



Cumbria Hill Farming Matters

CUMBRIA HILL FARMING MATTERS

Committed to Farming in the Fells
www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk

Cumbria hill farmers provide a huge range of benefits that go beyond livestock production.

They:-

- Commit to farming in the fells including the grazing of hill, moorland and common land by heafed native breeds of sheep.
- Conserve the land to protect natural resources and biodiversity.
- Collaborate with other hill farmers and relevant agencies.
- Communicate actively with local communities and visitors to increase public understanding of the countryside through shows, guided walks and farm open days.
- Maintain the landscape through enhancing historic countryside features such as vernacular buildings and dry stone walls.
- Produce quality local food.



Galloway cattle at Braesteads Farm

The Hill Farming Systems project has created a website **www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk** which champions the cause of hill farming, begins a digital record of this invaluable cultural asset in Cumbria, and acts as a two way bridge between farmers and the wider community.

The website includes profiles of 30 hill farms and a wide range of information about hill farming in the Cumbria Fells and Dales. It also contains a report detailing the economic, environmental and social contribution of hill farmers in the area and the results of a survey investigating the response of a sample of farms to the changes currently taking place in the industry.



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Lambs at Matson Ground

Hill farming in Cumbria is facing a period of unprecedented change as a result of:

- A reduction in livestock numbers on the fells as a result of environmental agreements and the impact of Foot and Mouth in Cumbria in 2001.
- Changes to the Common Agricultural Policy and the introduction of the new Single Farm Payment system.
- Changes to environmental support payments.
- A decline in the transfer of skills to the next generation partly caused by a lack of affordable housing for younger hill farmers.
- The inherent low profitability of hill farming:- according to a recent report by Newcastle University, farm business income for all English Less Favoured Area farms was only £10,786 in 2007 and, once family labour is accounted for, this falls to the equivalent of minus £8,800.



Photography - Beef Shorthorns at Matson Ground; High Wallabarrow farmhouse by Chris Chinn; Farm Walk at Matson Ground; Swaledale Sheep at Deepdale Hall

“This decline in numbers of people living and working on the land means that there is now an inadequate structure to allow communal management of some of the key elements such as walls, hedges, watercourses and grazed common fells. In many valleys the bones of the landscape pattern survive but are hanging on by a thread, as the social and economic systems that supported them are weakening.”

Susan Denyer, ‘The Lake District: A Proposed World Heritage Cultural Landscape Site’ (ICOMOS-UK, 2001)

For the future we need to:-

- Maintain active up-to-date research on the state of hill farming and its social, environmental, and economic benefits.
- Help policy makers and members of the public understand and value the unique characteristics of hill farming in Cumbria.
- Help hill farmers understand and apply for funding such as the new Rural Development Programme for England.

For the Cumbria hill farming website: www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk we aim to:-

- Make sure that it is actively used by the wider community of visitors, opinion formers, researchers, and public agencies.
- Expand the farm profiles to include up to 200 hill farms to provide a representative sample of farms in the area.
- Work on the rich story of hill farming looking at individual Lake District valleys and communities.

If you are interested in this future please contact



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