the parishes (28%) had seen a decline in farmer representation in this period. Interestingly, almost unanimously (92%), the parishes indicated that, whether changed or not, there had been no impact on the activities of their Councils/Meetings. In addition, 14 of the 52 parish council respondents perceived that there were no "wider social implications" resulting from the changes in agriculture in the recent past. Perhaps, what is evident here is the effect of the time scale used with a much greater change (and in turn greater social consequences) occurring more than five years ago.

4.6 Explanations offered by farmers themselves for the apparent decline of participation by farmers in the local community varied. While some farming stakeholder group members pointed to a desire to avoid exposure to criticisms of farming, others suggested that it was a combination of the declining number of farmers and increasingly long working hours which discouraged 'getting involved'. In particular, the rise of whole farm contracting was associated with a more arms-length style of farming and therefore, arguably, fewer opportunities for social contact within a local community setting:

“the farms have amalgamated. I don’t do any arable work anymore. The two farms next door have gone from being 1000acres to 4000acres each. There’s no one there. There’s no one living in the cottages, they’ve all been sold off. Two men running 4000acres and that’s it”

“I don’t really see a lot of farmers really. As far as farmers in the village, there’s a small farm down the lane, they’ve got a few cattle but there’s only one guy who works there. Contractors come in and do the rest so…”

4.7 While younger farmers were frequently active in farming groups such as grassland societies and other types of discussion groups, they were also frequently less involved in wider community activities:

“…. There’s not many farmers of my generation involved in those aspects now of the village community, we’d see now that more and more of those members are retired farmers…. In other words it just shows that farming is occupying a greater slice of their lives.”

Farmer: *“my working hours is absolutely crazy, absolutely ridiculous, off the scale. …. Ridiculous. (pause) This is why I have problems being involved with local community activities.*

Interviewer: *If you had more time would you be involved?*

Farmer: *Very much so, yes. This is why I’m making this commitment with the farm and the herd, because at the moment seven hours a day is occupied seven days a week by milking, seven days a week, seven hours a day. And then ....”*

4.8 Often, the contribution of farmers in community activities was to supply a ‘niche role’ as the occasional suppliers of land for community events, trailers, grass mowing for fetes, etc. As one respondent to the Parish Council consultation reported: “free *services to the local parish council have now been withdrawn as cost cutting continues*”. While the role of farmers as active community participants appears to be in decline, there is some evidence, in line with previous research (see Winter and Rushbrook, 2000) and, in this study, from the stakeholder discussion meetings and household interviews that incomers and non-farming members of the community are gradually filling the gap. These non-farming respondents are typically people with the time, energy and commitment to make a contribution and their growing social presence in rural communities is undoubtedly an important dimension of contemporary rural social change which is recognised by all respondents:

“I retired in ’99, or became semi-retired as I do some consultancy work … and if you come in to a village like this to live, if you participate you’ll finish up being involved. You know there’s the village hall, there’s all sorts of things you get involved in …”

4.9 The implications of changes in the social composition of rural areas was raised by many respondents to the Parish Council consultation, with 35% of responses related in some way to the influx of non-farming folk to the parishes. A number of factors are at play here, with the increasing supply of rural property, houses, cottages and land associated with the decline in farm incomes (and the type of capital consumption activity identified in Chapter Two), occurring at a time when there is perceived to be an increase in the demand for this property from those not formerly living in rural areas. The outcomes arising from these trends, in terms of community, are varied but what is clear from the responses from parish councillors is that the increase in property prices that this has produced and the resulting lack of availability of affordable housing for local farm and non-farm workers represents an issue of pressing social concern. The following examples represent widely held views regarding affordable housing and ‘incomers’ within the parish responses:

- “*lack of social housing*” - for the young – “*the very few remaining ex-council houses for rent have recently been allocated to single mothers from outside the area*”
- *“the villages are full of second homes and holiday cottages”*
- *“the villages become empty, apart from weekends”*.

4.10 Second homes, retirement homes, holiday homes and dormitory residences have varied impacts on the community, depending on where the occupants live most of their time and spend most of their income. Many more of the comments were focused on the negative than the positive, when referring to these so-called ’newcomers’;

- *“some of which cause much aggravation tending towards vandalism”*
- *“some socialise, some don’t – all are a nuisance”*

- this, along with the decline in the number of farmers has, "*contributed to the closure of the only village shop*".

4.11 Thus, incomers are clearly implicated, by many, in the changing affordability of rural housing and the wider availability of services. In turn, such negative attitudes towards new members of the community are likely to colour relationships with the existing population.

4.12 The wider implications of these social trends were revealed in a number of comments made by farmers regarding their local community and its changing social complexion. Many recognised a tension between the indigenous population and incomers and a decline in the degree of trust between farmers and their non-farming neighbours:

> *"I think it matters hugely because someone mentioned people complaining if you've got a tractor out or a pea-viner out at something like three in the morning, but where you don't have links suddenly everything is a big issue. Where's there's low trust there's high cost, so instead of just saying at the pub 'cor you were late', it's a solicitor's letter …"*

4.13 In situations where incomers were perceived as being reluctant to get involved in community life, this was seen as creating social division:

> *"The local people that have lived here all their lives know each other and are families. The people who have got a lot of money and have moved down from London tend to keep themselves to themselves. So you've really got … so how can I put this, there's two tiers … two tiers of people. The people that lived and worked in the village and the people who come down like the peace and quiet. They don't get involved. Two tiers of people, and we don't have a pub in the village so therefore … there's not that sense of community as such."*

> *"I would say twofold, it's split into two groups. I would say the older (name of village) people and particularly the farmers, they've got a good community spirit, they connect up, we'll have a phone call, neighbourhood watch type of thing, not an official one, probably an unofficial, 'Oh, there's some people around.' Enquiring about how we are, how're family, etc. etc. etc. That's one side, and the other side is the newcomers, not interested in the slightest. They just want to be out in the country and enjoy the better bits but as far as integrating or anything, I wouldn't say they're interested in the slightest."*

4.14 Equally, there were concerns expressed when incomers *did* become involved with key community institutions, albeit with some redeeming consequences:

> *"…. Because of the new people coming in. We've got good people come in. Old village people don't bother about anything, they just let things go by but the ones we've got in now are, you know, they'll go litter picking. They think a lot of the village".*
>
> *"But I mean, also, the people that have moved into the village have employed local builders and gardeners and handymen and that sort of thing so from that point of view they have brought employment into the village, as such."*

4.15 Evidence from elsewhere supports the notion that rural in-migration acts as an economic stimulus. Based on a survey of 689 household in rural Scotland, Findlay et al. (2000) calculate an overall jobs multiplier associated with migrant households of 0.77 and argue that "a very significant net job gain has taken place as a result not only of the inflow of self-employed households, but also as a result of new service jobs created by other economically active migrants"

4.16 Perhaps by way of self-justification, it is these non-farming community members who are most likely to see their communities as stronger and more cohesive than they were five years ago, with farmers as a group offering up a more pessimistic assessment, particularly if they are farmers who have lived in the parish for some time and now find themselves economically stressed or on the edge of viability. Reflecting the observation already made concerning farmers' sense of being under-appreciated as an occupational group in society, many farming respondents felt that their role in the community was not now recognised as significant: 60% of farmers stated that farmers had a beneficial role in the community compared to 77% of non-farmers[23]. Frequently, the opinion expressed by farmers themselves that farmers had little to offer the community was based on a recognition that as a group farmers are in a minority in rural society:

[23] Despite this level of support and similar results from other research (e.g. Milbourne et al. 2001), many farmers were reluctant to accept that there was much public sympathy and support for farmers.

"Because changes in agriculture have taken place and agriculture now plays such a small part in the village that the newcomers have got their jobs, their lives, all geared up, and I don't really see a lot of changes there. I think change is .. people naturally think of country, of villages as being agriculture, whereas now we're in such a small way, all the farms, that we don't really, whatever we did wouldn't really affect the village life too much really. If you took all the farmers out and sent us on holiday to Australia, it wouldn't really affect the village over two years much at all….. So really .. that wouldn't affect, the agricultural side of it wouldn't affect the village at all, I don't think."

4.17 Interestingly, it is the active adaptors, more active in local organisations and experiencing an increased frequency of contact with their non-farming customer base through direct marketing, farm shops and contract work, who were also more likely to think that farming played a positive role in the community. Ninety-one percent reported that farmers offer positive community benefits compared to 64% of passive absorbers.

4.18 As has already been said, the changing pattern of community engagement and social interaction by farmers tells only part of the story of social change in a countryside that is increasingly the domain of non-farming residents and middle class incomers. In their review of research on the changing position of agriculture in rural society, Winter and Rushbrook (2000) point to the paucity of research into the way farmers interact with incomers and other non-farming members of rural and the extent to which the restructuring of agriculture, particularly where this involves economic diversification and associated new developments, could be seen as a source of conflict between them. By including a non-farmer component in the present survey, we were interested to further explore some of these linkages and to investigate how non-farmers were experiencing (or were actually aware of) agricultural restructuring in the contemporary countryside.

4.19 So far as our non-farming interviewees were concerned, 66% report they have contact with farmers at least once a week, with 34% describing their contact as less frequent. This compares directly to previous research (Milbourne et al. 2001) in which 66% of non-farmers reported contact at least weekly, 21% had contact less than once a week, 13% had no contact with local farmers. Although the non-farming respondents to the present survey were largely sympathetic towards farmers in general (whilst at the same time voicing concerns such as the level of ‘subsidies’) they were mostly unable to discuss the role of local farmers in the community and economy in any detail due to a lack of knowledge. It has been suggested by others (e.g. Smithers et al. 2005) that one of the reasons why views between farmers and towns-people differ is that their knowledge and awareness of modern farming and the challenges that it presents is shaped by more generalised secondary accounts rather than specific knowledge of local trends.

4.20 Not all non-farming respondents were un-knowledgeable though as this following exchange between a couple that had moved to a rural area from a city illustrates:

> Husband: *The farm that had been the centre of this village with over 4,000 acres … 4,000 acres was owned by one farmer …one farming family. And the third generation farmer’s son sold up. So grandfather created it, father carried it on, he farmed it and then the massive decline that was in farming and farm prices, he decided to sell and the majority of that was bought by the [names purchaser]. And so what you have got is very much more contract farming now. Now you still have … this village … there were three farms and none of them exist now, two of which have disappeared in the last five years. So big change and you see, it is very obvious, if you know farming now, that you see the contract farming. It’s … there was a classic example over this last weekend: contract combines come in; massive machinery comes in it can hardly get down the road, you know the stuff if you know about agriculture, you know four track machines, eleven furrow ploughs, discs and work all the way through the night and forty acres of barley is cut, cultivated in 24 hours. You never ever saw that kind of farming intensity and I think in away because of the loss of the main farm you’ve lost something in terms of the agricultural community.*
>
> Wife: *The care of the land is not the same because they don’t feel they belong to it whereas when it was the family owning the farm they would do things like cutting the verges along the lanes, cutting the hedges, so the feel of the countryside around here was …*
>
> Husband: *… it was more personal than it is now. It’s still farmed quite well but it’s very much on a different basis.*

Summary

4.21 The long held view that farmers and farm family members form the backbone of rural society has been challenged by this and other recent research. Despite being socially embedded in their communities, the evidence presented here suggests that farmers are less socially active than non-farmers. The reasons for this vary but are associated with a desire to avoid exposure to criticism (of farming/being a farmer), the lack of time associated with excessive working hours and, more straightforwardly, the declining number of main occupation farmers in rural areas. Active adaptors though are more likely than others to be involved in community based organisations and are likely to have seen their contacts with non-farmers to have increased in recent years – often a direct consequence of their diversified activities.

4.16 To some extent it appears that non-farmers, frequently in-migrants, are ‘taking up the slack’ and moving in to take up positions vacated by farmers. In turn, this can make them easy targets for the criticism that they are attempting to ‘take over’ (although in-migrants are equally criticised for not taking part) even though there was some recognition of the socially important role played by newcomers. Despite the common assertion by farmers that there is little public support for them, non-farmers were more likely to think that farmers played an economically and socially important role in the community. However, when pressed for more details of how changes in agricultural were impacting on the community and local economy, few non-farming respondents were able to answer in any depth. This reflects the lack of regular contact between many farmers and non-farmers and a consequent lack of knowledge and understanding.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and policy observations

The pattern of change

5.1 By comparing the nature and extent of agricultural restructuring in 2002 with that taking place in 2005 reveals few new trends or indeed any significant strengthening of those already known to be in play. Farmers, it is clear, remain deeply embedded in their locales, typically living at or very near the place of their birth and close to most of their family. At the same time, most of them, by choice or through force of circumstance, intend to continue to occupy their present farms. Indeed, the impression from the re-survey reported here is of a minority of actively adapting farmers, many of whom are concerned with making changes to their core agricultural business in order to cut costs and improve profitability. One outcome of these actions is that a greater proportion of farmed land is now under the management of these generally larger scale farmers. An equally large proportion are also actively broadening their income base through further integration up and down stream within the agricultural sector and/or engaging in on-farm diversification. While these farmers are, on average, younger there is no simple association between age and agricultural restructuring. Rather, it is a clustering of characteristics including age, education and other factors such as disposition towards risk and membership of social networks that appears to be influencing behaviour among this group.

5.2 At the same time a large number of farmers are essentially standing still, either because they have no alternative or because they believe further change is to come, or both. While disengagement from mainstream agriculture is taking place, this is proceeding along a number of pathways and, at this stage at least, seems rarely to lead to complete farm businesses actually being given up. Hence, alongside a continuing, if unspectacular, move to diversify the income streams coming into the farm household through diversification and off-farm employment, the increasing incidence of retirement and lifestyle holdings means that a growing proportion of agricultural land is no longer being farmed by those who actually occupy it. The rise of contract farming and other, more provisional, land rental and letting arrangements, is partly explained by reluctance on the part of many disengaging and retiring farmers to actually give up their farms, even in the face of declining returns and policy uncertainty.

Indeed there is evidence that the effect of the uncertainty surrounding the SPS and market conditions more generally has been to delay widespread change rather than hasten its implementation. Quite how long this perverse policy response will operate is unclear, although Moss et al. (2002) suggest that the full impact of decoupling will not be realised until farmers reach a point in their business cycles when they face major reinvestment decisions. There is certainly little evidence from the current survey of an imminent mass exodus from farming.

5.3 Despite an apparent determination to continue, the survey did however hint at the heavy personal costs being shouldered by some farmers and farming families at this point in the policy transition. Low levels of self-worth and personal well-being among sections of the farming community are apparent as a significant proportion of the sample struggle to come to terms with changes in the social status of farming as a profession and to the rationalisation of government support for the industry. The social costs associated with this state of affairs are mostly borne by the farmer and his/her family, with growing isolation and a corresponding withdrawal from traditional networks and community activities on the part of those individuals who are ‘playing the waiting game’, as one of our respondents put it. In particular, the survey suggests the existence of significant numbers of elderly farmers, or even people in their 50s and early 60s, who are ‘soldiering on’ in the expectation that the farm will eventually be handed-on. Certainly, large numbers of these farmers report having a successor to their business but it is less clear just how willing younger successors will be to actively manage their farms in the longer term. For this group of farmers attempting to passively absorb change the future is likely to see a process of gradual winding down – a mental if not physical disengagement from farming as they feel themselves increasingly adrift from the main thrust of contemporary agricultural policy and equally, unsupported by non-farmers. But this is a story of two different types of agri-culture, with a widening gap between the personal situation and social connectivity of these essentially passive absorbers of external policy reform and market trends and of an emerging grouping of actively adapting and possibly socially re-engaging farmers. The evidence presented here certainly suggests that active adaptors are increasing their contact with farmers and non-farmers and are actively engaged in local organisations. Further research is required to explore the validity of this distinction and its policy implications but it would seem that those who do succeed in ‘getting off the treadmill’ reap social as well as economic benefits, with greater personal time, improved family relations, a better social life and increased social interactions with a wider community of people, not all of them locally based. In turn, these wider, non-local networks of association may prove particularly important in stimulating new ideas and entrepreneurial behaviour. The social benefits arising from the diversification activities of these farmers (employment generation and (re)connections between farmers and non-farmers) require further exploration but potentially further add to the rationale for public support of farm diversification. An important point to note is that even in cases where active adaptors are still very busy developing new business ventures; they still appear to reap a well-being dividend by dint of having stepped off the agricultural treadmill.

The implications for policy

5.4 The implications for policy which flow from all this are necessarily broad and to an extent must be addressed to the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of agricultural restructuring. It is worth observing at this point, however, that while the personal and social costs of agricultural adjustment are presently largely being internalised within farm families, the long term prospect is for the wider social repercussions of agricultural change to be more widely felt and to be recognised as an important social policy concern. Our first recommendation, therefore, is that the nature, magnitude and distribution of these social costs needs to be more fully weighed in the balance as part of any public debate concerning the future of the countryside. While the current project has advanced understanding of some of the key social implications of recent agricultural restructuring that are now in progress, further work is needed in order to explore more fully the likely future direction that any restructuring will take, the magnitude of the social costs incurred and thus to define limits to acceptable change in terms of the impacts for farmers, farming families and rural communities. In particular, further research is required to explore the impacts which are currently hidden from view within farm households (e.g. substance misuse, domestic violence, etc). In addition, it is recommended that a repeat study of the current research is conducted in 2-3 years time to gauge the impact of the SPS on restructuring, retirement and succession decisions, once this and other recent policy innovations have become more fully embedded.

5.5 In the meantime, there are several implications for policy delivery and understanding, farmer support networks and long term policy strategy itself which need to be explored.

5.6 **Delivery and policy promotion:** clarify the role and purpose of the SPS and the mission of agriculture post the MTR. Despite an early commitment by Defra staff and stakeholders to clear and transparent implementation of the 2003 CAP reforms, it is evident from the survey that there is considerable confusion surrounding the purpose and rationale of the SPS[24] and a lack of confidence by farmers generally in the commitment of government and its agencies to long-term policy development in the rural field. The survey has not uncovered evidence of the best way to 'get the message across' but it is clear that the lack of clarity and understanding (on the part of farmers) alongside delays in delivery is compounding a feeling of negativity amongst many (though not all) members of the agricultural community – that they are unwanted, unvalued and not understood. In turn, this kind of mind set is not conducive to business restructuring and adaptation. There is a clear need therefore to promote confidence and self-respect amongst farmers as members of a newly emerging (multifunctional) land management community. A clear and shared vision of the role and value of farming should be developed. It should be shown that there are ways to remain viable as a manager of the land and to be a valued member of the community although equally, escape routes should be made available for those who need them via early retirement schemes. One option would be a fully funded, time limited, national roll-out of the *FreshStart* scheme (as currently implemented in Cornwall). Not only would this help relieve some of the pressure for those who feel they are a victim of (policy and market) circumstances, it could also provide a vehicle for introducing new blood and a more entrepreneurial and dynamic spirit into the sector. Such a scheme should

[24] Exacerbated at present by more immediate concerns about the complex delayed and, in some cases, still opaque delivery mechanisms and the associated constraint on the land market (particularly land to rent).

be designed to speed up the process of restructuring and to bring about environmental gain.

5.7 **Promote and support the social benefits of diversification:** the original policy rationale for farm diversification was concerned with diverting resources from production to help ease concerns regarding surpluses and the cost-price squeeze. This research has confirmed the employment dividend associated with diversification but also hints at the social benefits in terms of drawing farmers into a wider set of social networks and customer relations. While diversification, and the new developments it brings with it, is not without controversy in rural areas, there is scope here for a fresh look at the way diversification is regulated through the planning system and promoted under the next ERDP, with more and better training for farmers concerning the importance of good marketing, networking and sensitive design in the development of new diversification schemes and projects. These issues are further explored in the review of the diversification measures and impacts being undertaken by the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth.

5.8 **Farmer support and advice:** while there is a need for further in-depth research in to the well-being of farm family members, continued support for the Rural Stress Action Plan (RSAP) is also required to assist the farming help charities in seeking to address the symptoms and consequences of restructuring. At the same time, those delivering advice (such as FBAS and demonstration farms) should be aware of the social reconnection effect associated with stepping off the agricultural treadmill (through diversification, for example) and, in particular, the personal well-being dividend.

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Appendix 1: Methodology

The farming respondents were selected from the 2002 study of agricultural restructuring (Lobley et al., 2002). The non-farming sample was selected by identifying initial contacts through the Parish Council consultation (see below). These contacts were not necessarily members of the Parish Council but were people identified as potentially helpful informants. The remainder of non-farming interviews were selected through a process of 'snowballing' and random selection [25] within each study area. Table A1.1 details the number and percentage of farming and non-farming households surveyed in each study area.

Table A1.1: Percentage of farm and non-farming households in sample

Area	Farming household		Non-farming household		All Households	
Bakewell	19	(15)	14	(5)	17	(20)
Fakenham	14	(11)	17	(6)	15	(17)
Grantham/Newark	19	(15)	14	(5)	17	(20)
Heathfield	21	(17)	14	(5)	19	(22)
Orton Fells	14	(11)	20	(7)	16	(18)
Witheridge	14	(11)	20	(7)	16	(18)
	100	(80)	100	(35)	100	(115)

Farming Households

To enable continuity between farms in the original survey and those visited in this research, a sub-sample of the 2002 survey was drawn to reflect the different restructuring trajectories. While this did not guarantee that farms revisited in 2005 would be still on that trajectory, it was intended to provide a benchmark against which the 2005 restructuring trajectories would be compared. Table A1.2 compares the 2002 survey, with the 2002 sub-sample and the respondents interviewed in 2005. Generally, the trajectories of 2002 and 2005 are similar with the only exception being that of the static trajectory. This is not unsurprising given that farms on any of the other trajectories, particularly that of traditional restructuring, may require a period of stability

[25] Although the non-farm household sample was very small and designed to be informative and not indicative of all non-farming rural residents, it was still important to recruit a mix of respondents. The snowballing approach – asking each interviewee to identify further potential interviewees – carries with it the risk that sample will comprise individuals with similar socio-economic characteristics who are known to each other or who are at least members of a wider social network. In an attempt to address this concern, individuals were also approached at random to request an interview. This approached ensured that the

without further changes to their business, and thus are recorded as static in 2005.

Given the structure of the sample, farms in each study area were telephoned to arrange a face-to-face interview, using the questionnaire[26] (see Appendix 3), at their farm. The average response rate for this in each study area was 43% (see Table A1.3) although this varied between 31% for the Orton Fells study area and 48% for the Fakenham study area. Lower samples (as reflected in Table A1.1) for Fakenham and Witheridge replicate the lower the average samples attained in the original 2002 survey, although the response rate from those approached was similar to other areas. One exception was that of the Orton Fells study area. The poor response rate in this area was the consequence of the delayed timing of the survey in response to the General Election and due to good weather in the week scheduled for interviews; Orton Fell farmers were in the midst of first cut (only cut) silage making.

Table A1.2: Comparing 2002, Survey, the 2002 sample with the final sample in 2005 (Percentage)

	Percentage in 2002		Number in 2002 sub-sample		Number of respondents in 2005	
Static	9	(22)	7	(13)	17	(13)
Minor change	17	(42)	13	(25)	16	(12)
Traditional restructuring	45	(115)	45	(85)	37	(28)
Vertical integration	11	(27)	12	(22)	9	(7)
On-farm diversification	12	(30)	15	(28)	15	(11)
Off-farm diversification	4	(10)	4	(8)	1	(1)
Capital consumers	4	(9)	4	(7)	5	(4)
Total	100	(255)	100	(188)	100	(76)

non-farm household sample, while ultimately self-selecting, contains a cross-section of individuals in terms of age, employment status, length of residency in the area, etc.

[26] The questionnaire used for non-farming households mirrors the first 24 questions of the farm household questionnaire (see Appendix 3). The only exception is question 15 that was exclusively in the farming household questionnaire and thereby removed from the non-farming household questionnaire. As the non-farm household questionnaire ends with question 24, the remainder were directed at farm households only.

Table A1.3: Comparing 2002 sample with response rate in 2005

	Percentage selected from 2002 of total sample	Number selected from 2002 sample	Percentage of respondents in 2005 of total sample	Number of respondents in 2005	Response rate in each study area
Bakewell	19	(35)	19	(15)	43
Fakenham	12	(23)	14	(11)	48
Grantham/Newark	18	(33)	19	(15)	46
Heathfield	20	(37)	21	(17)†	46
Orton Fells	19	(36)	14	(11)	31
Witheridge	13	(24)	14	(11)	46
Total Sample	100	(188)	100	(80)	43

† This includes a farm not surveyed in 2002, which is new to the agricultural industry.

Postal council consultation methodology

A postal consultation was sent to 112 parish councils in the study areas (see Appendix 2 for consultation questionnaire and results). Of these, one questionnaire was returned uncompleted, address unknown, reducing the sample to 111. A mean response rate of 47% was attained for the survey (see Table A1.4) with the highest response from Orton Fells study area (69%) and the poorest response rate from the Bakewell study area (35%).

Table A1.4: Response rate for Parish Council survey

	Number in sample	Number of responses	Response Rate %
Bakewell	20	7	35
Fakenham	20	11	55
Grantham/Newark	30	11	37
Heathfield	18	9	50
Orton Fells	13	9	69
Witheridge	10	5	50
Total Sample	111	52	47

Appendix 2: Parish Council consultation

The Wider Social Impacts of Agricultural Business Restructuring Parish Consultation

(Please return using FREEPOST envelop or email allan.j.butler@exeter.ac.uk by 16th May)

Name of Parish: …………………….

What would you say are the main agricultural characteristics of your Parish?

How has farming in the parish changed in the last five years? (e.g. changes in size and intensity of farming system adopted, changes in enterprise mix such as decline of livestock, change in mix of full-time/part-time farms, change in size of machinery used, addition of any non-farming enterprises)

Has this had any wider 'social' implications (e.g. isolation of farmers, farmers more/less active in community groups/activities, alternative employment opportunities for former farm workers, availability of housing in the area, influx of non-farming residents into the area, availability of services in the parish)

How do you think farming in your parish is likely to change over the next five years?

Is this likely to have any wider social implications for your community?

How many members of the Parish Council are there? ……………
How many members of the Parish Council are farmers? …………..
How has the proportion of farmers on the Parish Council changed over the last five years?
Has this change had any impact on the activities/effectiveness of the Parish Council?

Do you predict any changes in the membership of the Parish Council in the next five years?
Will this change have any impact on the activities/effectiveness of the Parish Council?

Please add any further comments …..

Parish Council Feedback in the six study areas across England

The comments and perceptions reported below were received from 52 Councillors across the study areas – Bakewell (6), Heathfield (3), Witheridge (5), Newark (15), Fakenham (13) and Orton Fells (10).

A familiar picture of agricultural restructuring in the parishes

Not surprisingly, most respondents were able to articulate accurately the nature of the farming currently carried out in their parishes.

The picture portrayed by the parish councillors is not unfamiliar – a picture of polarisation in size and increase in complexity with the addition of non-agricultural enterprises. At one extent, agribusiness continues to develop with larger specialised farms, in some cases also more intensive, with economics driving the shedding of labour and the increase in the use of contract services. Scale adjustment or complete loss of dairying is reported in most parishes replaced, in the latter cases, by beef and sheep.

The remaining smaller farms are occupied by retired farmers, part time farmers who have sought income away from the farm (for many following the spouse who also works away from the farm) or incomers attracted to rural areas for residential reasons.

Diversification is a common feature with the benefits of job creation and change of use of traditional farm buildings. Presence and type of activity is clearly dependent upon location in relation to market. Increasing prominence of agri-environment scheme activity is reported by many.

Representing the extreme of this evolutionary post-productivist pathway, the responses from the Heathfield study area in East Sussex indicated almost total loss of farming, replaced by ‘small business units’ of horsiculture, horticulture and non-agricultural enterprise.

Many feel that, in their area, the main restructuring has occurred or the trends identified above are to continue, ‘more of the same’. Others refer to the, as yet unknown, impacts of the Single Payment Scheme. Many subscribe to the view that farmers will have to continue to become ‘countryside curators or wardens rather than producers of good, sound, quality livestock’.

Perceptions of social implications associated with restructuring

Interestingly, 14 of the 52 respondents perceived that there were no ‘wider social implications’ resulting from the changes in agriculture in the previous five years. Across the study areas the response was polarised; with all Witheridge and East Sussex respondents identifying some impact compared with only 60-77% in the other areas. This may reflect the time scale used in the questioning, a much greater change having occurred in their particular parish earlier than five years ago. Conversely, it may reflect differences in the particular parish situation such as in Lincolnshire (where 40% reported no change) where only one or two large arable farms dominate the parish.

For the others, the ‘wider social implications’ reported can be usefully categorised as implications for the community environs, the farmers and the structure and functioning of the community in the parish.

The community environs

Influencing the overall experiences of the community, the environs are seen as having changed with fewer larger units and farmer occupied residences more disparate than in the past. The increase in scale of machinery is reported as creating problems on small lanes without the capacity for such machines and some are unhappy at the extent of setaside and the ‘unsightly’ nature of such land use. Others are worried that, increasingly, farm property may become neglected with the focus on cost and non–agricultural activity. In Cumbria, there is particular concern over the under-grazing of moorland areas.

On a more positive note, the conversion of existing farm buildings to more economically effective use is seen as advantageous. Restrictive planning controls, no doubt positive for some, are thought by others to be ‘making it difficult for farmers to build houses for workers or next generation’. There is also optimism that farmers will continue to move more to agri-environmental activity, with an associated increase in public access.

Impact on the farmers and farm workers

Amongst the councillors there is a good degree of appreciation of the negative impacts of restructuring on the farmer and the farm worker. The shedding of labour in agriculture is not new and farm worker numbers are already much reduced compared with twenty years ago. The trend is reported to be continuing, with less demand for full time farm labour. Low margins have moved the farmer to rely more seriously on contracting as a means of dealing with the more mechanised operations on the farm. For the farmer, this means, in many cases, much less in the way of contact with employees than in the past.

Three other factors, relating to the decline in farm income, reported as potentially leading to a greater feeling of farmer isolation are the lack of farm successor working alongside, the necessity for many spouses to seek work away from the holding to maintain household income and the increase in working hours required by the farmer, reducing the time available for social interaction in the community. This is all compounded by the change in community mix which is seen by some as resulting in a decrease in the desire for contact with the local community – some say that village incomers are unaware of what is around them and 'have no knowledge or affinity with agricultural activities'. As a result, and increasingly under pressure for time, the links are further stretched, 'free services to the local parish council have now been withdrawn as cost cutting continues'. The loss of livestock markets is noted also as contributing to the reduction of regular contact between farmers.

For the farm worker, the position is mixed. Some councillors refer to ex-farm workers as having found other employment outside the village, with some remaining in their farm cottages which they have bought from the farm. More frequently, however, parishes report that farm workers have had great difficulty in finding work and are often lost to the community, as they move away to seek work and housing elsewhere. The same issue is seen as a problem for other 'lower paid workers' who may wish to live and work in more rural surroundings. This issue of farm work supply and demand is complex and varies across the country. In contrast to the above, for example, one or two councillors referred to the difficulty in filling farm jobs that became available with labour from the locality and the need to employ migrant labour instead.

The structure and function of the community

A variety of issues relating to the community more generally focus on three main areas, the role of local farmers in the community, the change in mix of community, and the shortage of affordable housing.

The decline in farmer number and the high average age of farmers (fewer younger farmers and farm workers), important in the past in most rural communities, is reflected in the feedback from the parishes with some referring to the loss of 'sense of community', the loss of skills and the reduction in the income to the local economy from this decline.

As a tangible measure of farmer activity and influence in the community, Parish Council/ Meeting membership and farmer involvement was recorded. Table 1 reports the size of Parish Councils as a baseline.

Table A2.1 Size of Parish Councils

	Number of parishes	%
Parish meeting	7	14
< 7 members	10	20
7-10 members	25	50
above 10 members	8	16

Just over 25% of the parish councils (and parish meetings) reported that they had no farmer members. This was highest for the Fakenham (38%), Newark (40%) and Bakewell (33%) study areas. Although significant, this was unusual when compared with other parishes where one or two farmer members (58%) and three or more farmer members (16%) were reported. Nearly two thirds (63%) of representatives commented that there had been no change in this in the last five years, whilst 14 of the parishes (28%) had seen a decline in farmer representation in this period. Interestingly, almost unanimously (92%), the parishes indicated that, whether changed or not, there had been no impact on the activities of their Councils/Meetings. Perhaps, what is evident here is a previous decline in farmer activity in some areas with a continued trend in other areas.

Alongside this, is clear realisation and articulation of change in community mix; in fact, more properly referred to as change in 'owner mix'. Around 35% of responses related in some way to the influx of non-farming folk to the parishes. A number of factors are at play here, with the supply of rural property, houses, cottages and land, as a direct result of the decline in farm incomes, and an increase in the demand for this property from those not formerly living in rural areas. The outcomes arising from these changes, in terms of community, are varied but what is clear is the hike in property prices that this has produced and the resulting lack of availability of affordable housing for local farm and non-farm workers. The following represent wider held views:

- 'lack of social housing' - for the young – 'the very few remaining ex-council houses for rent have recently been allocated to single mother from outside the area'
- 'the villages are full of second homes and holiday cottages'
- 'the villages become empty, apart from weekends'.

Second homes, retirement homes, holiday homes and dormitory residences have varied impacts on the community, depending on where the occupants live most of their time and spend most of their income. Many more of the comments were focused on the negative than the positive, when referring to these so-called 'newcomers';

- 'some of which cause much aggravation tending towards vandalism'
- 'some socialise, some don't – all are a nuisance'
- this, along with the decline in the number of farmers has, 'contributed to the closure of the only village shop'.

As well as variable involvement in the community by property owners in the parishes, a greater turnover of new comers, with their work untied geographically, is seen as an issue affecting the medium and long term 'stability' of community.

Some degree of balance is, however, provided by those are keen to point out the advantages of the mix of farming and non-farming residents in the parish;

- whilst 'we will lose the family feeling, but keep our schools etc'.
- 'farmers still take pride in heritage and tradition while welcoming the help and opinions of the newcomers'.

Concluding remarks

The picture is, therefore, one of considerable change, with reflections more on the negative implications than the positive. For the farmer, there is evidence of past, present and future pressure but also a feeling of understanding, along with encouragement for them to change, to survive and to contribute. A sense of inevitability has been captured concerning the changes to the community, with the perceived balance a degree less negative, now and for the medium term.

Appendix 3: Social impacts questionnaire

Note: some of the formatting of the original questionnaire has been removed

Social Impacts of Agricultural Restructuring Questionnaire

Farm Households

IID:		

I would like to reassure you that everything that you tell me will be treated in the strictest confidence.

All Household Questions – Social Participation

1 **Have you always lived in this parish?**

Yes **(Go to Q. 4)** □ **1**

No □ **2**

1a. If No, where did you live before?

2 **What were the main reasons for moving to this parish?**

Prompts: parish attractions, moving factors

3⇘	**How far did you move?**					
	Within 10 miles	□	**1**	Within 100 miles	□	**4**
	Within 25 miles	□	**2**	Over 100 miles	□	**5**
	Within 50 miles	□	**3**	Not Applicable	□	**6**

4⇘	**How far do you live from where you were born?**					
	Same location	□	**1**	Within 50 miles	□	**4**
	Within 10 miles	□	**2**	Within 100 miles	□	**5**
	Within 25 miles	□	**3**	Over 100 miles	□	**6**

5⇨	**Where do most of your close relations live?**					
	Same location	□	**1**	Within 50 miles	□	**4**
	Within 10 miles	□	**2**	Within 100 miles	□	**5**
	Within 25 miles	□	**3**	Over 100 miles	□	**6**

6⇨	**Where do most of your close friends live?**					
	Same location	□	**1**	Within 50 miles	□	**4**
	Within 10 miles	□	**2**	Within 100 miles	□	**5**
	Within 25 miles	□	**3**	Over 100 miles	□	**6**

7 **Are you a member of any committees, groups or societies that are based locally?**

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

(If no go to Q. 8)

If yes,

7a ✍ **How would you describe your current activity in any of the following organisations/groups?**	Very Active (1)	Active (2)	Member only (3)	Not involved (4)
NFU	□	□	□	□
CLA	□	□	□	□
Discussion group	□	□	□	□
Buying group	□	□	□	□
Selling or marketing group	□	□	□	□
Labour sharing group	□	□	□	□
Young farmers	□	□	□	□
Local Hunt	□	□	□	□
Women's Institute	□	□	□	□
Mothers' Union	□	□	□	□
Playgroup	□	□	□	□
Mothers & Toddlers	□	□	□	□
Youth Club	□	□	□	□
School Governor	□	□	□	□
School PTA	□	□	□	□
Parish/town/district/county council	□	□	□	□
Community/Village Hall committee	□	□	□	□
Twinning Society	□	□	□	□
PCC (or similar)	□	□	□	□
Sports club (e.g. rugby, cricket, etc.)	□	□	□	□
Garden Club	□	□	□	□
British Legion	□	□	□	□
Political group	□	□	□	□
Environmental group	□	□	□	□
Other campaigning group	□	□	□	□
	□	□	□	□
Others ________________________________	□	□	□	□
________________________________	□	□	□	□

7b **How many hours in a month on average would you say you spend taking part in any of the above?**

7c. Is this more, less or the same as 5 years ago?

7d. Why is that?

Thinking about people in your local community and how they interact with each other

8a How would you describe the sense of community in this parish?

8b. ⦰ Which statement best describes the community here?

Very strong sense of community	□	**1**
Strong sense of community	□	**2**
Poor sense of community	□	**3**
No sense of community	□	**4**

8c. Do you think this sense of community is the stronger or weaker than 5 years ago?

Don't know	□	**1**
Stronger	□	**2**
Weaker	□	**3**

8d. Why do you say that?

Prompts: agricultural changes, employment changes

Still thinking about people in your local community and how they interact but now in a supportive role

9a To what extent would you say that the local community works as a support system for residents here?

9b. What sort of people would you say benefit most from this?

9c. What sort of people would you say benefit least from this?

9d. ⦰ Which statement best captures this:

The local community works well together and is very supportive	□	**1**
The local community generally works well together and is supportive	□	**2**
The local community generally does not work well together but is supportive	□	**3**
The local community generally does not work together and is not-supportive	□	**4**

9e. Do you think support systems are the stronger or weaker than 5 years ago?

Don't know	□	**1**
Stronger	□	**2**
Weaker	□	**3**

9f. Why do you say that?

9g. In what ways do you think your community will change in the next five years?

Turning to your own personal friendships

10⇘ Which best describes the group of people that matter most to you?

People that live in the same area □ **1**

People that share the same interests, culture or beliefs □ **2**

People that share the same interests, culture or beliefs and live in the same area □ **3**

None of the above □ **4**

Others________________________________ □ **5**

Thinking about people that are important and support to you, whether this is from a business point of view, friendship, emotional support, or are just there as a person for you.

11⇘ Who are the five most important people in your social network?

Name (first only)	Relationship to you	Role in your life	Time known	Talk to them
Eg. David	*Father*	*Talk about work*	*30 years*	*daily*
a)				
b)				
c)				
d)				
e)				

12a Is this the same as five years ago?

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

12b. If no, how has it changed?

12c.Why did it change?

13a ⇘ During the last 5 years, have you ever felt isolated?

Never □ **1**

Rarely □ **2**

Some of the time □ **3**

Most of the time □ **4**

All of the time □ **5**

13b. If you have felt isolated, can you explain what the reasons for this were?

13c. Did you seek any outside support?

13d. What was this? Was it helpful and if so how?

Now turning to think about farming and the countryside around this area,

14 **In what ways, if any, do you think farming around here has changed in the last 5 years?**

14a **How do you feel about these changes?**

⇘

Strongly approve	□	**1**
Approve on balance	□	**2**
Disapprove on balance	□	**3**
Strongly disapprove	□	**4**

14b. Why do you say that?

Thinking about farmers more specifically

15 **Give me two or three words to describe what it's like being a farmer in 2005.**

15a **What is the role of farmers in the local community?**

Prompts: organising events, taking part in events, being part of the social life of the parish, etc.

15b. ⇘ On balance, do you think this is:

Very negative	□	**1**
Negative	□	**2**
Beneficial	□	**3**
Very beneficial	□	**4**

15c. To what extent has the involvement of farmers in the local community changed, if at all, in recent years?

15d. Why is that?

15e **Do you think the attitude of the local community towards farming and farmers has changed in recent years?**

15f. If so how?

15g. Why is that?

15h **Does the above affect the way you feel about yourself and your profession?**

15j. If so how?

15k. Why is that?

16⧅ **How important do you feel farming is to the local economy?**

Essential	□	**1**
Quite important	□	**2**
Not particularly important	□	**3**
Not essential at all	□	**4**

Given what you have said about the farmers and farming, I would like to explore the impact on the community if certain scenarios occurred.

17 **What would happen if there were fewer farmers around here?** (say half the amount as now)

18 **What would happen if there were more younger farmers around here?**

19 **What would happen if there were more women farmers around here?**

19a **What would happen if there were more part-time farmers around here?**

20a ⧅ **How frequently do you have contact with other farmers apart from other members of your household?**

Never	□	**1**
Yes, at least once a week	□	**2**
Yes, but less than once a week	□	**3**

20b. If YES, in what capacity?

20c. ⧅ Have your contacts with other farmers, increased, stayed the same or decreased in the last five years?

Increased	□	**1**
Stayed the same	□	**2**
Decreased	□	**3**

If changed, why is that?

20d.⇨ Have your contacts with non-farmers, increased, stayed the same or decreased in the last five years?

Increased □ **1**

Stayed the same □ **2**

Decreased □ **3**

If changed, why is that?

21a **Do you or anyone in your household buy food items that are produced locally?**

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

21b ⇘

Of the following, which do you buy food from?	Never Use (1)	Once a month or less than once a month (2)	Less than once a week but more than once a month (3)	Once a week or more (4)	Does not exist (5)
Village/Post office shop	□	□	□	□	□
Farm shop	□	□	□	□	□
Farmers market	□	□	□	□	□
Supermarket	□	□	□	□	□
Other ______________________________	□	□	□	□	□

21c **For what reasons do you use these food retailer outlets?**

22 ⇨	**Do you or anyone in your household use the following *local* services?**	Never Use (1)	Once a month or less than once a month (2)	Less than once a week but more than once a month (3)	Once a week or more (4)	Does not exist (5)
	Village shop/post office	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Petrol-filling station	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Garage services	□	□	□	□	□
	Public/community bus service/train	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Pub	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Doctors surgery/health centre	□	□	□	□	□
	Area Primary School	□	□	□	□	□
	Area Secondary School	□	□	□	□	□
	Area further education college	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Youth club	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Church/Chapel	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Community Events	□	□	□	□	□
	Library (mobile/permanent)	□	□	□	□	□
	Local Sports facilities	□	□	□	□	□
	Others____________________________	□	□	□	□	□
	________________________________	□	□	□	□	□

23 ⇲	**How would you describe your marital status**					
	Married	□	**1**	Divorced	□	**4**
	Single	□	**2**	Widowed	□	**5**
	Co-habiting	□	**3**			

24⧅ Details of people in your household

1 Yourself ___________________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

2 Person ___________________________________ Relationship to you ________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

3 Person ___________________________________ Relationship to you ________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

4 Person ___________________________________ Relationship to you ________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

5 Person ___________________________________ Relationship to you ________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

6 Person ___________________________________ Relationship to you ________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

7 Person ___________________________________ Relationship to you ________________________

Age _________________________ Employment _____________________________

Highest Educational attainment ____

What is the nature of their contribution to the farm business? ____

General Farm Questions

25 **Please give a brief description of the enterprises that you have on your farm.**

Prompts: agricultural, diversifications (tourism, retail, processing, etc.),

26 ⇘ **Which one description best fits your type of farming?**

	□	**1**
Beef and sheep	□	**2**
Pigs	□	**3**
Horticulture	□	**4**
Arable	□	**5**
Other (Specify)__________________	□	**6**

27 **Please indicate the areas of the following on your farm**

	Acres	Ha
Total area farmed	______	______
Total area on this holding (incl. buildings, woods, etc)	______	______
Area owned	______	______
Area rented IN	______	______

28 **How many people work in your business, including yourself and your family**

	Full-time	Part-time	Casual
Yourself and your family	______	______	______
Employees	______	______	______

Changes Since 2002

29a **How has YOUR farm business changed since 2002?** **(if NOT changed go to Q.32)**

Prompts: enterprise mix, land use, input use, on farm diversification, off farm work, marketing, etc.

30a **Has the total area of the business changed since 2002?**

Yes	□	**1**
(Go to Q. 30c) No	□	**2**

30b. Can you quantify these changes?

	Acres	**Ha**
Area bought	______	______
Area sold	______	______
Area rented in	______	______
Rented land given up	______	______
Land let out	______	______
Other (please specify)__________________	______	______

30c **Have the changes to your business since 2002 affected the total number of people employed?** (describe changes)

Yes □ **1**

(Go to Q.31a) No □ **2**

30d. Can you quantify these changes?

Change in number of employees	
More	**Less**
_______	_______

31a. Why did you make the changes to your farm business?

Prompts: to make life easier; to realise new economic opportunities; to reduce stress; to create time to pursue other non-farming source of income

31b. Who, besides yourself, has initiated and taken the responsibility for these changes (and the stress associated with them)?

31c. What have been the impacts on yourself?

31d. What have been the impacts on other members of your household?

31e. What has been the impacts on other people connected with your business?

Go to Q.34 UNLESS no significant changes.

32 Why has your business remained largely unchanged since 2002?

33 Do you think this has had an impact on the long-term viability of the business?

34⧅ Since 2002, on average, what proportion of your total annual household income has come from the following sources?

	Since 2002
The farming activities on this farm	________%
The non-farming activities on this farm	________%
Income from let land or property	________%
Other (off-farm) business interests	________%
Employment off the farm	________%
Private pensions or investments	________%
Social security payments (including State pensions)	________%
Other (specify)______________________________	________%
	100%

Section C – Future Plans (the next five years)

35
⇘ Which of the following statements best describes your plans for the next five years

I will be retired/semi-retired in favour of a successor	□	**1**	**(Go to Q.36 – C1)**
I will be retired/semi-retired and will have sold the farm	□	**2**	**(Go to Q.37 – C1)**
I will be retired/semi-retired and let the land/buildings out	□	**3**	**(Go to Q.37 – C1)**
I will have sold the whole farm and taken up a career elsewhere	□	**4**	**(Go to Q.47 – C2)**
I will have handed over the management of the farm to someone else (e.g. contract farmer, farm management company)	□	**5**	**(Go to Q.56 – C3)**
I will still be in control of farm management and farming here	□	**6**	**(Go to Q.63 – C4)**
Other (specify)____	□	**7**	**(Go to best appropriate)**

Section C1 - Retirement Plans

36a Have you already identified a potential successor who will take over the business?

Yes □ **1**
No □ **2**

36b. If yes, who is it and why?

37 **What are your main reasons for wishing to retire?**

Prompts: making way for the younger generation, reducing stress, having more time for other interest, other reason

38a **Do you plan to move from your current residence when you retire?**

Yes □ **1**

(if no go to Q.40) No □ **2**

38b. ⇘ If yes, where do you expect to live?

Another house on farm □ **1**

Move to a small holding □ **2**

Move into a village/town □ **3**

Move in with relatives □ **4**

Move into a retirement/nursing home □ **5**

Other (specify)________________________________ □ **6**

39⇘ **How far do you expect to move?**

Within 10 miles □ **1**

Within 25 miles □ **2**

Within 50 miles □ **3**

Within 100 miles □ **4**

(Go to Q.41) Over 100 miles □ **5**

40a **If staying at present residence, where will your successor live?**

40b. Why is that?

41 **What will you do once you have retired/semi-retired?**

Prompt: continue in farming at any level on the farm

42a **Will the changes to your business affect members of your household?**

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

42a. How will these changes affect you?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

42b. How will these changes affect other members of your household?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

42c. How will these changes affect other people connected to your business?

43 What will you most miss about farming when you retire/semi-retire?

44 What will you be most pleased to give up about farming when you retire/semi-retire?

45 Do you think your social life will change after you've retired/semi-retired? Yes □ **1**

If yes, why and in what way? No □ **2**

46⧅ What percentage of your total annual household income do you expect to receive from the following sources once you have retired/semi-retired?

The farming activities on this farm	___________%
The non-farming activities on this farm	___________%
Income from let land or property	___________%
Other (off-farm) business interests	___________%
Employment off the farm	___________%
Private pensions or investments	___________%
Social security payments (including State pensions)	___________%
Other (specify)________________________________	___________%
	100%

We have now come to the end of the questionnaire but before we finish is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to reassure you again that everything that you have told me will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Finally, would like to receive a summary of the results from this project?

Yes □ **1**
No □ **2**

(End of Questionnaire)

Section C2 - Sold the whole farm and changed career

47 **What are your main reasons for wishing to sell the farm and start a new career elsewhere?**
Prompts: making way for the younger generation, reducing stress, having more time for other interest, other reasons

48a **Do you plan to move from your current residence once you have sold the farm?**

Yes □ **1**
(if no go to Q.49) No □ **2**

48b. ⇘ **If yes, where do you expect to live?**

Another house on farm □ **1**
Move to a small holding □ **2**
Move into a village/town □ **3**
Move in with relatives □ **4**
Move into a retirement/nursing home □ **5**
Other (specify)________________________________ □ **6**

48c**.** ⇘ **How far do you expect to move?**

Within 10 miles □ **1**
Within 25 miles □ **2**
Within 50 miles □ **3**
Within 100 miles □ **4**
Over 100 miles □ **5**

49a Will the changes to your business affect members of your household?

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

49a. How will these changes affect you?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

49b. How will these changes affect other members of your household?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

49c. How will these changes affect other people connected to your business?

50 What will you miss most about farming?

51 What will you be most pleased to give up about farming after you have sold the farm?

52a What career do you plan to follow after you have sold the farm?

52b. Why this career?

53 Will you have new training needs that will be necessary follow this career? Yes □ **1**

If yes, can you describe these needs? No □ **2**

54 Do you think your social life will change after you've sold the farm? Yes □ **1**

If yes, why and in what way? No □ **2**

55 ⇘ What percentage of your total annual household income do you expect to receive from the following sources once you have sold the farm and started a new career?

Business interests	________%
Employment	________%
Private pensions or investments	________%
Social security payments (including State pensions)	________%
Other (specify)________________________	________%
	100%

We have now come to the end of the questionnaire but before we finish is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to reassure you again that everything that you have told me will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Finally, would like to receive a summary of the results from this project?

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

(End of Questionnaire)

Section C3 - Handing management of the farm to someone else

56 What are your main reasons for wishing to hand over the management of the farm to someone else?

Prompts: making way for the younger generation, reducing stress, having more time for other interest, other reason

56a Do you plan to move from your current residence when you hand over management?

Yes □ **1**

(if no go to Q.57) No □ **2**

56b. ⇘ If yes, where do you expect to live?

Another house on farm □ **1**

Move to a small holding □ **2**

Move into a village/town □ **3**

Move in with relatives □ **4**

Move into a retirement/nursing home □ **5**

Other (specify)________________________________ □ **6**

56c. ⇘ How far do you expect to move?

Within 10 miles □ **1**

Within 25 miles □ **2**

Within 50 miles □ **3**

Within 100 miles □ **4**

Over 100 miles □ **5**

57a **Will the changes to your business affect members of your household?**

Yes □ **1**
No □ **2**

57a. How will these changes affect you?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

57b. How will these changes affect other members of your household?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

57c. How will these changes affect other people connected to your business?

58 **What will you miss most about farming when you hand over the management?**

59 **What will you be most pleased to give up about farming when you hand over the management?**

60 **What will you do once you have handed over management of the farm?**

61 **Do you think your social life will change after you've handed over management?** Yes □ **1**
If yes, why and in what way? No □ **2**

62⧅ **What percentage of your total annual household income do you expect to receive from the following sources once you have handed over management to someone else?**

The farming activities on this farm	__________%
The non-farming activities on this farm	__________%
Income from let land or property	__________%
Other (off-farm) business interests	__________%
Employment off the farm	__________%
Private pensions or investments	__________%
Social security payments (including State pensions)	__________%
Other (specify)____________________________	__________%
	100%

We have now come to the end of the questionnaire but before we finish is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to reassure you again that everything that you have told me will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Finally, would like to receive a summary of the results from this project?

Yes □ **1**
No □ **2**

(End of Questionnaire)

Section C4 - Continue farming

63a. **How will YOUR business change in the next five years?**

Prompts: changes in farm size, enterprise structure, pluriactivity, environmental management, employment, etc,

63b. Why (*CAP reform, changes to household, changes to income, changes to enterprises*, etc)

63c. Will these changes require additional skills or training needs for you or other members of your household?

63d. Where will you get these from?

64 **Will the changes to your business affect members of your household?**

Yes □ **1**
No □ **2**

64a. How will these changes affect you?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

64b. How will these changes affect other members of you household?

Prompts: Increased/reduced hours worked; Reduced/increased opportunities to purse other interests; Increase/reduce levels of stress

64c. How will these changes affect other people connected to your business?

Go to Q.67 UNLESS considering making no significant changes

65 Why will your business remained largely unchanged in the next five years?

66 Do you think this will have an impact on the long-term viability of the business?

67⇘ In the next five years, as a percentage where will your total annual household income come from?

	Next five years
The farming activities on this farm	__________%
The non-farming activities on this farm	__________%
Income from let land or property	__________%
Other (off-farm) business interests	__________%
Employment off the farm	__________%
Private pensions or investments	__________%
Social security payments (including State pensions)	__________%
Other (specify)______________________________	__________%
	100%

68a Have you identified a potential successor who will eventually take over the management of the business?

Yes	□	**1**
no	□	**2**

68b. If yes, who is it?

68c. How long have you been making plans for this?

68d. What are the implications for other members of your family?

We have now come to the end of the questionnaire but before we finish is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to reassure you again that everything that you have told me will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Finally, would like to receive a summary of the results from this project?

Yes □ **1**

No □ **2**

(End of Questionnaire)

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