Food and Footprint

Case Study

Working with farmers to tackle climate change.

Farming for a Better Climate

farmingforabetterclimate.org

Practical climate change mitigation measures can be good for both the environment and farm business, but where to start? Working with farmers across Scotland, SAC Consulting delivered the Scottish Government funded Farming for a Better Climate initiative. Farming for a Better Climate trialled and demonstrated a range of practical climate change mitigation measures that could be adapted and adopted to improve business efficiency and reduce the farm carbon footprint.

The client challenge

We are facing the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Scotland has committed to ambitious carbon reduction targets, aiming to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.

We all must cut our carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. For farmers, crofters and land managers, routine biological processes also give rise to two other key and potent, greenhouse gases for consideration. Methane (CH_4), as a by-product of ruminant digestion and nitrous oxide (N_2O) from cultivation including application of nitrogen fertilisers and manures.

Our solutions

Working with volunteer focus farmers across Scotland, the Farming for a Better Climate initiative saw first-hand the innovative measures farmers were putting in place and the benefits this could have had for the farm

business. Thirteen climate change focus farmers across two cohorts signed up for a three-year programme with the Scottish Government funded Farming for a Better Climate initiative. The volunteer host farmers worked with SAC Consulting and other industry specialists to explore changes that could benefit both the farm business and the environment.

Farm soils can often be overlooked, and the soil story was something we continued to pursue, this time with a group of farmers interested in soil regenerative agriculture techniques. The group, based in the northeast of Scotland, were trialling both old and new soil regenerative agriculture measures and sharing their findings. The challenge of establishment of cover crops, integration of livestock into the arable rotation and soil biological health were all areas the group were exploring.

Added value

By working directly with land managers, we demonstrated practical techniques and solutions, tried, and tested on working farms, sharing our findings with the sector.

In partnership with Scottish Government, QMS, Soil Association and NFUS, Farming for a Better Climate hosted the new Agriculture, Biodiversity and Climate Change (ABCC) Network. The network showcased examples of measures farmers and land managers were already putting in place to reduce the farm carbon footprint and benefit biodiversity, providing a pool of examples to inspire others.

Host farmers started with a range of baseline data; a key part of this was a carbon footprint via Agrecalc. The carbon audit gave another way to look at the farm business, identifying how farms were performing in carbon terms and how they measured up with like businesses. Information was shared through a series of on farm discussion group meetings, demonstrating changes and providing a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas. For those unable to attend, a series of meeting notes, practical guides and case studies were provided.

Our client says

"I've learned a lot from being part of the group and working with other farmers, it's made me think more about how we manage our soils. Moving towards regenerative soil practices doesn't have to be all or nothing overnight; between us we were able to try out new techniques and ways of doing things, swapping ideas about what's worked well and allowing us to tailor what's right for our individual farms."

Hugh Black
Backboath Farm (part of the Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group)