

Climate change focus farms

Overview of first discussion group meeting at
Torr on Tuesday 26th October 2010



Meeting theme – Soil and nutrient management

The discussion group will have the opportunity to cover a range of topics under the 5 Key Action Areas within the Farming for a Better Climate initiative. The meeting topics will be influenced by the interests within the farmer group.

The theme for this meeting was soil and nutrient management. As this was the first meeting of the discussion group at Torr, topics and guest speakers were arranged in advance for the group.

Gillian Reid from the SAC Dumfries office is the Farm Facilitator.

Item and Speaker	Content	Actions/Outcomes/links
Introduction Gillian Reid, SAC	Gillian introduced meeting, gave an overview of the Farming for a Better Climate initiative and some of the topics that the discussion group could cover.	- more information at www.farmingforabetterclimate.org
Welcome to and overview of Torr Ross Paton, Farmer	Ross told the group a bit about the farm and some of its soil types and management challenges. Currently around 190 cows but usually nearer to 150. All soil analyses currently up to date.	- more information at www.sac.ac.uk/climatechange/farmingforabetterclimate/ccfocusfarms/ccdairy/
Discussion topic 1 Soil Management. Dr Bill Crooks, SAC	Bill gave a presentation on the importance of soil condition for effective nutrient use, taking the group back to first principles for land management and improving soil condition. The presentation included optimal soil condition, soil organic matter, soil carbon, risks factors leading to poor soil quality and steps to improve soil organic matter.	- Know soil types and quality around the farm - better soils can help to improve yields - check for compaction - protect against soil erosion - reconsider soil management if issues found - 'back to basics' soil guidance at www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47121/0020243.pdf
Discussion topic 2 Efficient use of nutrients Dr Alex Sinclair, SAC	Alex echoed the previous presentation to confirm that soil structure needed to be sound to get best out of nutrient application. Alex used soil and slurry analysis data to illustrate what effect the management routine at Torr has had on soils; showed a good picture with a few issues to correct. Estimated that slurry from Torr had a nutrient value of around £2.93 m ³ . Used SAC Technical note TN632 and TN622 to work through examples.	- start with soil testing on one or two fields - address any soil structure and pH issues - match nutrient application to soil and crop requirements - information in SAC Technical Notes TN632 and TN622 at www.sac.ac.uk/publications/technicalnotes/
Demonstration PLANET Scotland	Bill and Alex gave a demonstration of a new computer program PLANET	- can download software free at www.planet4farmers.co.uk

Dr Bill Crooks and Dr Alex Sinclair, SAC	Scotland, designed specifically for Scottish Soils. PLANET Scotland can help farmers plan organic and inorganic nutrient applications.	
Site visit Red clover field at Torr, Ross Paton	Ross took the group out to one of the red clover fields for a look at grass and clover quality and to continue discussion.	<i>Practical Guides at</i> www.sac.ac.uk/mainrep/pdfs/pgnfix.pdf www.sac.ac.uk/mainrep/pdfs/pginorganic.pdf www.sac.ac.uk/mainrep/pdfs/pgorganic.pdf www.sac.ac.uk/mainrep/pdfs/pgapn nutrients.pdf
Close of meeting Gillian Reid, SAC	As this was the first meeting, Gillian will follow up by telephone with group members to take suggestions for the next meeting topic and establish if they would like a free Carbon Budget for their farm which could help farmers identify the proportion of farm emission and could be used (anonymously) for benchmarking and wider and discussion within the group.	- Gillian to follow up with group about carbon budget, date and topic for next meeting - to include more discussion time for future meetings
Date and location of next meeting	To follow	

Do you farm and would you like to attend the next meeting?

There are a few places left for new farmers to join the group. Its free and members will be able to influence the topics, speakers or sites to visit for future meetings.

Further information and contact details

Contact Gillian Reid, SAC Facilitator for Torr at SAC Dumfries Office on 01387 261172; email gillian.reid@sac.co.uk or Rebecca Audsley, Climate Change Manager on 01292 525089; email rebecca.audsley@sac.co.uk .

Alternatively you can visit the website at www.farmingforabetterclimate.org or email a general enquiry to climatechange@sac.co.uk



Photos show Ross Paton with the discussion group in one of the red clover fields.