

# ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESS OF NATURE CONSERVATION ADVICE TO FARMERS IN ENGLAND

## A case study of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

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**ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESS OF NATURE CONSERVATION  
ADVICE TO FARMERS IN ENGLAND:**

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(FWAG)**

Veröffentlichung einer überarbeiteten Diplomarbeit, erstellt

an der Fakultät für Architektur und Landschaft der Universität  
Hannover, Institut für Umweltplanung

von Rasmus Klöpper

vom 24. November bis zum 24. März 2006

unter Betreuung von

Frau Professor Dr. Christina v. Haaren  
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(Bristol).

Originaltitel: Analysis of the factors which contribute to or hamper  
nature conservation advice to farmers in England:

A case study of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)



## Acknowledgements

I want to thank my two supervisors Professor Dr Christina v. Haaren and Dr Simon Arlidge for their commitment and for their continuous support. I feel I have learned a lot in conducting this work and much of that is due to them.

Furthermore, I owe a great thankyou to all the ten persons who agreed on an interview. They took all some hours of their time and most of them were also available for further questions after the interviews. Especially Richard Knight, Ben Thorne, Michael Woodhouse, James Trueman, Diane Spence and Alan Hooper have been very helpful with further pleasant phone calls. They all did not only help me uncover the miracles of some so far unknown English institutions, they also brought new enthusiasm when I felt I needed a new push.

I am very grateful for the support of many who read and corrected my work. I thank very much Proserpine Peralta and Harry Chichester who read much. For my German friends the correction was a particular challenge. First of all I want to mention Katrin Meyer. Also Thomas Cornelißen, Markus Rösger, Christian Albert, and Fiona Howie helped me very willingly. Esther Ludwig and Timo Kaphengst both gave instructive hints as to my work procedure.

Thanks also to those others who I got much help from in England. Many people in the FWAG head office, in Somerset FWAG and other places should know I mean them.

Thank you really very much. Even though I have had some difficult times, it was overall a real pleasure to conduct such a piece of research. I hope it will bring those who read it insights and pleasure.



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## 1 Abstract

**Background:** In Germany, nature conservation advice is not widely available for farmers. Many NGO-conservation organisations demand the governments of the German federal states to provide better finance conditions for the delivery of nature conservation advice for farmers. In contrast to that, conservation advice in England appears to be broadly established and to work successful. It is assumed that there is more experience with conservation advice in England than in Germany. Therefore, this thesis sets out to examine how conservation advice works in England. The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) is the most important provider of farm conservation advice in the UK.

**Aim of the work:** This thesis analyses to what extent FWAG is successful in satisfying the farmers' needs and in meeting conservation aims with its conservation advice. It is also analysed which of FWAG's qualities contribute to or hamper its success. Thirdly, FWAG's financial problems and strengths are analysed.

**Work procedure:** At first, the motives of the farmers to ask for conservation advice and the reasons why government departments and agencies with particular responsibility for the environment (referred to as conservationists) want conservation advice to be delivered are established. The information for this work step are taken from ten expert interviews and from a literature research. Out of the motives and reasons, general requirements for successful conservation advice are developed. FWAG's performance regarding each of the general requirements is then analysed and discussed with respect to the aim of the work. The information for the analysis is taken from the ten expert interviews and from four evaluations of FWAG (KNIGHT 2005, ECOTEC 2000, MORRIS & WINTER 1999, and WINTER et al. 1996).

**The farmers' motives to ask for conservation advice:** One reason for farmers to ask for conservation advice is to get financial benefit from it. For many farmers, the reason is that they want to learn about conservation and enhance their farm environment. Some feel that they ought to do conservation because the public thinks badly about the way farmers treat the environment.

**The conservationists reasons to support conservation advice:** The conservation agencies (DEFRA, RDS, English Nature) have to achieve policy aims with regard to conserving the beauty and the biodiversity of the countryside and to support sustainable agriculture. The conservation agencies expect that the delivery of conservation advice can help them to achieve their environmental aims on farmed land. Indicators of the environmental performance of conservation advice agencies are the increase of the farmers' environmental awareness, the number of implemented conservation tasks and their potential benefit for wildlife. Furthermore, the advice should facilitate the implementation of the agri-environment schemes and bring about a good conservation value for public money.

**Analysis of FWAG's success:** The farmers were found to be very satisfied with the advice. It increased their understanding of conservation. However, the opportunities for financial benefit were limited.

The environmental output was satisfactory. The quality and potential benefit for wildlife of the conservation tasks, which the farmers had implemented after the advice were good, but the amount of tasks the farmers subsequently implemented was only satisfactory. FWAG's advice was assessed to be potentially appropriate to improve the agri-environment scheme's

environmental gain and it can be considered to bring about benefit for society at a reasonable cost (no definite figures about the monetary effects could be found with respect to this aspect). Most interviewed representatives of the conservation agencies were satisfied with FWAG's conservation motivation, though some complaints were issued.

**FWAG's qualities:** FWAG is led by farmers and most advisers are said to have a good understanding of farming. The advice is voluntary and independent from statutory bodies. The advisers show the farmers that their needs are at the centre of the advice. Therefore, the advisers can develop a trusting relationship with the farmers.

The acceptance of advice is dependent on the person who delivers the advice. This is important for conservation advice because many farmers do not like to be advised by people whom they perceive as 'conservationists' (MCHENRY 1997). Therefore, the trusting relationship between FWAG and the farmers is vital for FWAG to achieve that the farmers accept the advice. Further qualities, which are assumed to improve the farmers' conservation activities are that the advisers try to enthuse the farmers for wildlife. The advisers also say that they try to understand each farmer's motivation for conservation and see if they can persuade him or her to do a little bit better conservation work than they had initially intended to do.

Some conservationists complained that some FWAG advisers were too farmer-friendly and would not target their advice to achieve environmental outcome.

**FWAG's finances:** FWAG is funded from various sources. Most money comes from grants and contracts with central and local government agencies, projects with various public and private partners, and charges from the farmers. Every local FWAG group has to raise its own funds. Apparently, this works well and led to that FWAG co-operates with many different project partners.

The core funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), however, has ceased. This is a major problem for FWAG. DEFRA wants to control the delivery of conservation advice and has therefore put advice contracts out for competitive tender. FWAG did not win a contract. No details of the reason for the failure can be given, but according to the relevant officials in DEFRA it has to do with that FWAG's local groups do not work in a consistent way and that FWAG nationally does not plan its work strategically. FWAG has realized these shortfalls and works on them.

## German abstract

In großen Teilen Deutschlands können Landwirte keine Naturschutzberatung in Anspruch nehmen. Viele Naturschutzverbände fordern von den Länderministerien, die Rahmenbedingungen für eine Finanzierung von Naturschutzberatung zu verbessern. Im Gegensatz dazu ist Naturschutzberatung in England breit etabliert und scheint gut zu funktionieren. Daher kann angenommen werden, dass in England mehr Erfahrung mit Naturschutzberatung besteht, als hierzulande. Aus diesem Grunde wird in der vorliegenden Arbeit die englische Naturschutzberatung untersucht. Die Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) ist der bedeutendste Anbieter von Naturschutzberatung in Großbritannien.

**Das Ziel der Arbeit:** Diese Arbeit analysiert, inwieweit FWAG mit seiner Naturschutzberatung sowohl die Landwirte zufrieden stellt als auch zur Verwirklichung von Naturschutzziele beiträgt, und welche Eigenschaften und Fähigkeiten dazu beitragen oder diesen Ziel entgegenwirken. Außerdem wird FWAGs finanzielle Situation untersucht.

**Vorgehensweise:** In einem ersten Schritt werden die Motive der Bauern, Naturschutzberatung nachzufragen, und die Gründe für die behördlichen Naturschützer, eine solche Beratung zu unterstützen, ermittelt. Die für diesen Arbeitsschritt nötigen Informationen entstammen zehn Experteninterviews und einer Literaturrecherche. Aus den Motiven und Gründen der Bauern und Naturschützer werden sodann generelle Anforderungen an eine erfolgreiche Naturschutzberatung abgeleitet. FWAGs Leistungen in Bezug auf jede der generellen Anforderung werden darauf mit Hinblick auf die Ziele dieser Arbeit analysiert und diskutiert. Die Daten für die Analyse sind ebenfalls in den zehn Experteninterviews gewonnen, bzw. sie wurden vier Studien entnommen, im Rahmen derer FWAGs Arbeit evaluiert worden war (KNIGHT 2005, ECOTEC 2000, MORRIS & WINTER 1999, and WINTER et al. 1996).

**Die Gründe für Landwirte, Naturschutzberatung nachzufragen:** Ein Grund für Landwirte, Naturschutzberatung in Anspruch nehmen zu wollen, ist der Wunsch nach zusätzlichem Einkommen. Viele Bauern wollen mehr über Naturschutz wissen und wollen eigene Naturschutzideen umsetzen. Manche wollen Naturschutz betreiben, weil sie sich einem öffentlichem Druck ausgesetzt fühlen, als Landwirt schlecht mit der Umwelt umzugehen.

**Die Gründe für die Naturschutzbehörden, Naturschutzberatung zu unterstützen:** Das englische Landwirtschafts- und Umweltministerium sowie die Fachbehörden müssen politische Ziele in Bezug auf Landschafts- und Artenschutz erreichen. Sie erhoffen sich von der Naturschutzberatung eine Hilfe bei der Umsetzung von Naturschutzmaßnahmen auf landwirtschaftlichen Flächen. Die Beratung soll zu einem gesteigerten Umweltbewusstsein der Landwirte, sowie zu einer hohen Anzahl von umgesetzten Maßnahmen führen, die möglichst hohen Naturschutzerfolg erbringen. Außerdem soll die Naturschutzberatung bei der Umsetzung der Agrar-Umwelt Programme helfen und in einem günstigen Kosten-Nutzen Verhältnis stehen.

**Analyse von FWAGs Erfolg:** Die Landwirte waren insgesamt sehr zufrieden mit FWAGs Beratung. Ihr Verständnis von Naturschutz ist verbessert worden. Die Möglichkeiten für finanziellen Nutzen aus der Beratung sind allerdings insgesamt eher mäßig.

Der Naturschutznutzen aus der Beratung scheint zufriedenstellend zu sein. Die Qualität und der potenzielle Naturschutz-Nutzen der umgesetzten Maßnahmen ist grundsätzlich gut. Die

Menge der umgesetzten Maßnahmen ist allerdings nur ausreichend. Die Beratung von FWAG hat das Potenzial, die Umsetzung der Agrar-Umwelt Programme zu verbessern. Sie scheint im Verhältnis zum Geldeinsatz einen gesamtgesellschaftlichen Nutzen zu erbringen (allerdings konnte hierüber nur auf Annahmen zurückgegriffen werden). Die meisten interviewten Naturschutzvertreter waren mit der Naturschutzmotivation der Berater zufrieden. Einige Naturschützer äußerten diesbezüglich allerdings Bedenken.

**Die Eigenschaften von FWAG:** Die Gremien von FWAG sind überwiegend mit Landwirten besetzt und die meisten Berater haben praktische Erfahrung mit Landwirtschaft. Die Beratung ist freiwillig und vertraulich. Die Berater geben den Bauern das Gefühl, dass ihre Belange bei der Beratung im Vordergrund stehen und versuchen, ein Vertrauensverhältnis mit ihnen aufzubauen. Dies gelingt ihnen in der Regel gut.

Wie Beratung angenommen wird hängt von der Assoziation ab, die der Beratende vom Berater und der Beratungsinstitution hat. In Bezug auf Naturschutzberatung ist dies besonders wichtig, da viele Bauern Naturschützer negativ assoziieren und nicht von ihnen beraten werden wollen (MCHENRY 1997). Daher ist das Vertrauensverhältnis zwischen Landwirt und FWAG-Berater eine besonders wichtige Voraussetzung dafür, dass der Bauer die Beratung gut annimmt und infolgedessen Naturschutzmaßnahmen umsetzt. Weitere wichtige Eigenschaften der Berater sind, dass sie versuchen, die Landwirte für die Natur zu begeistern. Die Berater versuchen, die persönlichen Einstellungen der Landwirte zu Natur und Naturschutz zu verstehen und sie zu einem etwas anspruchsvolleren Naturschutz zu bewegen, als sie womöglich selber vorhatten.

Einige Naturschützer beklagten, dass einige FWAG Berater zu Bauern-nah beraten würden, und so sehr den finanziellen Nutzen des Landwirts im Auge hätten, das sie dabei den Naturschutznutzen außer acht ließen.

**FWAG's finanzielle Situation:** FWAG bezieht Einkommen aus verschiedenen Quellen. Das meiste Geld stammt von Zuschüssen und Verträgen mit Behörden, Projekten mit unterschiedlichen öffentlichen und privatwirtschaftlichen Partnern, sowie Zahlungen der Landwirte. Jede lokale Gruppe muss ihre eigene Finanzierung sichern. Das scheint gut zu funktionieren und trägt dazu bei, dass FWAG insgesamt auf sehr verschiedene Weisen mit unterschiedlichen Projektpartnern arbeitet.

Ein großes Problem für FWAG ist, dass sie keine Förderung mehr vom Umwelt- und Landwirtschaftsministerium (DEFRA) erhalten. Der Grund liegt darin, dass DEFRA besser kontrollieren will, wie die vom Ministerium geförderte Naturschutzberatung ausgeführt wird. Daher hat DEFRA einen nationalen Naturschutzberatungs-Vertrag öffentlich ausgeschrieben. FWAG hat dafür geboten, allerdings nicht den Zuschlag bekommen. Die Gründe dafür sind nicht genau in Erfahrung zu bringen gewesen; allerdings gaben die verantwortlichen Vertreter des Ministeriums an, FWAGs Misserfolg diesbezüglich liege grundsätzlich in dem Unvermögen der Organisation, mit einer nationalen Strategie die eigene Arbeit zu planen. Außerdem arbeiteten alle Gruppen von FWAG so unterschiedlich und unkoordiniert, dass man im Ministerium nie wusste, was mit den Fördergeldern erreicht wurde. Das Management von FWAG hat die Mängel erkannt, und arbeitet daran, diese zu beheben.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

In the United Kingdom, nature conservation advice has been ongoing for the last 30 years. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the biggest national nature conservation organisation in Britain, defines the term conservation advice<sup>1</sup> as follows:

“Conservation management advice can be defined as the imparting of knowledge on the conservation management of land to land managers and those who directly influence them. It includes both the “how” and the ”why” of land management for conservation as well as supporting the implementation of advice” (RSPB 2002, 2).

Conservation advice can be looked at from the perspective of two different interest groups: The farmers on the one hand and the government departments and specialist agencies which have a particular responsibility for the environment on the other hand. (Relevant departments and agencies for this thesis are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Rural Development Agency (RDS), English Nature and the Environment Agency. Where no differentiation is necessary, these are hereafter summarized as ‘conservation agencies’)<sup>2</sup>.

For the farmers, conservation advisers provide a service to fulfill their needs and aspirations. For instance, they advise farmers who want to put a particular conservation idea into practice, or who seek access to funding from agri-environment schemes. The advisers also inform about the compliance with agri-environmental legislation or with quality assurance schemes from the food industry (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

For the conservation agencies, the availability of conservation advice can be regarded as an instrument to pursue environmental aims in agriculture by changing the behaviour and attitude of farmers concerning their farmland management (ECOTEC 2000, 5f).

This thesis looks at the English nature conservation advice from a German perspective. In Germany, extension systems from which farmers can obtain conservation advice for a wide range of environmental and conservation related issues are not widely established. In large areas, there is no conservation advice offered. The conservation advice coverage differs between the German federal states (Bundesländer). In most of those regions, where conservation advice is available, the coverage is patchy, including large areas where no advice can be obtained. Many federal states do not even offer a specialist advice in connection with their agri-environment schemes. Overall, conservation advice seems to reach only a very small number of farmers (VAN ELSSEN 2005, pers. comm.).

Many interest groups and specialists demand this shortfall in farm conservation advice to be amended. The German advisory council on the environment (Rat von Sachverständigen für Umweltfragen SRU) demanded in 2002 that the legislators should provide for a possibility to co-finance ‘nature conservation advice’ under the EU Rural Development Regulation 1257/99. This regulation sets the framework for the agri-environment schemes until 2006 and

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the terms conservation advice, nature conservation advice, farm conservation advice and conservation management advice, are used as synonyms.

<sup>2</sup> See also glossary for further explanations of similar terms.

does not provide for funding for conservation advice (SRU 2002, 109). The Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU) and the Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL) (German Association for Landcare) demand that the newly introduced possibility to financially support conservation advice, which the *new* EU Rural Development Regulation 1698/2005 offers, should be implemented on the level of each German federal state (NABU 2005a, NABU & DVL 2005). Likewise, conservation organisations are calling for implementing conservation advice to remedy certain shortcomings in the implementation of the agri-environment schemes. In the federal state Baden-Württemberg for instance, an alliance of three conservation organisations<sup>3</sup> propose that conservation advice should facilitate a ‘whole-farm management’ to be implemented as part of the agri-environment scheme. To achieve this, private conservation consultancies should advise the farmers (NABU et al. 2005). The organic farming cultivation associations declared the desire to make nature conservation advice available for their members (NABU 2004).

The Bundesamt für Naturschutz (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation) organized three workshops throughout 2004/05 to promote the exchange of ideas and to encourage the establishment of conservation advice<sup>4</sup> (VAN ELSSEN et al. 2004).

Also, many farmers wish to receive more information and advice on conservation issues. In three recent surveys in different Germany regions, 70 %, 78 % and 81 % of the farmers expressed the wish for a consultation and planning on nature conservation for their holding (NABU 2004).

Conservation advice in Germany is, for instance, given from public-NGO-partnership associations, private consultants or projects with a limited duration (VAN ELSSEN 2005, pers. comm.). For example, some of the Landcare Associations (mainly in the south of Germany) and the Biological Stations (in Northrhine-Westphalia) deliver conservation advice. However, the Landcare Associations and the Biological Stations have many different conservation remits, and only some of the local offices of the two organisations offer conservation advice (MARKET 2005). The German federal state Rheinland-Pfalz pays private consultants to offer advice for its agri-environment scheme FUL (Förderprogramm Umweltschonende Landbewirtschaftung) (FRANKENBERG et al. 2004, 81). In Lower Saxony, there is one adviser employed in a project with limited duration at the Kompetenzzentrum Ökolandbau (KÖN). The adviser offers conservation advice to organic farmers on a wide range of environmental issues (MEYERHOFF 2004).

There are several possible reasons why a widespread delivery of conservation advice is not yet existing in Germany. Most important seems to be a lack of funding. On the above mentioned workshops, the question from which sources sufficient funding could be raised has been a major point of discussion. The farmers’ willingness to pay for the conservation advice is very low. The public budgets provide only scarce financing for conservation advice and in most federal states the agri-environment schemes finance only practical work but no advice. In many agricultural ministries, which administer the biggest part of the money spent on agri-

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<sup>3</sup> Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU), Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz (BUND), Landesnaturschutzverband Baden-Württemberg (LNV)

<sup>4</sup> A series of three workshops organized by T. v. Elsen, E. Keufer, R. Oppermann, and N. Wiersbinski, supported by the Bundesamt für Naturschutz (Federal Agency for Nature Conservation) on nature conservation advice for farmers between Feb. 2004 and Feb. 2005 on the Island Vilm. A follow-up workshop was held in Oct. 2005 at the University of Witzenhausen. The DVL organized a conference on the implementation of the Flora-Fauna Habitat Directive through conservation advice in Fulda. The author attended the four last workshops.

environment schemes, the members of staff appear to have no interest to finance advice. This is probably the case because money which is spent on advice does not reach the farmers directly. In the agricultural ministries, however, the officials may feel that their responsibility is to grant the most possible money to the farmers at the least possible efforts. In these ministries, it seems that the political importance of nature conservation on farmland is not as strong as the requirements of a production-focussed agriculture. Overall, the consideration to implement conservation advice appears to be a topic which has come onto the the political agenda only in the last few years (SRU 2002, NABU 2005a, NABU & DVL 2005, VAN ELSEN 2004, pers. comm., PERSIEL 2005, pers. comm., WICKE 2006, pers. comm.).

In the last two years, political considerations have been ongoing about the details of the new Rural Development Regulation 1698/2005, which from 2007 on will set the framework for all the rural development programmes of the EU member states. The regulation provides for the possibility to financially support conservation advice (VAN ELSEN 2005). Until the summer 2006, the agricultural and environmental ministries of the federal states have to submit the descriptions of their new rural development programmes to the European Commission for approval. In Lower Saxony, the programme description includes the financing of conservation advice for farmers who want to take part in the agri-environment schemes. It is to be expected that from 2007 on, nature conservation advice will be financed through the agri-environment schemes, at least in Lower Saxony (WICKE 2006, pers. comm., KRUSE 2006, pers. comm.). Whether the programme descriptions of the other federal states contain financial items for conservation advice or not was not established for this work.

In Great Britain, nature conservation advice for farmers appears to be well established. It seems to work similar to how the German interest groups mentioned above would like conservation advice to work in Germany.

Conservation agencies and farmers have different motives to demand conservation advice (ECOTEC 2000; MORRIS & WINTER 2002). Consequently, a conflict of aims may arise for any conservation advice body which wants to satisfy both groups' demands. A successful advice agency needs to find its position in between the two interest groups and to satisfy either group without compromising the needs of the other too much.

The advice agency which is subject to the analysis in this work appears to be successful in fulfilling the requirements of the farming community on the one hand and the conservation agencies, on the other. The following facts give indication of the success:

- As a response to the rising demand from the farming and the conservationists side, the biggest advising body, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) has become a large organisation with about 120 conservation advisers in Great Britain (FWAG 2006).
- The organisation carries out about 10,000 conservation advice visits to farmers every year (FWAG 2005). The FWAG advisers point out that many of these visits are repeat visits, which indicates the farmers' satisfaction.
- The advice raises the farmers' awareness for the farmland wildlife. This is, for instance, confirmed in a study by MORRIS & WINTER (2002) who assessed Farm Biodiversity Action Plans delivered by FWAG to the fresh produce suppliers of the supermarket chain Sainsbury's.



- Specialist agencies such as the Environment Agency and English Nature want to work together with FWAG: They ask their service in many occasions because they benefit from FWAG's position in between the farming and the conservation sector and their ability to act as intermediaries (SMITH, pers. comm. 2005).
- The head of the agricultural department within the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), WINSPEAR, suggested that advice could be a means of improving the relationships between farmers and conservationists. The farmers' view on nature conservation had improved considerably over the last 10-20 years. WINSPEAR assumes, that this was a result of the increased implementation of conservation advice (2005, pers. comm.).

Therefore, the thesis proceeds on three assumptions:

- In Britain, nature conservation advice for farmers is, at least partly, successful in fulfilling the predominantly economic requirements of the farming community on the one hand, and environmental policy aims of conservation departments on the other hand.
- The requirements of the farming community and the conservationists are probably partly controversial. The success of conservation advice is therefore probably never absolute for either side.
- In Britain there exists a lot of knowledge and experience with regard to
  - how nature conservation advice to farmers can become successful in delivering benefits both to farmers and to the environment, and
  - how advice agencies can obtain sufficient funding to offer their advice to farmers at a reasonable price.

In Germany, there is less experience than in the UK of funding conservation advice and how this advice can be successful in fulfilling the partly conflicting interests of farmers and conservationists. Therefore, from the German perspective, it appears to be instructive to examine this British approach to agri-environment in more detail.

## 2.2 Aim of the work:

Proceeding on this, the aim of this work is to answer the following questions

1. Is FWAG successful in delivering nature conservation advice in the way that it
  - a. meets the farmers' requirements with regard to financial benefits, information about conservation and about compliance with environmental regulations
  - b. and fulfills the demands of the government departments and agencies with responsibility for the environment to deliver a sound outcome for landscape and wildlife, raise the farmers' awareness, and bring about good conservation value for money?
2. Which qualities and skills contribute to and which hamper the success of FWAG?
3. How is FWAG's work financed and what are FWAG's key strengths and weaknesses with regard to a secure funding?

In the UK, there are a number of organisations which advise farmers on conservation. The decision to choose the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group was based on the following reasons: FWAG is the largest conservation advice agency (ECOTEC 2000) and the only organisation whose sole remit is to give advice on environmental issues to the farming community (WINTER et al. 2000). Farmers are generally more aware of FWAG than of the other important nationally active conservation advice organisation, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) (ECOTEC 2000, 15). In a comparative evaluation of both agencies, FWAG appeared in many aspects to be more successful than ADAS (WINTER et al. 1996).

This thesis concentrates on England, even though FWAG works in all the four countries of the UK.

### 2.3 Work procedure

The structure of the work

The thesis is based on information derived from interviews and from a literature investigation. Ten semi-structured expert interviews were conducted in England. They were carried out with four FWAG employees, representatives of two farming organisations, and six interviewees from conservation agencies and the RSPB. The most important documents used were four studies in which different aspects of the performance of FWAG and other conservation advice organisations had been evaluated. The details about the interviews and the literature are explained at the end of this chapter.

**Table 1:** Work procedure

Question	chapters	Work step	Used resources
What motives have farmers to ask for conservation advice?	4.1 General requirements for farmers' satisfaction	Motives of farmers are set up	Interviews, 4 evaluation studies of conservation advice
Which aims do conservation agencies want to be achieved with conservation advice?	4.2 General requirements conservation aims	Aims of the conservation agencies are set up	Interviews, 4 evaluation studies of conservation advice
What are the general requirements that any conservation advice agency needs to achieve?	4.1 and 4.2	General requirements for farmers' satisfaction are derived Gen. requ. for aims of conservation agencies are derived	
Does FWAG achieve the general requirements with regard to the farmers satisfaction and which qualities are relevant for that?	5.1 Analysis - farmers satisfaction	Analysis of farmers' satisfaction is carried through	Interviews, 4 evaluation studies of conservation advice
How can the different aspects be interpreted?	5.1 Discussion	Discussions	
Does FWAG achieve the general requirements with regard to the conservation aims and which qualities are relevant for that?	5.2 Analysis - conservation aims	Analysis of achievement of conservation aims carried through	Interviews, 4 evaluation studies of conservation advice
How can the different aspects be interpreted?	5.2 Discussion	Discussions	
How is FWAG financed and what are strengths and weaknesses with regard to a secure funding?	6 Finances	Financial analysis carr. through	Interviews, literature
Which conclusions can be drawn?	7 Conclusion	Conclusion	
Which recommendations can be given for establishment of conservation advice in Germany?	8 recommen dations Germany	Selected recommendations	

### Chapter 3: Remit and structure of FWAG

In chapter 3, details which are essential to understand the work of FWAG are given. They comprise FWAG's purpose, the historical background and recent drivers, as well as an overview of the present organisational structure. Two of FWAG's advice instruments are also explained.

### Chapter 4: General requirements for the success of conservation advice

In chapter 4, three questions are answered

1. What motivates the farmers to ask for conservation advice?
2. Which aims do the 'conservation agencies'<sup>5</sup> want to be achieved through the delivery of conservation advice?
3. Which results does a conservation advice agency need to achieve so that the advice is successful in fulfilling the reasons and motives of the farmers and in accomplishing the aims of the conservation agencies?

Chapter 4.1 deals with the first question and chapter 4.2 with the second. The two chapters each have several sub-chapters, in which the farmers' motives and the aims of the conservation agencies are determined. The farmers' motives and the aims of the conservation agencies are derived from the studies mentioned above in this chapter and complemented by the interviewees' statements.

The answers to the third question are several 'general requirements'. They are derived from the answers to the questions 1 and 2 and are written at the end of each sub-chapter of the chapter 4.1 and 4.2. The 'general requirements' describe the indicators of success for any organisation providing conservation advice. For the rest of the thesis, the general requirements serve as a standard by which FWAG's success is measured.

The 'general requirements' are divided into two sections:

- Chapter 4.1: General requirements in relation to the farmers' satisfaction with the advice.
- Chapter 4.2: General requirements in relation to the conservation agencies' satisfaction and the achievement of environmental aims.

### Chapter 5: Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of FWAG

In chapter 5, there are three further questions to be answered:

4. How does FWAG go about meeting the general requirements and which qualities and skills are regarded as necessary to achieve them?
5. Are the farmers and the conservationists satisfied with FWAG's achievements?
6. Which strengths and weaknesses has FWAG in relation to meeting the general requirements?

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<sup>5</sup> See glossary

Chapter 5 is divided up into two parts, according to chapter 4. In chapter 5.1, the questions 4, 5, and 6 are analysed on the basis of the farmers' satisfaction with the advice. In chapter 5.2, the same is done for the achievement of conservation aims and the conservation agencies' satisfaction. The information used to answer the questions 4 and 5 is taken from the above mentioned studies and from the interviews.

At the end of each sub-chapter of 5.1 and 5.2, the results of the former analysis are discussed and evaluated with regard to FWAG's strengths and weaknesses.

#### Chapter 6 FWAG's sources of financing

In chapter 6, FWAG's financial situation and its important sources of income are briefly explained. The information for this is taken from FWAG's financial statements, from the interviews and the studies mentioned at the end of the chapter. Finally it is discussed which of FWAG's qualities contribute to or hamper that its financing works.

#### Chapter 7 Summary of discussions

Here a table presents the key findings of the discussions to every analysis chapter. This enables a good overview of the general requirements, FWAG's performance and its qualities and skills.

#### Chapter 8 Conclusion

In the conclusion, the key findings of the single discussions from chapter 5.1 and 5.2 are drawn together to answer the three questions which this thesis has set out to answer.

#### Chapter 8 Selected recommendations for more conservation advice in Germany

This chapter provides a brief list of selected recommendations what people and institutions who intend to establish more conservation advice in Germany should pay attention to. The aspects are drawn from the overall impressions the author got from the work about FWAG. The recommendations are not backed up by thorough investigations about conservation advice in Germany, but only by the knowledge the author has from the four above mentioned workshops.

#### Glossary:

The glossary has a particular significance in this thesis, since specialist terms are defined in a way which might differ to how they are commonly used in England.

#### The references and its limitations

##### Literature

The availability of literature on the questions of this thesis was very limited. The reference list of the available literature for this thesis was presented to Michael Winter, Professor at the

University of Exeter, who is widely regarded as an expert in the relevant research on conservation advice in Britain. He provided assurance that the list had ‘no glaring omissions’.

The literature, from which the general requirements were derived, was largely the same as the literature which was used to analyse FWAG’s performance. There are four evaluations of FWAG and other advisory agencies:

KNIGHT (2005): 64 farmers in receipt of advice by FWAG on a Farm Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>6</sup> (Farm-BAP) have been questioned about their satisfaction. The survey has been carried out by FWAG. It has been considered not to take this study into account since it could have been biased towards FWAG, but TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) from English Nature confirmed that it was a good report which was relatively objective.

ECOTEC (2000): Economic Evaluation of free advice programmes. The data was collected through postal questionnaires to 5000 farmers, interviews with advice recipients, advisers and other stakeholders. Furthermore, it contained an analysis of the written advice, which had been given to the farmers after the advice.

MORRIS & WINTER (1999): 30 farmers, who were in the process of implementing a Farm-BAP and 10 FWAG advisers had been interviewed about their satisfaction with the Farm-BAP. MORRIS & WINTER (2002) is a publication about the same study.

WINTER et al. (1996): Socio-Economic Evaluation of Free Conservation Advice Provided to Farmers in England by ADAS and FWAG. The study is the oldest though the most substantial one. Four surveys were carried out: face-to-face interviews with 329 conservation advice recipients, 202 telephone interviews with farmers not in receipt of conservation advice, an analysis of the content of the written advice sent to farmers after the advice visits. In addition, a site assessment on a sub-sample of 70 farmers with whom interviews had been carried out before. WINTER (1996) is a publication about the same study.

The study by WINTER et al. (1996) was carried out in 1993/94. Although some results might be a little out of date, there is no study which is as comprehensive as this. ECOTEC (2000) deals with more farmers, but the results relevant for the issues discussed in this thesis are less detailed.

### Semi-structured expert-interviews

A large part of the information for this thesis was obtained through ten face-to-face semi-structured expert interviews in England. Four of the interviewees were staff members of FWAG. Two managers were chosen because they were supposed to have a good overview of the whole organisation. These were the director FWAG England - Michael Woodhouse and the former technical director FWAG - Richard Knight. The advisers to be interviewed should have worked for FWAG for a long time and should have been regarded as successful. Knight suggested Ben Thorne in Somerset and Janet Lomas in Herefordshire and they agreed to an interview.

Two interviews were held with representatives from farming organisations: Fiona Howie from the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Ben Underwood from the Country Land and Business Association (CLA). These organisations were chosen because it was believed that they best represent farming interests in the context of conservation.

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<sup>6</sup> See glossary

From the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Rural Development Service (RDS), English Nature and the Environment Agency, those officials should be interviewed who were responsible for the contact with FWAG in their organisation. One interview was with three interviewees in DEFRA and the RDS: Diane Spence, Alan Hooper (RDS), and Emma Claire (DEFRA). From English Nature James Trueman was interviewed and from the Environment Agency James Letts.

In addition one interview was held with a representative from a non-government conservation organisation, Peter Robertson from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Apart from these interviews, several shorter telephone interviews were held.

Before the meetings, the interview partners received individually tailored questionnaires. The questionnaires dealt with different blocks of questions: for the FWAG employees, these were:

1. The perceived satisfaction of the farmers with FWAG
2. The perceived satisfaction of the conservation agencies with FWAG
3. The qualities and skills necessary for good conservation advisers
4. The financing of FWAG

For the representatives of the farming organisations, the question blocks were:

1. The farmers' motives and reasons to ask for advice from FWAG
2. The farmers' satisfaction with FWAG
3. The qualities and skills of conservation advisers

For the representatives of the conservation agencies and the RSPB, the question blocks were:

1. The way the conservation agency /the RSPB co-operates with FWAG
2. The conservation agency's /the RSPB 's satisfaction with FWAG's work

The questionnaires are in the appendix.

### 3 FWAG's remit, structure and advice instruments

#### 3.1 FWAG's purpose

The aim of FWAG, as written down in its English mission statement reads as follows:

“FWAG exists to provide our farmers, landowners and other clients with the best opportunity for environmental gain through cost effective, quality solutions.” (FWAG 2005b)

The objectives of the charity are to provide:

- Farmers and landowners with the best independent technical advice and practical guidance on the enhancement of landscape heritage and wildlife, and the management of resource and recreation through environmentally responsible farming.
- Government and other partner organisations with a cost effective, independent and nationwide advisory network to convert policy into practice (FWAG 2005b, 4ff).

From FWAG's foundation in 1969 until now, the organisation's avowed aim was to demonstrate to farmers and conservationists alike that nature conservation needs not to be incompatible with modern and viable farming. FWAG has always championed the approach that the threats to the environment which come from intensification of farming can best be ameliorated by giving advice and setting incentives to farmers in order to encourage them to modify their management. FWAG starts from the assumption that there are farmers who have an interest to conserve their farm environment and that they will carry out more environmentally friendly farming practices if they know how to (COX et al. 1990, 2).

#### 3.2 Historical context and recent drivers of FWAG's development

The significance of information and advice for farmers has long been recognized. Advice free of charge on technical agricultural matters was available to farmers from the Ministry of Agriculture from the late 1940s on. The Countryside Act 1968 obliged all government departments to “have regard to conservation in exercising their functions”. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) responded to this obligation by considering to develop conservation advice to farmers. However, it took until 1981 that it was offered on a regular basis (WINTER et al. 1996, 7ff).

National FWAG was formed in 1969 by the National Farmers Union (NFU), the Country Landowners' (and later: Business) Association (CLA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Nature Conservancy. The aim was “to bring together agriculturalists and conservationists to promote mutual understanding and co-operation” (COX et al. 1990, 2).

FWAG's focus on delivering direct advice on a local county level did not develop strongly until the 1980s. Their primary task lasting approximately until 1975 was to bring together leaders of the farming community and the conservationists to figure out practical modes to reconcile both groups' interests. FWAG was then, and remains until today, a voluntary sector body, albeit with several statutory bodies in its committees. By the end of 1975, nine local FWAG groups were in existence. (ibid, 7f).



In 1971, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) was born, a state organisation to exercise the agricultural ministry's advice function. This organisation is key to the advice policy developed by MAFF, which was until recently one of the important bases of FWAG's work. ADAS responded to the increased demand from farmers to receive advice on conservation (ibid, 7f).

A major environmental milestone was the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It required MAFF to include conservation advice into its advice provision. Much of the resulting work was jointly undertaken by ADAS and FWAG. In the aftermath of the 1981 Act, a farming organisation with a conservation remit such as FWAG was a brilliant example to thrust into the political limelight to prove that both government and the farming community cared for the environment. Hence firmer financial commitments from different government departments enabled FWAG to grow. 1980 most rural counties had their local FWAG. Most of them were run by the volunteers. Only two had a full-time officer and one a part-time adviser. (ibid, 7).

In 1986 the Agricultural Act 1986 was passed. It increased the ministry's responsibility for conservation. After the Act, conservation affairs gained importance and started to be recognized more widely as an integral part of mainstream farming. Another result of the Act was the introduction of charging for agricultural advice. The logic was that farmers should pay advice themselves if they needed help with making their business more viable. Only that part of the advice which would offer benefits to public goods was kept free of charge (ibid, 8).

Boosted by the state support, many county FWAGs could take on specialized staff and professionalise their work. Both ADAS and FWAG got formal contracts with the agricultural ministry which specified the advice they should deliver. In that way MAFF would meet the cost of the advice which was free to the farmers.

The development of agri-environment schemes was vital to FWAG. The "Environmentally Sensitive Areas" scheme (ESA) started regular operation in 1987. The objective of the scheme was to maintain valuable landscape, wildlife and historical interest within the designated areas of national importance. In 1996, the Countryside Stewardship scheme (CSS) was launched. It should encourage farmers outside the ESAs to conserve, enhance or re-create - and not only maintain - important landscape types (ECOSCOPE 2003, 28).

Following the Rural Development Regulation 1257/99, a new direction for agri-environment schemes with gradually increasing funding was announced by MAFF. "As an effect", BETTLEY-SMITH, the former Chief Executive of FWAG, wrote in 2000 "by 2006/07 the Government spending will be double the current level." (BETTLEY-SMITH 2000, 92). This expectation must have given a certain planning reliability to look confidently into the agri-environmental future and enlarge FWAG. And in fact, between 2000 and 2004 FWAG's turnover rose from around £ 3 million (ibid, 95) to £ 5.8 million (FWAG 2005b).

An earlier international development of some impact on FWAG was the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. A direct result of the conference was the development of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 1994. This is a national plan to target and implement habitat and species conservation (BETTLEY-SMITH, 2000, 92) Further down this chapter it is explained how FWAG responded to the development of the BAP.

A further strong driver for the growth of FWAG in recent years was the increased demand of farmers for help with obeying to environmental standards. This became more important with the emergence of quality assurance schemes from supermarkets or processors and with a

growing awareness of the need to comply with agricultural regulations (Smith 2005, pers. comm.).

There has been a general increase in the number of advisers and subsequent visits in England. In 1993/94 FWAG made 3,500 visits, compared with 4,723 in 1998/99. The number of advisers rose from 35 in 1994 to 54 in 1999 (WINTER et al. 2000, 39). In 2003/04 there then 110 advisers made just under 10,000 visits to farmers in England, Scotland and Wales, covering over 1 ¼ million hectares of farmland (FWAG 2004b, 5). In January 2006, FWAG had 120 advisers in 66 local groups and a total staff of 190 in the whole of the UK (FWAG 2006).

### 3.3 FWAG's current structure

FWAG has a headquarter in Stoneleigh in the county Warwickshire, a regional management on the basis of the eight English government regions and local county groups. The organisation is a Registered Charity with a Board of Trustees and an Advisory Council. Most advisers work in England. 25 work in Scotland, 3 in Wales, and one in Northern Ireland<sup>7</sup>.

The **Board of Trustees** for UK FWAG is the ultimate decision committee of the charity. The Board is responsible for developing FWAG's policy and managing its affairs. The trustees can sanction the management proposals of the four country directors of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are 15 trustees who are elected at the Annual General Meeting to which all FWAG members are invited. They meet six to eight times a year (FWAG 2005c). The job purpose of the trustees is

“To further the aims and objectives of the organisation, in keeping within its charitable status” (FWAG, no year a, 1).

Their main tasks are

“To take part in formulating and regularly reviewing the strategic aims of the organisation;

With other trustees to ensure that the policy and practices of the organisation are in keeping with its aims;

With other trustees to ensure that the organisation functions within the legal and financial requirements of a charitable organisation and strives to achieve best practice” (FWAG, no year a, 1).

The **UK and the England head quarter** are both in Stoneleigh. The UK team deals with the accounts and finance, personnel and wages, and the IT administration for all the four country FWAGs. The FWAG England head office managerial staff provides management support and guidance to the adviser network. They work in national affairs with decision-makers and partner organisations, such as DEFRA, English Nature, the Environment Agency, the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts, and the farming organisations NFU and CLA. The head office bids for national funding, develops and adapts the general strategy for the advice delivery, administers membership and monitoring, devises national publicity documents and organises staff training (FWAG 2005c).

The **regional managers** are the line managers between the headoffice and the county groups. They are the line managers of the local FWAG teams and shall support them with the

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<sup>7</sup> The numbers were taken from the FWAG website by counting the advisers listed for each county in Scotland and Northern Ireland on the 17.01.06. The number for Wales is from Knight (2005, pers. comm.)

business planning. They communicate messages from headoffice down to the advisers and are in charge of the single group matters. They have the last word in who will be employed, step in and help if problems arise locally. The regional managers also help with the funding of the groups by identifying and negotiating commercial contracts with appropriate regional bodies, partner organisations and local authorities. Furthermore, they shall cross-fertilize skills and communicate between the FWAG groups to share strengths and weaknesses and to achieve best practice across the region (FWAG 2005c).

The actual advice work is done in the **county groups**. The size of the groups varies. The groups are very independent and do not all prioritise the same issues in their advice. The partners they cooperate with and the financing differs from county to county. Historically the local FWAG groups only consisted of volunteers and did not have employed advisers. Still the groups have a volunteer committee, consisting mostly of four people. Purpose of the committees is to create and sustain local support and a networking system to the advisers to root them in the local community. The committee members, as well as almost all the volunteers, are or were farmers or have some practical connection with farming (DEFRA, no year a; LOMAS, 2005, pers. comm.).

The **Advisory Council (AC)** “acts as a forum for advising the Board of Trustees on the policies forwarded for consideration and also to look longer-term at conservation needs in general. It meets twice per year” (FWAG 2005c, 2). It comprises members nominated by FWAG's partner organisations and up to 10 FWAG County Chairmen (FWAG, no year b, 1). There are 18 representatives from partner organisations, representing: The Royal Agricultural Society of England, Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, RSPB, DEFRA, English Nature, Environment Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Agency, NFU, Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department, WWF, and Rural Development Agency. The Advisory Council is a forum for them to “give policy steering to the [FWAG] Management Committee in the light of developments in countryside policy and the agriculture industry. The AC should be the main forum in which partner organisations discuss together, and with representatives from FWAG itself, how they would like to see FWAG's policies and practices develop and what part they believe FWAG should play in delivering improved wildlife and landscape conservation on the far.” (FWAG, no year b, 2).

### 3.4 Landwise and Farm Biodiversity Action Plan

Two of the advice delivery mechanisms used by FWAG, “Landwise” and the “Farm Biodiversity Action Plan” (Farm-BAP) have been important to FWAG's development in the past ten years. Landwise has been the common delivery format for the free advice visits funded by MAFF and DEFRA (WINTER 1996) and the Farm-BAP is an instrument developed by FWAG, English Nature and private enterprises which was lauded widely for bringing the issue of biodiversity to the farming community and satisfying the farmers (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.). To know them is important to understand the way FWAG serves both the farmers and aims at conservation.

#### Landwise:

In 1995, FWAG nationally restructured its advice delivery and launched the new advisory service ‘Landwise’. FWAG had noticed farmers becoming confused by the range of environmental advice. They therefore clarified and categorised their advice and re-launched

their service for the whole of Britain in a co-ordinated, consistent and repeatable form (WINTER 1996, 243).

There was a reporting format of Landwise which provides for the Landwise Report, Review and Plan. All were meant to deal with the whole farm, but differently detailed. It was vital to the Landwise idea that the farmer always received a written document of advice to help him/her recall all of what had been spoken about during the visit. Although a reporting format was used, there was still substantial flexibility to tailor the advice to each farmer's situation (ECOTEC 2000, 13). Depending on the level of detail, maps, aerial photographs and diagrams were attached to the written advice (FWAG no year c).

The Landwise *Reports* were drawn up after a half-day farm visit free of charge. The *Reports* gave an outline action plan based on the farmer's goals. The adviser looked at environmental impacts of everyday farm operations and highlighted environmental assets on the farm. Zero or low budget conservation works and grant aid opportunities were identified. Farmers who wished for an update of the Landwise *Report* could receive a Landwise *Review* or a Landwise *Plan*. These often included an application for the agri-environment scheme. For the *Review*, FWAG looked at priority areas in detail, considered the benefits of introducing new technology and detailed work guides were drawn up. The *Plan* provided an 'in depth study' of all wildlife habitats on the farm, gave a detailed description of the environmental impact of farm operations and offered detailed long and short term management suggestions. Both *Review* and *Plan* would carry a modest charge (ibid).

The development of Landwise was closely linked with the delivery of the free advice visits which the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) funded. Every farmer could get a FWAG 'first' visit free of charge, and FWAG would get the money from MAFF. The result of such a visit would be a Landwise Report (ECOTEC 2000). After three years, a farmer was entitled to get another free 'first' visit (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). In practice, the free visits with the Landwise Report were used very frequently. The updates were only taken advantage of occasionally because the farmers were reluctant to pay for them (SMITH 2005, pers. comm.).

Presently, FWAG is on the point of revising Landwise and offering a new 'Landmanager' advice service (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.).

### The delivery of the Farm Biodiversity Action Plans

The Farm Biodiversity Action Plan (Farm-BAP) is one of the instruments, FWAG used to deliver conservation advice. The Farm-BAP is a tool which was developed in a project with participation of FWAG, the supermarket chain Sainsbury's and English Nature in 1997. The aim of the Farm-BAPs was to meet the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets at the farm level (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 653).

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan spells out goals for the conservation of 391 Species and 45 habitats. The implementation of the BAP is partly based on the principle of partnerships between public, private and conservation organisation actors. There are local BAPs which define local biodiversity targets and conform mostly to the county boundaries. "Their preparation has incorporated representatives of the agricultural community, but the extent to which this process has enabled biodiversity to reach a wide constituency of farmers is questionable. Thus, the idea of a farm-specific BAP is significant" (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 655).

The reason for Sainsbury's to become involved in Biodiversity was that it wanted to reinforce its corporate environmental policy and to establish the attitude among customers that it was truly caring for the environment and for the safety of food. As part of its Living Landscape initiative, it wanted to encourage suppliers to positively manage habitats and biodiversity. Therefore, Sainsbury's approached FWAG, seeking assistance on the development of a mechanism to deliver biodiversity on farms (ibid).

The Farm-BAPs were launched in 1997. Sainsbury's gave the major funding for the preparation of the plans. FWAG delivered the advice and English Nature was the public partner to provide additional funding and support in kind of environmental information (ibid). In 1999, English Nature granted additional funds. With that money, the FWAG Farmland Biodiversity Project, was started to run in parallel for five years with the Sainsbury's agreement (ibid, 18).

In the literature (KNIGHT 2005, MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 1999), no clear conservation aim for the both Farm-BAP projects could be found. The most important objectives identified by respondents of the MORRIS & WINTER Farm-BAP survey (1999, 5) were:

- to raise the farmers' awareness of target species,
- to enhance the farm for wildlife

The overall concept of the Farm-BAP is that farmers get an advice visit from a FWAG adviser, during which the farmer and the adviser choose four species of conservation concern, which can be enhanced on the farm. The written outcome of the visit is the Farm-BAP. It gives details on the habitat requirements of the species and tells the farmer how to enhance the habitats. Both participation and implementation of the proposals for the target species is voluntary to the farmers, and Sainsbury's does not pay for the implementation (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 7).

FWAG devised a monitoring system to show that the action taken led to measurable improvements for target species. Furthermore, FWAG felt that showing farmers what they had achieved was the best encouragement to them, and would raise their ambition and performance (KNIGHT 2005).

Until September 2005, 868 often highly intensive farms with over 102,000 hectare received Farm-BAPs (ibid, 18). Two of the studies used for this work evaluate the success of the Farm-BAPs: KNIGHT 2005 and MORRIS & WINTER 1999 (respectively MORRIS & WINTER 2002, which is the publication about the earlier study)

## 4 General requirements for the success of conservation advice

There are some performances which every conservation advice agency needs to accomplish in order to satisfy the farmers' needs and achieve conservation aims with their advice. To develop these general requirements it is necessary to determine what the farmers expect from conservation advice and what the government departments and agencies want to be achieved through the advice.

### 4.1 General requirements for the farmers' satisfaction

Farmers have different motives and reasons to be interested in conservation advice. In most cases, several reasons in combination cause the farmers to contact a conservation adviser (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). In the Economic Evaluation of Free Advice Programmes by ECOTEC, the different levels of interest which farmers had for selected types of information and which caused them to demand conservation advice, were determined (ECOTEC 2000, 45). This can be seen in Table 2.

Availability of grants (for conservation)	Conservation principles	Farm conservation features <sup>8</sup>	Sources of further information	Farm conservation management plan <sup>9</sup>	Compliance with assurance scheme <sup>10</sup>	Other (not further detailed)
3.0	3.0	2.9	2.1	2.0	1.7	3.3

**Table 2:** Level of interest as a reason to ask for conservation advice (ECOTEC 2000, 45)

The level of interest is ranked on a scale being 1 = none, 2 = limited amount, 3 = significant amount, 4 = in depth.

#### 4.1.1 Financial benefits

The main reason for farmers to ask for conservation advice is their expectation of a financial benefit. In the *Economic Evaluation of Free Advice Programmes* it was found that “farmers declared that one of their chief reasons for contacting the advice programme was to find out about grants” (ECOTEC 2000, 45). MORRIS & WINTER (2002, 659) analysed the reasons for farmers to commission advisers to draw up a Farm Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>11</sup> for their holding. It became apparent that “although environmental considerations, such as building on an existing interest in, and actions for, conservation ranked highly, economic considerations were dominant” (ibid). Table 2 shows that interest for “available grants” ranks highly, but it is not the single most important reason for farmers to ask for conservation advice. Interest in “conservation principles” was equally important and “other” reasons (which were not detailed in the report) surpassed both.

<sup>8</sup> Probably, the authors of the study mean the conservation of landscape features, e.g. hedges, ponds, orchards, etc.

<sup>9</sup> probably, the authors mean a whole-farm plan, which, according to Winter et al 1996, considers the conservation of landscape features over a wide range, not necessarily all, of the areas of a farm.

<sup>10</sup> Quality assurance schemes are run by the food industry to assure customers of high food quality. Some schemes offer a premium to the farmers who take part.

<sup>11</sup> . See for more in chapter 3 and glossary

In a qualitative study about farmers' perception of the environment and conservation issues, it was found that "farmers view landscape as a factor of production and a source of profit (...)" (NEWBY 1985). "For many farmers the 'existence' value of nature, without a productive use [is] not really considered. (...) There [has] to be some return from the market for their conservation, either from shooting, diversified enterprises (...) or a less discernible benefit from tourism (...)" (MCHENRY 1997, 1046).

The interviewed FWAG advisers stated that the initial stimulus of most farmers to ask for conservation advice was to get access to the agri-environment schemes offered by DEFRA. There were two schemes, the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and the Countryside Stewardship (CSS). They have been replaced by the new Environmental Stewardship (ES), which was launched in March 2005 (DEFRA 2005 a, b). A FWAG adviser said that until last year, about 50 % of the farmers who contacted her, wanted advice about how to enter one of the old agri-environment schemes. Now, about 80 % of the farmers' requests are about getting access to the new scheme (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). Some farmers intend to use the schemes to facilitate work that they want to carry out anyway. Others see them rather as a means to seek alternative way of farm income (ECOTEC 2000, 44).

Apart from the Environmental Stewardship, DEFRA offers two woodland grant schemes. English Nature has the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme for its Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and some counties have their own schemes to reward work which is not eligible for grants under DEFRA's or English Nature's programmes (KLÖPPER 2006).

There are also further alternative sources of income which farmers can get access to through conservation advice, for example income from tourism, hunting, fishing and farm shops. According to an adviser, it can be beneficial for the farmers, if potential customers have a positive view on what the farmers do. The farmers perceive that a way to improve the view of the public on farmers is to show them that farmers are committed to conservation (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

Quality assurance schemes also cause some farmers to get in touch with conservation advisers. The schemes demonstrate to customers in supermarkets that the farmers take greater efforts to produce food of a high quality than they would be legally obliged to. Some schemes offer a premium to the complying farmers. Another reason for farmers to participate in the schemes is that they might think that through the participation they can secure their market position as a supplier to the company who runs the scheme. To participate in the scheme, farmers must adhere to certain quality standards, some of which concern nature conservation. The conservation advice can help farmers to understand, and comply with, the conservation related standards (ECOTEC 2000, 44f; MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 660; LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.).

Another benefit which farmers can get from conservation advice is the saving of operating costs. This is rarely the initial reason to contact a conservation adviser because farmers interested in that mostly contact an agronomist. However, when the farmers get involved with conservation advisers, it often comes to light that there are potentials to save costs through more effective application of fertilizer, manure, and pesticides and other resources (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

A further advantage farmers expect from conservation advice is to get information about the commercial implications which would come if they changed their management according to the advisers' recommendations. This knowledge would help the farmers to make informed

decisions about their farm management. Conservation management can, for instance have an impact on the farmers' work routine. For example, the participation in an agri-environment scheme option which aims at an extensified grassland management will possibly influence the forage supply of the farm. The advisers need to see such connections (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.).

From these motives and reasons, the following general requirement can be deduced:

**General requirement I:**

**The conservation advice must demonstrate to the farmers how to obtain additional income.**

**Currently, farmers can acquire direct financial support mainly through advice on**

- **the agri-environment scheme**
- **quality assurance schemes**

**Indirectly, they can profit from advice on**

- **how to get an improved market position by getting into or remaining in quality assurance schemes or from alternative farm activities.**
- **In addition, advice might result in cost savings.**

**Furthermore, the advisers must have regard for the commercial implications on the working routine, which a change of management could bring about.**

#### 4.1.2 The farmers' interest in conservation

##### The farmers' motives

Some farmers seek conservation advice because they want to enhance the wildlife on their farm. According to the Economic Evaluation of Free Advice Programmes, recipients of conservation advice "were clearly very interested in finding out about general conservation principles and specific features on their farms (...). [They either] had a specific feature on their farm that they want[ed] advice on, such as a pond that needed some attention.

Alternatively, they were interested in conservation and wanted to learn about how to improve their farming practices, usually at lowest cost" (ECOTEC 2000, 44). In Table 2 it can be seen that the level of interest for "Conservation principles", "Farm conservation features" and "Farm conservation management plan" ranked fairly high (3.0/2.9/2.0) (ibid).

The generally high interest of farmers in conservation is also confirmed in the findings of a survey, carried out in 2001 in a region in the north of Germany. When the survey was carried out, no conservation advice was available in that area. All farmers of the organic farmers' association 'Bioland' in Lower Saxony were asked in written form whether they would like to be given conservation advice. The advice should be voluntary and free of charge. 81 % of those responding (30 % of the questionnaires were returned) stated yes. The farmers were asked the question, which contents they were interested in. "Specific conservation ideas for my farm" ranked highest (70 % of the responding wishing that), followed by "information concerning grant aid" (69 %) (MEYERHOFF 2004, 19). However, it should be mentioned that organic farmers are presumably more inclined to be interested in nature conservation than their conventional colleagues.



The FWAG advisers who were interviewed for this thesis stated that many farmers felt it was their responsibility to be the custodians of the countryside. Many farmers were interested in conservation “from the goodness of their heart” (THORNE, 2005, pers. comm.). Another adviser said that all the farmers loved their farm, and therefore wanted to do something good for the environment on their ground (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). The former technical director of FWAG said: “They want to get the balance right between farming and wildlife. They want to enhance the farm by small conservation works, like hedge planting or digging a pond. And they want to learn about the wildlife on their farm” (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). A representative from the National Farmers Union (NFU) said that “farmers are often very proud of the wildlife they have and if an adviser tells them the name and habits of the species and they can do something to enhance them which fits into their business, then they like to do it”. The NFU officer also thought that if the farmers saw that their neighbours had a lot of species, they were sometimes goaded to doing something themselves. “Often the kids or the wife like the flowers or the birds on the fields or they think the public sees it” (HOWIE 2005, pers. comm.). The FWAG advisers estimated that around 10 - 20 % of the farmers were very keen on conservation and worked for it even without financial incentives. About 60 %, or a bit more would engage in it if the remuneration was sufficient. The remaining 20 – 25 %, however, would not be interested in conservation (KNIGHT, THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

The existing interest and commitment of some farmers in conservation is also confirmed in a survey of farmers who took part in the FWAG Farmland Biodiversity Project<sup>12</sup>: “The farmers’ own interest became a potentially valuable tool; individuals expressed expertise in, and enthusiasm for bats, otters, butterflies, wading birds and game species (amongst others) and offered their expertise and local experience to support their colleagues” (KNIGHT 2005, 26).

### The farmers’ perception of nature and conservation

Attention should be drawn to the fact that the perception of nature and its conservation can differ substantially between farmers and conservationists. Although both would express the motivation to properly enhance the farm environment, farmers’ opinion about the means to achieve this can be at odds with the conservationists’ view. The following quote strikingly expresses the contradictory conclusions from farmers and conservationists viewing the same landscape: “(...) this same Wensleydale landscape which afforded the farmer such pleasure and self-satisfaction was also described by an officer of the National Park Authority (...) as having been ruined by modern agricultural practices and technology” (MCEACHERN 1992, 159). It is important for a conservation adviser to know that the views of farmers and conservationists on conservation can differ. The adviser must adapt his/her behaviour towards the farmer to the farmer’s attitude.

MCHENRY (1997) investigated how farmers perceive nature and conservation. The view of many farmers on nature was found to be exploitative because they work with nature. They believe conservation should have an economic benefit for them. Notwithstanding the major changes of technology and management, the farmers still see themselves as being in partnership with and caring for nature. At the same time they never feel free of nature’s influence, and express to work in a constant power struggle against nature. This is reflected in the expressions that agricultural land is ‘reclaimed’ or ‘improved’. Farmers feel that nature

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<sup>12</sup> The aim of this project is to draw up Farm Biodiversity Action Plans for farmers. For further explanation see chapter 3

recovers quickly once cultivation ceases. In the farmers' perception, a nice landscape is therefore where farming is successful and nature under control. MCHENRY suggests that this should not only be interpreted as a mere economic view. It also exemplifies the way in which farmers are emotionally attached to their farm (MCHENRY 1997).

Farmers are aware of easily recognizable animals, especially the pretty and appealing ones, and they are happy to enhance their habitats. This holds true especially where the species complement or at least do not conflict with the farming practices. Unsurprisingly, species which are perceived to be pests are often not seen as entitled for conservation. In many farmers' construction, conservation means to look after the land and to keep it in a good, tidy fit - which is what they see as farming. Simultaneously, many farmers hold another interpretation of conservation, which is something separate from farming and which would therefore need to be remunerated if farmers were to do it (MCHENRY 1997).

Many farmers have a negative picture of conservationists. Prevailing opinions include that conservationists would not understand farmers and would interfere with farmers wherever they could. They were also believed to be responsible for increased bureaucracy and to be know-it-alls. Often farmers have a tendency to believe bad myths about conservationists although, or maybe because, they have very limited contact with them (MCHENRY 1997). "The belief that they are criticised by a range of pressure groups, combined with the self-image of a misunderstood minority (NEWBY et al. 1981), makes it unsurprising, that farmers were inclined to believe 'scare stories' about their critics, whatever their own experiences [were]. One worry expressed was that, if conservationists were invited to the farm once, (...) they would keep returning. The biggest fear, however, was that conservationists would see something of interest and designate an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), which was seen as the manifestation of the conservationists' power over farmers" (ibid, 1049). Many farmers do not understand the conservationists beliefs about conservation. "This is particularly the case where less familiar or noncharismatic species are concerned". (...) The lack of understanding (...) turned more to antipathy when the aims of conservationists were at odds with those of the farmers" (ibid, 1047).

MCHENRY emphasises further that there is "a power struggle in the countryside over which group is seen as reflecting and representing the interests of the countryside, and whose knowledge is seen as 'true' (...). Farmers may consider that they were involved in a confrontation between their 'farming' knowledge of the countryside and the conservationists' knowledge which threatens it. Conservationists were seen as denying value to farmers' specialist knowledge. In the same way, farmers derided the conservationists' specialist knowledge" (MCHENRY 1997, 1047). To be conscious of this relationship and the potential reluctance of farmers to accept knowledge from outsiders is essential to conservation advisers.

There are two general requirement which can be evolved from this chapter:

**General requirement II:**

**Conservation advisers need to help the farmers to achieve their personal conservation aims. This includes**

- **informing them on those conservation questions they want to be answered and**
- **advising them on how best to implement their personal conservation projects.**

**General requirement III:**

**The advisers need to**

- **be aware of the fact that many farmers have a bad image of conservationists and are not willing to accept advice from them;**
- **have regard for the farmers' personal attachment to and construction of nature and nature conservation;**
- **and behave in a way that the farmers develop a trusting relationship with them.**

**The advice should be voluntary, confidential, and independent from statutory power.**

#### 4.1.3 The perceived need to respond to public pressure

Farmers perceive a change in the public's view of their role in society. While seeing themselves still mainly as food producers, they realize that policy makers and the public have started to value also the non-productive impacts of agriculture. In this view, conservation is increasingly seen as part of the farmers' work (MCHENRY 1997, 1039). The farmers also feel that farming has fallen in the public's esteem to an all time low and they acknowledge that their commitment to environmental issues would improve their reputation. Therefore, the farmers' reason for doing conservation is often the result of public interest in the issue (ibid, 1045).

Also, the advisers state that many farmers feel that the public does not appreciate farming. They feel depicted as environmental polluters by the media, government departments, and conservation organisations. This issues a diffuse public pressure on them (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). One adviser explained that farmers told him that they were feeling direct community pressure. He mentioned especially that people press farmers because of incidents such as soil on the roads from wash-off after heavy rain fall. He said "farmers are no longer the majority in the villages, but the minority, and many people don't have much understanding of farming. Farmers feel the pressure form neighbours, people in the village, whom they meet when they pick up their children in the village school, or when they go to the pub" (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). This feeling of not being understood, for some farmers translates into a lack of confidence in their own values. Sometimes, the pressure developes when farmers feel that the people think they treat the environment badly. Many farmers who do good environmental work are aggrieved because they do conservation and nevertheless the farming industry is criticised. Apparently, they feel relieved when advisers come to them and reassure them that what they do is right (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE and KNIGHT thought that the public pressure was a "strong driver" to make farmers demand conservation advice.

Also in the FWAG Farmland Biodiversity Project, it came to light that farmers are aware of their reputation. In this project, farmers who supplied the Sainsbury's supermarket chain had a Farm Biodiversity Action Plan (Farm-BAP, see chapter 3) prepared by a FWAG adviser. For the retailer, this was a part of its corporate responsibility activity. The products of the farmers who had a Farm-BAP were not labelled to show the demonstrably successful biodiversity work. The farmers were disappointed that their efforts were not reflected by the products on the supermarket shelves because they wanted a public outlet for their positive work (KNIGHT 2005, 16ff).

The farmers' feelings to be exposed to public pressure and their wish to demonstrate their conservation activities lead to the following general requirement:

**General requirement IV:**

**The role successful advisers need to fulfill is to help the farmers to bear the public pressure which rests on the farming industry because the public perceives the farmers as environmental polluters and to give them ideas how to respond positively to the pressure.**

**The way to do this is**

- **to suggest feasible conservation works and**
- **to evoke a feeling of confidence in the farmers that the way they act is beneficial to the countryside.**
- **to assist the farmers in disseminating evidence of their activities in the media.**

#### 4.1.4 Assistance in complying with environmental regulations

Farmers perceive a strong regulatory pressure from agricultural regulations. Many farmers are confused about the various regulations. Some are not sure, which of them are relevant to their business and how to implement them. The NFU representative HOWIE said that the farmers were confused about the different campaigns coming from various government agencies on different issues. Examples were the cross compliance, the new waste regulation, the voluntary initiative, quality assurances, or the new Environmental Stewardship. Many farmers complained that they are flooded with paperwork (HOWIE 2005, pers. comm.).

Presently, the farmers are very concerned about the new cross compliance. From 1 January 2005, the Single Payment Scheme<sup>13</sup> replaced most former crop and livestock payments. Farmers have to demonstrate that they are keeping their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition and comply with a number of special legal requirements relating to the environment, public and plant health and welfare, as well as livestock identification and tracing. Most of the requirements only reinforce existing law. What is new is that the agricultural subsidies now depend on the compliance (DEFRA 2004a, 5). The complexity of the cross compliance creates the need for a lot of advice (HOWIE 2005, pers. comm.).

According to the NFU officer HOWIE (2005 pers. comm.), the farmers want to be informed which regulations they have to care about and which are less important for their farming operations. A FWAG adviser explains what the farmers ask from him: "Many want to know about the cross compliance, clean water, soil erosion, nutrients, and water framework directive. They ask us to help them the way through it, whether they are all right or breaching with anything" (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). In another county, the adviser said "the farmers feel environmental issues are something that is required of them, it becomes part of their job to meet certain environmental standards to avoid prosecution" (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). Some farmers feel the need to be informed about the regulations, because to be sure on what they know makes it easier for them to communicate with the Environment Agency staff. It gives them confidence to know facts about the conservation issues they talk about with the officials (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

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<sup>13</sup> see glossary

For the farmers' demand for information about environmental regulations, the following general requirement can be set up:

**General requirement V:**

**Conservation advisers need to inform farmers about**

- **which of the statutory agri-environmental regulations are relevant to their business,**
- **the contents, and**
- **the way to implement the statutory agri-environmental regulations in day to day work.**

**The advisers also need to make the farmers become confident in the environmental issues which they have to speak about with the staff of the conservation agencies.**

## 4.2 General requirements for the achievement of conservation aims

### 4.2.1 The government's policy aims concerning conservation advice

The British Government is legally obliged to have regard for the environment. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 puts the duty on every minister to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in exercising their functions (CROW ACT 2000).

The Public Service Agreements (PSA) show the aims of the British Government. They set out the government's priority targets that have to be met within a fixed period. The PSAs are an integral part of the government's public expenditure framework. They aim at delivering outcomes and help to ensure that the public services produce value for money. The targets, which are 110 altogether, show to the public what they can expect the government to deliver. Departments are required to report their performance publicly against targets twice a year, offering the public the information to judge how the government is doing. Each government department has its PSA. Those parts of DEFRA's PSA which are relevant for conservation advice, read as follows:

**“Aim:** Sustainable development, which means a better quality life for everyone, now and for generations to come, including:

- a better environment at home and internationally, and sustainable use of natural resources;
- economic prosperity through sustainable farming, fishing, food, water and other industries that meet consumers' requirements; and
- thriving economies and communities in rural areas and a countryside for all to enjoy” (HM TREASURY 2004, 33).

The following objective I directly relates to nature conservation:

**“Objective I:** Protect and improve the rural, urban, marine and global environment, and lead integration of these with other policies across government and internationally.

(...)

3. Care for our natural heritage, make the countryside attractive and enjoyable for all and preserve biological diversity by:

- reversing the long-term decline in the number of farmland birds by 2020, as measured annually against underlying trends; and
- bringing into favourable condition, by 2010, 95 % of all nationally important wildlife sites” (ibid).

The following objectives II, III and IV concern the social and economic domains which are an important background to nature conservation in the countryside.

**“Objective II:** Enhance opportunity and tackle social exclusion in rural areas.

4. Reduce the gap in productivity between the least well performing quartile of rural areas and the English median by 2008, demonstrating progress by 2006, and improve the accessibility of services for people in rural areas.

**Objective III:** Promote a sustainable, competitive and safe food supply chain which meets consumers’ requirements.

**Objective IV:** Promote sustainable, diverse, modern and adaptable farming through domestic and international actions.

5. Deliver more customer-focused, competitive and sustainable farming and food industries and secure further progress, via Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations, in reducing CAP trade-distorting support” (ibid).

DEFRA’s Public Service Agreement emphasizes a sustainable development and a sustainable farming. The objective I is directly relevant to conservation advice because conservation advice can be one instrument to help the government to achieve the objective. The objectives II, III and IV can rather be seen as providing a framework into which the contents of conservation advice must fit: All advice must have regard not only for the ecological but also for the economic and social dimension of sustainability. These objectives can be regarded as the wider policy aims in relation to conservation advice because they do not directly relate to conservation. Conservation advisers must, as far as possible, pursue these wider policy aims.

The Government’s Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food takes up the aim of a sustainable development and sets out a vision which details the necessary enhancement of the environment. In the Strategy it is written, “one of the biggest challenges facing us is the need to control diffuse water pollution from agriculture. (...) Agriculture is essential to the maintenance of our biodiversity and the rural environment contains a high proportion of our cultural heritage. It is important for recreation, for our economic and physical well being, and for our sense of local identity and history. Between the 1930s and 1980s, there were large scale losses of habitats, drainage of wetlands, reclamation of moorland and losses to many historic features in the UK. (...) Significant problems remain, including continued attrition of the historic environment, serious overgrazing in some upland areas, declines in the population of widespread species, and the loss of biodiversity within some surviving habitats” (DEFRA 2002, 24f).

The ecological dimension of sustainability concerning agriculture can be divided into the abiotic, biotic, and landscape-cultural sub-dimensions. The abiotic sub-dimension deals with issues such as the protection of soil, water and air, and the efficient use of energy. The

biological sub-dimension concerns species diversity, habitat diversity and genetic diversity. The third sub-dimension includes the maintenance of cultural landscapes and considerate land use methods (OPPERMANN 2004, 60f).

The formulation of a general requirement is not necessary at this point, because the contents of this chapter are incorporated in the general requirements VI and VII.

According to ALAN HOOPER, head of the Farm Advice Unit in the Rural Development Service, there is no list available that would give a generic statement concerning the conservation aims which the government pursues with conservation advice. DEFRA develops the aims which a conservation advice agency should pursue only when it agrees on a conservation advice contract with an advice body. Therefore, the author has set up the following general aims, and HOOPER orally agreed on their content.

Conservation advice aims at:

- raising the farmers' awareness and understanding of nature conservation;
- encouraging farmers to maintain, restore, and create:
  - habitats for the benefit of a biodiverse environment;
  - key landscape characteristics and possibilities to access the landscape for the public enjoyment;
- encouraging farmers to maintain and restore historical and archaeological features;
- encouraging farmers to protect the natural resources soil, water and air;
- In delivering this, the commercial and social implications which can come from a change in the farm management that the advisers recommended should be highlighted.

#### 4.2.1.1 The quality of the advice

To pursue the aims of conservation advice which are set out above, an advice giving agency would have to deliver a conservation advice of good quality. The following requirements are regarded as necessary and beneficial to a high quality conservation advice.

- **Encourage farmers to deliver a good conservation outcome:** The advisers need to make the farmers implement conservation that is really effective. For that, they may have to encourage the farmers to do a little bit more or different conservation than they initially wanted to. This can be regarded as important because though farmers may have the motivation to do conservation, they sometimes lack the knowledge on what is best for the species, habitats, and landscape on their farm. An adviser reported that sometimes farmers wanted to implement 'standardised' conservation measures. These are often not adapted to the locality of the farm. In some cases, these may even be detrimental, for example if a farmer wants to plant an orchard on valuable grassland. The conservation advisers should encourage the farmers to do the most effective conservation which is possible on their farm (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).
- **Advice on a comprehensive range of issues:** All conservation advisers should be able to advise on a comprehensive range of topics. Not all need to know everything about everything, but should have competencies in wildlife, biodiversity, and landscape, as well as in soil, water, nutrients and pesticides. A sectoral view of only

one or a few conservation resources is not good. All biodiversity, landscape, soil and water need to be seen as a whole. The priority problems on the farm and suitable solutions should quickly be grasped and combined to a strategic overview (LETTIS 2005 pers. comm.). Advisers should have regard for the wider policy aims of the conservation agencies by highlighting the potential commercial and social implications of a recommended environmental work. It can be appropriate to signpost farmers, whose requests exceed the conservation advisers expertise, to other advisers (CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.). This is important, because only if the different types of advice – conservation, technical and business – are more integrated, will the extension lead to a sustainable farming (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.).

- **Whole-farm advice:** In the literature (WINTER et al. 1996) and by the conservationists from DEFRA and English Nature, as well as by the FWAG managers (TRUEMAN, SPENCE, KNIGHT, all 2005 pers. comm.), it is viewed as positive if conservation advice is given on a whole farm basis, as opposed to advice on single landscape features. WINTER et al. do not give a reason for that preference. TRUEMAN pointed out that advantages of a whole-farm approach were that it enabled a broader view on the distribution of farmland wildlife across a wider area and allowed for a more strategic conservation management in terms of habitat connection. Further reasons were not mentioned; however, from other comments, it seems logical that many actors expect that with a whole-farm approach, the economic and ecological impacts which single conservation measures can have, can be taken into account and reacted upon. In German literature, it is also mentioned that a whole-farm approach favours the integration of different environmental aims with each other, e.g. to reduce nitrate leach and to increase biodiversity on agricultural land (WICKE 2005, 146).

A definition of whole-farm advice is that it “considers all aspects of farm management and the farming system including wildlife habitats, landscape features, environmental management (fertilizer and pesticide use, soil erosion, energy and water conservation, pollution control), and the farm business” (MORRIS & COBB 1993, 53). “As the authors of that piece concede, very few farm plans meet such a comprehensive target” (WINTER 1996, 58). Therefore WINTER (ibid) “classified advice as (...) whole-farm (...) if the advice covered a wide range, not necessarily all, of the potential areas of a farm.” Using that classification, a whole-farm advice for a 200 hectare arable farm “might refer to the existing hedges, woodland, field corners, tracks, headlands and arable fields, as well as suggesting a pond or beetle bank. By contrast, feature-specific advice might deal with just two features – hedges and a woodland – meaning that a large proportion of the holding is not covered by advice.” This type of whole-farm advice should be pursued by conservation advisers (ibid). Certainly, when there are very valuable features on the farm, these require more attention than others and then feature specific advice is justified (WINTER et al. 2000, 37).

- **Good practice of written advice:** In the evaluations by WINTER et al. (1996) and MORRIS & WINTER (1999), some aspects of good practice were identified, which the written conservation advice should incorporate. The written advice is important to help the farmers recall the contents given in the visit. Its format should be adapted to



the farmers' likings, so that the farmers keep the information easily in mind and feel inclined to look at them again. Advice should be visually striking, restricted to the essentials and with a view to implementation (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 29). A clear objective and a work calendar for the advice should be given, so that the purpose, the manner, and the timing of the recommended action is made clear to the recipient. As explored in chapter 4.1.2, there is strong evidence that farmers often employ very different constructions of conservation than conservationists. Therefore, thorough explanations for the particular advice is vital for the farmers' understanding and the likelihood that they put the proposals into practice (WINTER et al. 1996, 62). The advice on existing landscape features and habitats is regarded as more important for an effective conservation outcome than advice on the creation of new ones (WINTER et al. 1996, 61; VAN ELSEN 2004). Reasons for this judgement were not given, however, it was mentioned, that in the past, the creation of new features had been disparagingly referred to as cosmetic conservation. Another reason which is commonly used is that, generally, older habitats already have a conservation value which newly created ones will only reach in years time. This results from the continuity and maturity of the old habitats' biocoenosis (KIRSCH-STRACKE & REICH 2004).

- **Targeting priority conservation issues:** The representatives of the conservation agencies would like that the advice has relatively strong impact upon priority conservation issues. It should not only reflect an incidental reaction of the adviser to the conservation themes which come up during a visit (HOOPER, LETTS 2005, pers. comm.). Locally defined conservation priorities can be key species or habitats from the local Biodiversity Action Plan, designated sites, areas which are vulnerable to soil erosion or diffuse water pollution. Targeting towards conservation priorities would increase the efficiency of the advice in terms of environmental gain achieved per amount of money. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the advice is often given on intensively used farmland where no threatened habitats or species occur. It can even be an aim to enhance the biodiversity on intensive farm land. *Common* habitats and species would then deliberately need to be targeted (KNIGHT 2005, 4).

From the above-mentioned descriptions on a high quality advice the following general requirement is formulated:

**General requirement VI:**

**Conservation advice must**

- **encourage the farmers to optimize the conservation outcome compared with what he or she would have done without advice**
- **deal with a comprehensive range of environmental issues and also have regard for social and economic implications**
- **written advice must be so that farmers can recall it well: concise, strikingly visualized, implementation oriented but containing objectives and a work programme**

**Where suitable to the farm situation, the advice should**

- **focus on the whole farm, not only on single features**
- **have considerable effect on priority conservation issues**

#### 4.2.1.2 The impacts of the advice

Three demands concerning the impact of conservation advice can be subsumed from the literature and from the interviewees' statements:

- **Increase of the farmers' environmental awareness:** The farmers' environmental awareness should be raised. Many farmers stated that they did not know much or were not interested in conservation (MCHENRY 1997; MORRIS & WINTER 2002). Their understanding of their farm activities' impacts on the environment and of the impacts that conservation activities have upon farming and upon wildlife should be improved. The FWAG advisers think that this is important because when the farmers understand the reasons behind certain conservation measures, they become more interested in conservation. Consequently, they incorporate environmental concerns in their decisions and are likely to increase their conservation activities. The increase of environmental awareness was also cited as a core aim which conservation advice should achieve in ECOTEC (2000), MORRIS & WINTER (2002), and WINTER (1996).
- **Good implementation:** A large proportion of the advice needs to be acted upon. The works which the farmers have carried out according to the advice need to tally with the recommendations. The quality has to be satisfactory so that the works provide benefit for the environment (WINTER et al. 1996, 72).
- **Effect on farmers who are not keen on conservation:** The advice should affect farmers who have not yet had much to do with conservation because they potentially cause more harm to the environment than those farmers who have a high environmental awareness (LETTS 2005, pers. comm.). In the past, it has been a frequent criticism of FWAG that the advisers only 'preach to the converted farmers' (WINTER et al. 1996). In the FWAG Farmland Biodiversity Project, it has been one of FWAG's aims to find out how to improve on reaching those farmers who are as yet 'cold' to the process of conservation (KNIGHT 2005).

From these outcome requirements, the following general requirement can be summarized:

**General requirement VII: The advice needs to be delivered so that it results in**

- **an increased environmental awareness of the farmers**
- **a high implementation rate**
- **a good quality of the conservation works with a high potential benefit for wildlife**

**The advice needs to reach also those farmers who have not yet been dedicated to conservation.**

#### 4.2.1.3 Advice to improve the effectiveness of the agri-environment scheme

To achieve the objectives of the Public Service Agreement, the government departments and agencies have several instruments at hand. One instrument for that is the agri-environment scheme Environmental Stewardship. The purpose of agri-environment schemes is to incentivise farmers to adapt an environmental friendly mode of farm management.

Conservation advice can potentially contribute to successful implementation of the scheme.

Agri-environment schemes are offered by all EU member states under the Rural Development Regulation No. 1257/99. The English agri-environment scheme is the Environmental Stewardship (ES) has two elements: Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). It was launched in March 2005 and replaced the former schemes Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and Countryside Stewardship (CSS), which have subsequently been closed for applicants. The Rural Development Service (RDS) manages the Environmental Stewardship on behalf of DEFRA (KLÖPPER 2006).

#### **Excursus: the Environmental Stewardship (ES)**

DEFRA offers the Environmental Stewardship since the 3rd of March 2005. It is made up of two levels. The first is the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), which is open to all farmers in England and offers payments for easy conservation works. For organic farmers, there is the Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS), which rewards them with higher payments. The Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) finances more demanding measures in more valuable landscapes and habitats. In both levels, farmers choose from a management catalogue conservation work options which they want to carry out on their farm.

For ELS/OELS, all applicants will be given an agreement. DEFRA expects the ELS to reach a high uptake with 70-80 % of all agriculturally used land being brought into the scheme. Structure, application, and administration are simple. ELS/OELS aims to make farmers “deliver simple yet effective environmental management that goes beyond the Single Payment Scheme<sup>14</sup> requirement to maintain land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition” (cross-compliance conditions) (DEFRA 2005a, 6). If it will cover wide areas of the countryside, it will contribute to

Improvement of water quality and reduction of soil erosion (...)

Improvement of conditions for farmland wildlife (...)

Maintenance and enhancement of landscape character (...)

<sup>14</sup> see glossary

Protection of the historic environment (...) (DEFRA 2005a, 6)

ELS offers a comprehensive set of 60 conservation options. Each option has a certain number of points and the farmers must choose so many options that altogether, the point score amounts to 30 points per hectare of their farm. Without further checks, farmers receive a flatrate payment of £ 30 per hectare over the whole holding. The agreements run for five years.

The Higher Level Stewardship has five primary objectives:

Wildlife conservation

Maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character

Natural resource protection

Protection of the historic environment

Promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside (DEFRA 2005b, 6).

In HLS only the farms with the highest conservation value receive a management agreement. England is divided into 159 Joint Character Areas with different landscape characteristics and objectives. The better an applicant can contribute to achieving the objectives in his/her area, the higher is his/her chance to be accepted into the HLS. To facilitate the choice of options and to enable the RDS to pick out the best applicants, a Farm Environment Plan must be prepared for the application. Farmers mostly commission a conservation adviser for this job. The management agreements are individually tailored to the farmer's situation by a Project Officer of the RDS. The agreements consist of compulsory prescriptions and Indicators of Success. The indicators tell the farmers what they are supposed to achieve with the management and whether they succeed in it. It is hoped that this raises the farmers' ambition and increases the success of the scheme. The payments do not depend on the indicators (KLÖPPER 2006).

The scheme was devised with participation of representatives from farming and conservation associations. Both sides are generally happy with the scheme. Conservationists appreciate the whole-farm approach and farming representatives like the great choice of options and the simplicity of the ELS. The ELS is an innovative idea that may contribute to increase the farmers' environmental awareness, as it will reach many more farmers than the old schemes. The HLS is a progressive scheme with regard to its targeting towards the specific requirements of the different natural areas, the comprehensiveness of the options, the success orientation, the advice focus, and the individuality of the agreements. Hence it can be expected to bring about a great benefit for conservation. However, the scheme is very complex and can only work with the help of conservation advisers (KLÖPPER 2006).

The Entry Level Scheme is designed by DEFRA to function without advice. However, in the months after its launch, it came to light that many farmers asked for advice on the scheme. This is mostly due to the Farm Environment Record (FER) and the choice of the conservation options. The FER has to be prepared for the application and is a simple audit of the whole farm. On a map, the farmer has to mark all landscape features of conservation interest, according to 14 landscape feature categories. Basing on the landscape features on the map, the farmer can decide which conservation work options he or she wants to implement on the farm (KLÖPPER 2006).

For the Higher Level Stewardship, in contrast, advice is an integral part of the concept. HLS could not work without advice. There is advice given in three different circumstances with HLS. In one of them only, do non-state conservation advice agencies, such as FWAG, come to play a role: the consultation before the application, including the drawing up of the Farm Environment Plan (FEP). The advice in connection with drawing up the management agreements in discussion with the farmers and the supportive Care and Maintenance visits during the agreement term are carried out by the Project Officers of the RDS (ibid).

Because of the complexity of the scheme, only rarely will the whole application process be done by the farmer. This is especially so because of the competitive character of the scheme, with only the most promising applications resulting in an agreement. To assist the farmers with employing an adviser, there is money provided in the scheme budget from which farmers, who apply, get to pay an adviser.

With regard to making the Environmental Stewardship work successfully, the advice, which agencies such as FWAG deliver in the context of the scheme, can contribute to

- enable the relatively complex HLS to work. If non-government advisers would not do this, the RDS would either have to advise themselves, or make the scheme much simpler and less effective.
- disseminate information about the scheme and help farmers to understand the new system. In this way, conservation advice makes the scheme more popular and allows it to reach a higher uptake in a much shorter time.
- improve the environmental impact of both ELS and HLS through
  - suggesting a wider range of work options than the farmer alone would have chosen. This applies especially for the ELS. In HLS, the choice depends more on the requirements from the targeting statements.
  - explaining to the farmers what the proposed management aims at. It is widely assumed that, if the farmers see the sense of what they do, they are more willing to strive for a good outcome.
  - explaining to the farmers how and when exactly to carry out the management.

The requirement with regard to the agri-environment scheme is:

**General requirement VIII:**

**Conservation advice must help to put the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) into practice. In particular, it must**

- **enable the complex HLS to function**
- **increase the uptake of ELS and HLS**
- **improve the environmental gain of ELS and HLS**

#### 4.2.2 The value for money of conservation advice

Where tax money is spent, there must be a benefit for society and the output per amount of money needs to be maximised. Much public money goes into conservation advice. Hence, the advice agencies have to display that they achieve a conservation outcome which is worth the state spending (ECOTEC 2000, 7).

With regard to the outcome, the delivery of conservation advice is cost effective if it raises the farmers environmental awareness and results in a high number of executed conservation works in a good quality. That these aspects are the aim of conservation advice has been dealt with in the chapters 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.1.2. However, “any measures of the cost effectiveness of conservation advice will always be rough estimates. This is because in measuring environmental conservation values (...) there will always be components upon which money values cannot be placed at all” (WINTER et al. 1996, 77). Nevertheless, the work undertaken as a result of the advice can be measured against the costs of providing advice. Feasible criteria of the benefit for such a cost-benefit analysis are the number of tasks executed as a result from the advice or the additionality. This means the amount of conservation works, which would not have been carried out in the absence of advice (WINTER et al. 1996, 94; ECOTEC 2000, 26).

Beside the conservation output, the efficiency of advice depends on the costs of the delivery. For this work, advice is defined as *efficient* if the conservation outcome in relation to the financial input is maximised. With regard to this aspect, the different advice methods should be considered. The interviewees questioned for this thesis all used two categories of advice methods: the first is one-to-one advice - one adviser meets one farmer on his farm and talks face to face with him. The other method is one-to-many advice. This is given to a group of farmers and can have various forms. The first method is effective, in that it maximises the conservation outcome, but it is relatively expensive (the interviewees from FWAG and DEFRA, the RDS and English Nature agreed on that one-to-one advice was the most effective mode of advice). Conversely, the provision of one-to-many advice is less effective but cheaper (again, all the interviewees agreed) (THORNE, WOODHOUSE, SPENCE, CLAIRE, TRUEMAN, all 2005, pers. comm.). Apparently, both methods are good at *one* aspect of efficiency (they are either effective or cheap). FWAG favoured absolutely the provision of one-to-one advice since the outcome was found to be much better (WOODHOUSE, THORNE, 2005, pers. comm). SPENCE, CLAIRE, TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm) wanted more group advice to be delivered because of the cost-argument. Therefore, it was not possible for the author to derive logically the provision of which method would be most efficient. Hence, no aim with regard to the use of one-to-one and one-to-many advice could be set up, and in the analysis, this issue is not dealt with.

The general requirement developed from the statements in this chapter is:

**General requirement IX:**

**The conservation advice needs to result in a conservation outcome which is worth the state spending. That means that the advice should be effective, however, it should be delivered at a reasonable cost.**

**It needs to lead to the implementation of conservation works which would not have been implemented in the absence of advice.**

#### 4.2.3 The transparency and conservation motivation of the advisory body

A conservation advice agency which receives a significant part of its funding from the conservation agencies needs to display to the conservationists that it has a true conservation motivation and strives to achieve a high quality conservation outcome. For that, it is necessary that the advice agency works transparently, so that the financiers see what it does for the public money. The RDS and DEFRA would like conservation advice agencies to work

strategically and plan their work with project plans. These should be detailed in national, regional, and local level. They should comprise clear targets and priorities what is to be delivered, describe the methods to achieve the targets and give details about the project managers and the employees who deliver the advice. Moreover, the expected costs, and the timing must be detailed (SPENCE, 2005, pers. comm.). Very important for the transparency is that the advice body monitors, evaluates and reports the achievements of its work (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.). English Nature absolutely wants conservation advisers to work with an evidence based approach. They could evaluate two things: the growth of the environmental awareness and how much of their proposals are really implemented (ibid).

The following general requirement can be drawn up as a summary of the above explanations:

**General requirement X:**

**As the conservation advice is to a great extent financed publicly, the advice body should operate in a transparent way. For this they should work strategically and plan their work with project plans which would detail their outcome aims and the advisory instruments, timing, personell, and costs entailed to achieve the aims. They have to monitor and report the result of their advice.**

**The advisory body also needs to strive for offering its service in the most possible consistent quality and quantity throughout the country.**

**To secure the satisfaction and the (financial) support of the conservation agencies, the advisers need to act in a way which shows that they have a genuine conservation motivation.**

## 5 Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of FWAG

### 5.1 The farmers' satisfaction

#### 5.1.1 FWAG's qualities that are vital for a good relationship with the farmers

With regard to the farmers' concept of nature and conservation and the necessity to take efforts to make them accept the advice, in chapter 4.1.2 the following general requirement III was developed:

**General requirement III:**

**The advisers need to**

- **be aware of the fact that many farmers have a bad image of conservationists and are not willing to accept advice from them;**
- **have regard for the farmers' personal attachment to and construction of nature and nature conservation;**
- **and behave in a way that the farmers develop a trusting relationship with them.**

**The advice should be voluntary, confidential, and independent from statutory power.**

At this place, the third general requirement is dealt with before the requirements I and II because the qualities which FWAG needs for its achievement are probably decisive to fulfill the other general requirements in relation to the farmers' satisfaction. The qualities described in this chapter are also important to understand the way FWAG meets some of the general requirements in relation to the conservationists' aims. That is because if FWAG is good at making the farmers accept their advice, the farmers are likely to achieve conservation aims. For this to happen, certainly, the advice must be technically appropriate.

#### A farmer led organisation and locally based advisers

FWAG is a farmer led organisation. The members in FWAG's voluntary bodies "Board of Trustees" and in the steering groups of the local FWAG groups are almost exclusively farmers or people who are personally and practically attached to farming.

The FWAG advisers interviewed for this work found that the involvement of farmers in the steering of FWAG is essential for the farmers to feel that FWAG's advice has agricultural credential. The advisers feel that in this way, FWAG can best have regard for the farmers' needs. Most FWAG staff questioned for this thesis, agreed that the volunteers in the counties were a major asset for FWAG. KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) assures that their role was important. They are to guide and fine tune the local activities from a farming perspective. Not only do they know many important people in the county, but also the type of farming and the history. In addition, they assure a long term continuity if the professional adviser changes (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

The fact that the advisers are based locally is seen as an advantage, also by many outsiders. "A difference between FWAG and national consultancies is that FWAG has the local staffing, which is very important and very good" (HOOPER 2005, pers. comm.). FWAG advisers "know the localities and the farmers very well, they have a long term contact with the farmers on the



ground, they are visible and available. Very few other organisations have that, that's very good" (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.).

### FWAG is the farmers' friend

FWAG is perceived as an organisation working for the agricultural industry (WINTER et al. 2000, 39). "Throughout all their work, advisers for FWAG promote the notion of 'voluntary co-operation and goodwill'" (COX et al. 1985). The voluntary nature of the advice is vital because the advisers want to develop a trusting relationship with the farmers. The FWAG advisers feel that farmers who act voluntarily are the better conservationists: "If somebody is forced to work with us, the outcome is not good" (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.).

The FWAG advice is confidential and independent from statutory power. The FWAG advisers mainly give advice to those farmers who ask for it because they do not want to impose themselves upon the farmers (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). The farmers need not be afraid that the adviser would report any incident of bad practice on farms to any authority. An adviser said, "we are not policemen, not official, farmers can say to FWAG: look everything has gone really badly wrong, what can I do without the Environment Agency getting angry with me?" (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). A question which is frequently asked of FWAG advisers is what they do in such a situation. "You don't go to the Environment Agency, but if a farmer is breaking the law you tell him, he can't do that! Persuade him. And I have not met a farmer who would then do that" (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). In the rare case that a farmer would not want to change his behaviour, the FWAG adviser would stop working with him. He would not report him, that would ruin his reputation (SMITH 2005, pers. comm.).

### The relationship and the right advice ethic

The adviser THORNE told of an example, how he approached a farmer who was very sceptical about conservation. The man farmed in an SSSI<sup>15</sup> and had a bad relationship with English Nature. Conservationists were highly unwelcome on his farm. "English Nature asked me to work with him to get him into HLS<sup>16</sup>. So far, I have gone there and said 'I am here to help you. The whole SSSI depends on you, on your management. It is important that you are happy. I am not going to impose anything on you that is unreasonable for you. We'll put nothing in the [HLS] scheme what you don't like'. In the first visit we talked an hour about his cattle. He really loves his cattle. Next time I go there, he'll say 'I trust you because you are interested in me, not just in my site'. He feels that I treat him as an individual, with courtesy".

This example makes clear how important personalities and relationships are for advice. This is especially important because many farmers are "weary of conservationists" (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). "Many farmers work a lot on their own, they are a little bit special. You must first of all build a relation of trust. Without trust and good communication you are not going to get anywhere" (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). An adviser feels that often, the first impression the farmer gets from an adviser is decisive for the further co-operation. It is important that the farmer likes the adviser. (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). To establish a good atmosphere in the first visit, to begin with, it is good to talk on ground the farmer is comfortable with. To find a common language base and to listen patiently is important for a good adviser (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). Another adviser suggests: "A ten minutes

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<sup>15</sup>see glossary.

<sup>16</sup>see glossary

conversation about ‘Oh you’ve got a new tractor, how is your grass growing or how was silaging’, is always good. That makes them feel the adviser is not just a person with his own agenda, but he is taking an interest in the farmer and his farming business” (UNDERWOOD 2005, pers. comm.).

The farmers need to see that the adviser is knowledgeable in farming life: “Having a complete understanding of the difficulties and challenges they face is essential” (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). Also, a more general familiarity with countryside life can be quite helpful. “You need to be knowledgeable in his field (...). A knowledge of his hobbies, field sports, etc. will help (ibid). Absolutely vital is that conservation suggestions always reflect that the farm is a business and must remain viable. In giving ideas, the advisers need to consider financial and timing constraints. An adviser who does not bear this in mind, will not capture the farmers’ approval (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.).

The advisers feel that every farmer needs to be treated individually. It is important to listen carefully and to find out what the farmer wants, what his motives behind are and how far in terms of conservation delivery he or she could be taken. The adviser should understand what the farmer’s objectives are before he or she starts talking about the environment (UNDERWOOD 2005, pers. comm.). “You need a balance, you cannot push a farmer too far, he will lose interest (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.).

In accordance with the voluntary principle, the advisers ought to suggest, but always leave decisions clearly to the farmer. “Most of FWAG is about giving ideas. If somebody *tells* me to do something, I say no. If somebody says ‘it would be nice if you did this’, then I am more likely to agree” (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). If the advisers realize that a farmer does not like their proposals, they should first turn to another subject. However, if the issue is important, KNIGHT suggests being courteous but persevering: “Leave it and come back to it later, leave it in a footnote in the report for example. Better be humorous. Say ‘you don’t like it today, but maybe I will change you on that one day’” (ibid).

Knight thinks that it was necessary to a good adviser to transfer ideas and to have enthusiasm (ibid). “You need to have enough enthusiasm to spread it to the farmer. You must know how far to go, so that you take the farmer with you, and he will feel that he can succeed” (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). The adviser THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) agreed: “You want to [have an adviser who gets] the passion and the vision (...) to the farmer at the right level for the farmer. You must tailor your approach to the client.”

The advisers agreed that it was often necessary to praise the farmers for good attempts, in order to give the farmer a good feeling at the outset of the visit. “To praise positive attempts (...) is good, but you don’t want to flatter him. You have to be reasonable, practicable, and that involves occasionally praising what he does” (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). Even on farms where apparently the environmental situation is not good, advisers ought to find something praiseworthy to give the farmer the feeling that it is possible for him, too, to achieve improvements. Those can then be used as a basis for further improvements (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). “When you have good starting conditions, it is easier to say, ‘well I would have done it a bit more that way’” (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

A quality which among experts in Germany is commonly deemed important for a good response of farmers to a conservation adviser, is that the adviser should come from the region where he or she works (VAN ELSSEN 2004). This was not generally felt to be essential by the FWAG advisers. “It is not necessary to be from the locality. In Scotland not all advisers are

Scots” (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE reckons that in the Southwest of England, it differs greatly between the localities: “It’s not essential but it helps a lot. In some areas this is essential because people are very closed. In the [Blackdown] hills they don’t want to talk with any advisers who does not come from there” (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). Outside these hills, the farmers are mostly so open that THORNE would not see any difficulty in having an adviser from far away.

Knight feels that the trusting relationship they have with the farmers was the best advertisement they can have: “60-70 % of farmers come due to others recommending us to them because they trust us. A farmer commented about his positive working relationship with FWAG, after an adviser had drawn up his Farm-BAP, “we are very impressed that FWAG have been prepared to *work with us* to enhance the biodiversity on the farm” (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 661).

### The vocational background

Three fields of knowledge are regarded as necessary for a good adviser: a good understanding of farm life and agricultural practices, a profound expertise of the environment and conservation, and communication skills (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE (2005, PERS. COMM) , who leads one of the UK’s biggest local FWAGs in Somerset, and who both studied environmental sciences and worked on farms, emphasises the need for all FWAG employees to be attached to farming: “I would always recruit people, even admin people, with some kind of a farming background because they know what farmers are like. The key is the approach and that comes from a passion in the heart for farming (ibid).” He prefers members of staff with working knowledge in farming and environmental training. Important for him is “their passion for farming, for the environment, and that they think that farmers are the ones we have to work with”. KNIGHT, himself with a farming background, agrees: “It is more difficult to understand farming if you are from outside, whereas those environmental issues that advisers talk about are often very simple. To talk at a level that a farmer understands is easier if you talk from a farmer’s background. If you have an issue that requires expert knowledge, you can ask experts. FWAG advisers are specialists in being generalists. You must deal with 50 different topics from history and ecology to landscape and nutrients. You can’t be expert on all of them. You must be expert in pulling those threats together.”

THORNE (2005, PERS. COMM.) emphasised that he did not want to be misunderstood: although farming experience was important, this alone would not make for a good conservation adviser. A passion for the environment and good communication skills were essential, too. In this context, KNIGHT stressed the “ability of talking, to enthuse [the farmer], adapt to all very different types of farmers, not to preach but to listen and to praise, (...) to be very guarded and careful in what you say.”

Although farming experience is ranked highly, the director of FWAG England, WOODHOUSE, points out, “more than half of our advisers have a conservation background, especially the new ones and those who are taken on now.” KNIGHT even thinks that some of the advisers who were taken on in recent years have no farming experience. Two FWAG employees issued concerns that some of the young advisers had only an environmental background and no farming experience. They wondered how these can get along with farmers (UNDERWOOD, LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). Comments from stakeholders from the RSPB, the Environment

Agency and the RDS, however, suggest, that some advisers are too farmer-friendly and not so strong on conservation.

KNIGHT is sure, a certain maturity and experience was needed for the job. “Earlier, FWAG advisers needed 2-3 years of any other work and a minimum age of 25. That is no longer so. They wanted to bring in young graduates and train them. To teach agri-environment schemes is simple, but to understand what FWAG is really about is much more challenging and needs more maturity” (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.) In this point, TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) from English Nature agrees with him: “A good point is that many advisers have been around for a long time and they have gathered up a very good knowledge of conservation, wildlife and farming.”

From KNIGHT’s point of view, only 20 % of the FWAG advisers are very good at combining agricultural and environmental knowledge and passion with good communication skills. 60 % of the advisers were pretty good at combining these two qualities.

**Discussion: Does FWAG achieve a trusting relationship with the farmers and which of their qualities and skills contribute to that?**

**Strength:** From the FWAG advisers’ statements and from comments of all the questioned representatives of the conservation agencies and the RSPB (CLAIRE, HOOPER, LETTS, ROBERTSON, SPENCE & TRUEMAN), it can be said that FWAG is **strong** at achieving a trusting relationship and attaining a high acceptance of its advice among the farmers.

There are several qualities and skills which, as the FWAG advisers claim, contribute to the positive view farmers have of FWAG and their willingness to accept its advice:

- FWAG is farmer-led and has locally based advisers in the counties;
- the advisers are independent from statutory bodies and guarantee confidentiality;
- most advisers are said to have a genuine passion for farming;
- the advisers approach mainly farmers who want to hear them;
- the advisers try to treat every farmer as an individual. They are allegedly good at listening to and finding a common language base with a farmer. They also give each farmer the feeling that the farming priorities are at the centre of the advice;
- the advisers try to recognize how much they can ask from a farmer in terms of environmental performance;
- the advisers give ideas, praise positive attempts and enthuse for conservation, but leave the ultimate decision clearly to the farmer;
- in their conservation suggestions, the advisers bear in mind that the farm is first of all a business.

Three of the questioned FWAG employees consider farming experience to be more important for a farm conservation adviser than conservation knowledge. They had mentioned this especially with regard to the ability to establish a good relationship with the farmers. At this

point it should not be created the impression that generally conservation knowledge and experience is less important for a conservation adviser than agricultural experience. ROBERTSON (RSPB) and LETTS (Environment Agency) (both 2005, pers. comm.) did emphasise that conservation advisers absolutely needed to have a sound conservation knowledge. However, this chapter deals with the question, which qualities make conservation advisers successful in acquiring the farmers' trust. For this to achieve agricultural experience is regarded to be more important. Generally, a passion for both the environment and farming is essential for a good adviser.

### 5.1.2 The financial benefits which farmers gain from the advice

The general requirement I, as developed in chapter 4.1.1 is:

**General requirement I:**

**The conservation advice must demonstrate to the farmers how to obtain additional income.**

**Currently, farmers can acquire direct financial support mainly through advice on**

- **the agri-environment scheme**
- **quality assurance schemes**

**Indirectly, they can profit from advice on**

- **how to get an improved market position by getting into or remaining in quality assurance schemes or from alternative farm activities.**
- **In addition, advice might result in cost savings.**

**Furthermore, the advisers must have regard for the commercial implications on the working routine, which a change of management could bring about.**

The majority of farmers have a blend of motives to demand FWAG's advice. However, most of the farmers have the hope for a financial benefit from the advice in common. The success of any conservation advice depends therefore upon the advisers bringing financial benefit to the farmers.

#### The agri-environment scheme

Presently, the desire to get access to the new agri-environment scheme Environmental Stewardship is the single most expressed wish why farmers ask FWAG out onto their farm (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). As explained in chapter 4.2.1.3, the scheme comprises two parts. The Entry Level Scheme (ELS) is designed so that farmers can enter it without being advised. The Higher Level Scheme (HLS) is reliant on advice (KLÖPPER 2006).

FWAG's role is to help farmers get access to the scheme. The pre-application advice starts by explaining to the potential applicants the principle and the comprehensive details of the scheme. Although, with ELS, the farmers ought to be able to prepare the Farm Environment Record (FER) and to choose the options on their own, many ask FWAG for help. The advisers go through the process of marking the landscape features on the FER maps and choosing the conservation work options with the farmer (ibid).

The HLS is competitive, meaning that only the best application will be accepted. In the targeting statements, which the applicants get with their application documents, there are conservation objectives detailed for the natural area in which a farm is situated. The objectives are the conservation of certain habitats or species. Each of them has a certain point score. The HLS-participants must be able to contribute to the achievement of the objectives on their farm and clarify this in the application. For this, the advisers assess whether the habitats and species on the farm are relevant to the targeting statement. Then they help the farmer to choose work options to maintain or enhance habitats and species so that the application scores high enough to be accepted.

The preparation of the Farm Environment Plan (FEP) is done at the beginning of the application process and helps the adviser with the two above described work steps. For the FEP, a detailed survey of the whole farm is carried out. The adviser classifies the farm land according to landscape features and assesses their condition. The purpose of the FEP is to

- assist the farmers and advisers with identifying land which is most suitable for positive management and to facilitate the choice of the relevant options;
- provide the RDS with information to assess which applicants should be offered an agreement;
- give a basis to later monitor the success of the scheme (KLÖPPER 2006).

Together with the farmer, the adviser decides which management options are suitable to the farm and where they should be placed. They are marked on an options map and a field data sheet. The application is then sent to the RDS who will visit the farmer and subsequently offer an agreement or not (ibid).

For ELS, every applicant will be accepted and receive £ 30 per hectare over the whole farm. A FWAG adviser said that most farmers thought it was worth making the effort of applying (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.). So, FWAG is a safe way to lead them easily to the Entry Level money. On the downside, the ELS money comes from the modulation. This means that it is deducted from the first pillar of the agricultural payments and given back to the farmer via the rural development payments, of which the agri-environment scheme is a part. So, many farmers feel that it is “the same money they received before, they only have to get it in another way” (ibid).

That is different with the HLS. Only the best applicants receive an agreement, although all get some money to pay the adviser. The works which will be detailed in the agreements are much more demanding but also much better paid (KLÖPPER 2006)

Certainly, it is impossible to generalise how good the prospect of an individual farmer is to earn additional income from the HLS. However, some statements can be given. The prospect depends on three factors: the quality of his or her farm, the scheme details and the ability of the adviser.

Nothing can be said about the farm quality. Concerning the scheme details, the payments for each single option and the likelihood to be accepted are relevant. It is difficult to assess how high the likelihood to be accepted is. A rough approach to see that would be to estimate how large a proportion of farmers can take part in the scheme. Nevertheless, none of these statements tell very much about the potential chance of a certain farmer to earn money from HLS. Nevertheless, they are explored to give a broad impression.

For the option payments, only examples can be given: Maintenance of high value traditional orchards: £ 250/hectare; maintenance of species-rich, semi natural grassland: £ 200/hectare; fallow plots for ground nesting birds on arable land: £ 360/hectare (DEFRA 2005a). For some farm situations, farmers think that these payments were very good, and indeed, the demand to get into the scheme is very high (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.).

In the 2002/2003 financial year, £ 105 mil. was paid to agreement holders who had about 1,015,000 hectares of farmland under agreement (DEFRA 2004b). This mounts up to £ 103.44 per hectare land under contract. It can be assumed, that the payments for HLS will be higher than for the old schemes, especially because in the ESA, there was much land in lowly paid maintenance work options (KLÖPPER 2006).

To give a broad indication of the importance of this source of income for the farmers, the overall sum of money spend on the scheme is decisive. By the beginning of 2005, there were 1,300,000 hectares in agreements of the two old schemes CSS and ESA. This is 14 % of the total agriculturally used area of England (DEFRA 2003). As agreements of the old schemes expire, the money is free to be used for HLS agreements. In 2004, a total of £ 194.3 million was spent on the old schemes. This sum will be maintained for HLS (BOULDING 2006, pers. comm.). Conclusively, it can be assumed that in the future approximately 14 % of the farmers' land will get into HLS. DEFRA plans to increase the expenditure for the Environmental Stewardship to around £ 300 million in the coming years. However, political decisions which can arise from the ongoing discussion about the EU budget could have an adverse effect on the financial increase (ibid).

Turning to the question of whether the FWAG advisers are better at submitting successful applications for HLS, FWAG advisers tend to say yes. THORNE was absolutely sure that nowadays FWAG's success rate is by far higher than average (2005, pers. comm.). However, this claim is in contrast to the numbers published by WINTER et al. (2000, 36). These showed that in 1998/99, the share of unsuccessful CSS applications which FWAG submitted, was only slightly lower than the average (see Table 3). Also TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) from English Nature said that there was no indication that the applications submitted by FWAG were any better than others.

Advised by:	No. of successful applicants	No. of unsuccessful applicants	Share of unsuccessful on total advised (%)
Total applicants advised	1007	270	21
FWAG	490	114	19
ADAS	181	50	22
Local Authority	126	27	17
Wildlife Trust	115	30	21
Private	160	52	25
Other	179	41	18

**Table 3:** Number of successful and unsuccessful CSS applications in 1998/99 and organisations who advised on them (WINTER et al. 2000, 36, taken from ADAS and CCRU).

As an adviser said, a certain discontent could arise because many farmers assume that it is very easy to get into HLS. A lot of farmers think of applying for HLS but do not realize that it is not open for everyone (MILLS 2005, pers. comm.). These farmers may be disappointed that it is not as easy as they thought, to earn money with the Environmental Stewardship. This situation is not new. In two surveys from 1996 and 2000 (WINTER et al. 1996, ECOTEC 2000), farmers were found to be disappointed about the agri-environmental funding opportunities: The farmers stated that the low level of, and difficulty in obtaining grants undermined the usefulness of the advice (ECOTEC 2000, 56). Though this may still be the case with HLS, all farmers can get into ELS and hence the funding situation has improved.

Apart from the national agri-environment schemes, there are county schemes in some counties. These provide for small scale works, which were not covered by the options of ELS or HLS, or for farmers who only want to get support for some small-scale conservation works but don't want to, or cannot, get access to one of the national schemes. FWAG gives advice on these schemes, but many county schemes have been closed in the last years (STONEX, 2005, pers. comm.).

### Quality assurance schemes

The help with getting or maintaining access to quality assurance schemes can be a way in which FWAG leads farmers to additional income. The schemes are run by retailers or processors in the food supply industry and are a means of addressing consumer concerns about food production and help improve the competitiveness of the food producer (MORRIS 1999, 433). The schemes suggest a high food quality to customers. Farmers have to comply with certain quality standards and then they can deliver their produce under the name of the assurance scheme. For compliance with some schemes, the farmers receive higher prices. In other schemes, they only participate because they feel it would secure their place as a supplier to the company. Some of the standards are environmental and FWAG's role is to explain them to the farmers and advise on compliance (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 660).



However, many farmers dislike the quality assurance schemes. Many perceive the schemes as dishonest and merely an economic trick. The advisers feel that farmers often participate in these schemes because they are forced to do so for economic reasons. An adviser explains, “the farmers are never seen again after the advice. In theory they are supposed to get back to us for an update, but they don’t. They get away with it because [the supermarket] Tesco is not interested either” (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE confirms that farmers are not always satisfied with the schemes. “If the farmers get more money for their products if they comply, they like it, whereas if they are told [by the retailer or processor], ‘you need to comply, otherwise we don’t buy from you’, they dislike it”.

### Operation cost savings and alternative sources of income

The farmers do not call FWAG with the intention to have them look over their operations to save costs. For this, they would rather ask production oriented and business advisers. THORNE reckons that there is limited scope for the saving of operation costs through the FWAG advice. “If they did the hedge trimming as we want [less frequently], they save money on that. If the soil was tested some would see they need absolutely no phosphate to apply. And fertilizer costs are high” (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).”

In an independent research with around 1,000 farmers replying to postal questionnaires, it was found that “recipients of conservation advice, with a prior interest in conservation, believed there were few cost savings from conservation practices. (...) Those who sought conservation advice hoping for cost savings or cheap solutions were usually disappointed. (...) A number of farmers spoke of cost savings from reduced pesticide application and Integrated Crop Management techniques” (ECOTEC 2000, 59). Often the reason for that farmers were dissatisfied with the cost savings from the conservation advice was not that the FWAG advisers did not have ideas. It was rather because the farmers felt that if they implemented the suggestions, e.g. not to spray pesticides under a hedge, the countryside would start to look messy and unordered (ibid).

Nevertheless THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) said “Good advice can always save money. Take this example: one farmer wanted to build a pond for fishing and asked me about where to submit for planning permission and I could tell him that planning permission was not necessary”.

The aspect of diversification of farm income from tourism, farm shops, hunting, etc. is only important for a marginally small group of those who ask FWAG for advice. “Only some have direct income from fishing, farmshops, tourism etc. in Somerset. They are already switched on to that, they want us to come with special requests to make plans and maps showing the public what they are doing” (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

In their regularly used farmer feedback forms, FWAG asks the farmers who have received advice among other things about the satisfaction with income and cost saving from the advice. The answers of 79 respondents in 2004/05 are given in Table 4 (date and area is not clearly quoted in source). The overall satisfaction appears to be medium.

Do you believe that the advice given will generate additional income for your holding?	More likely			Less likely	
	1	2	3	4	5
	9	13	28	13	14
If the advice will not generate income, will it save costs on the holding?					
	1	2	3	4	5
	3	13	25	11	17

**Table 4:** Farmers’ satisfaction with income and cost saving through the advice, FWAG.

### Advice on the possible commercial implications of conservation

FWAG advisers have regard for the fact that farms are first and foremost businesses which must be operated viably. Only when that is secured, can environmental concerns stand on the farmer’s agenda. Nevertheless, there were concerns expressed by TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) from English Nature, that not all advisers have practical experience with business matters on farms.

In the above mentioned study by ECOTEC, the farmers found that all the advice programmes under examination in the survey “fared least well in terms of explaining the cost implications of the proposed management changes” (see Table 5). The study stated that it seemed to be a general technical problem that all environmental advice from different advice bodies did not deal with the cost implications of their proposals. In fact, FWAG performed better in this category than the other big provider of conservation advice, ADAS. Also TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) agreed, that this was a general problem of all conservation advisers, rather than just a shortcoming of FWAG. (See more about this in chapter 5.2.1.1)

Quality	Average satisfaction
	1 poor, 2 reasonable, 3 good, 4 excellent
Understandable	3.20
Relevant	3.05
Technically informed	3.15
Practical	2.95
Comprehensive	3,05
Informing about cost implication	<b>2.65</b>

**Table 5:** Quality of advice (altered, according to ECOTEC 2000, 56)

**Discussion: In which form does FWAG's advice provide financial benefit to the farmers?**

**Neither strength nor weakness:** Compared with the farmers' high demand for financial benefit from the advice, the potential rise in income from advice uptake appears to be limited. FWAG depends to a high degree on the funding instruments which are external to the advisers influence. It can be concluded that it is not one of FWAG's **strengths** to guide farmers to additional income, but they do not have a **weakness** here either.

In the past, farmers were disappointed about the difficult availability of grants. Now the situation has improved with the new agri-environment scheme. The ELS guarantees £ 30 per hectare to every farmer and FWAG can facilitate the farmers' application. The HLS offers higher payments but only the best farms in terms of landscape, biodiversity or historic value get access. It is unlikely that a farmer gets into the scheme without advice, and FWAG is the service provider mostly demanded for that (KLÖPPER 2006, ECOTEC 2000).

The advice on quality assurance schemes for the food industry potentially offers a way to additional income. However, many schemes do not reward the farmers with higher prices but only secure their position as a supplier to the company that runs the scheme. It appears that there is only limited scope for additional income and that many farmers dislike the schemes as they find them dishonest (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). Nevertheless, if they want to join, FWAG can give valuable help.

There is limited scope for saving operation costs and FWAG is not the agency farmers mostly ask for this. Only a small number of farmers approach FWAG for help with alternative additional income from diversification measures like farm shops, leisure activities, etc.

In an independent survey, farmers' satisfaction with additional income and saved costs from FWAG's advice was rather low (ECOTEC 2000), whereas in FWAG's feedback forms the satisfaction was medium. A large number of advisers do not include in their advice sufficient information on the commercial implications of proposed management changes.

### 5.1.3 FWAG's advice with regard to conservation, public pressure, and compliance

In this chapter, three general requirements are dealt with jointly. These are the general requirement II with regard to the farmers interest in conservation, requirement IV about the the advisers role to help the farmers cope with public pressure, and requirement V concerning compliance with environmental regulations. There are two reasons for doing so. The first is that the way FWAG advises for meeting them, especially concerning the conservation and the public pressure, is similar. The second reason is that there is no information as to the farmers' satisfaction with the way FWAG advises for the latter two aspects.

In the first work step, it is explored how FWAG advises to meet the three requirements. In the second step, the farmers' satisfaction and FWAG's relevant qualities are analysed.

### 5.1.3.1 The way FWAG advises

FWAG's advice with regard to the farmers' interest in conservation

The general requirement which FWAG needs to fulfill to satisfy the farmers' in this respect is

**General requirement II:**

**Conservation advisers need to help the farmers to achieve their personal conservation aims. This includes**

- **informing them on those conservation questions they want to be answered and**
- **advising them on how best to implement their personal conservation projects.**

In chapter 5.2.1, a full explanation is given of those qualities of FWAG, which are probably essential for the good acceptance of their advice among farmers. In that chapter it is concluded that the way FWAG deals with the farmers is favourable for a good acceptance of the advice because the FWAG advisers have the quality to build trusting relationships with the farmers.

Generally, but especially in the context of nature conservation and farming, “the acceptance of knowledge is contingent on the social relations and identities of those associated with it” (MCHENRY 1997, 1041). How information is transferred and who does it is very important (ibid). In fact, both representatives from the farming organisations and from the conservation agencies think that the positive relationship which most FWAG advisers establish with their clients is one of the most important reasons for the farmers to be satisfied with the FWAG advice (HOWIE, TRUEMAN, SPENCE 2005, pers.comm.).

Some aspects with regard to the instruments which FWAG uses to bring information to the farmers appear to be important for the farmers' satisfaction. The main instruments are the Landwise approach and the Farm-BAPs (see chapter 3).

In the context of its Landwise visits, FWAG advisers always hand a report of the visit to the client. Already before Landwise was launched, “FWAG require[d] their advisers to provide advice letters itemising all the advice given, even if sometimes time and space limit[ed] the details” (WINTER 1996, 55). This is regarded as very important because letters or reports can extend the ‘life’ of a particular visit (ibid). The length of the reports assessed by WINTER et al. (1996, 56) before the launch of Landwise varied between one and 31 pages. The average length was 4.7 pages. Nowadays, most of the advice reports contain maps and aerial photographs for additional explanation and to show the location of proposed works or existing habitats (SMITH 2005, pers.comm.). FWAG often gives the farmers work calendars which detail the time of the year an activity has to be carried out. TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) from English Nature commended FWAG for its well prepared information material on the web, which was initially made in connection with the Farm-BAPs. He found it an excellent opportunity to offer self-help to farmers.

Generally, FWAG spends long visits with its clients. In the ECOTEC study, FWAG was compared with ADAS, the other important provider of conservation advice: “The ADAS visits (...) usually ranged from two to two and a half hours (...). The respondents regarded this as being very short. FWAG's visits were, without exception longer – some respondents reported having both types of visit and finding the FWAG visits to be twice the length of

those from ADAS". FWAG advisers spent anywhere between 1 – 5 hours on the farms (ECOTEC 2000, 51).

On FWAG's web-site, the organisation's advice principles are explained. One of the principles is that they try to look for zero or low cost options to implement conservation on farms (FWAG 2005a). KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) confirmed that this is an aspect many farmers like very much about FWAG.

FWAG advisers report that some farmers react positively when the advisers offer advice which goes beyond the issues the farmers had requested or which is more appropriate to the sites than the initial conservation project would have been, which had made the farmer contact FWAG. The advisers felt that some farmers felt challenged when the advisers improved on their initial conservation ideas. It proved that as soon as the farmers saw success, they developed further ambition and desires that reinforced their demand for conservation advice (KNIGHT, THORNE, LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). This is confirmed in a survey of the FWAG Farmland Biodiversity Project. After the farmers had acted upon the advisers recommendations and monitored the success of their Farm Biodiversity Action Plan, they were very motivated. A group of farmers wished to compare the score from their monitoring with their colleagues' score. Subsequently they wanted to take the conservation process to a more in-depth stage (KNIGHT 2005, 25).

FWAG's advice with regard to helping the farmers respond to public pressure

To this question, the following general requirement has been drawn up:

**General requirement IV:**

**The role successful advisers need to fulfill is to help the farmers to bear the public pressure which rests on the farming industry because the public perceives the farmers as environmental polluters and to give them ideas how to respond positively to the pressure.**

**The way to do this is**

- to suggest feasible conservation works and**
- to evoke a feeling of confidence in the farmers that the way they act is beneficial to the countryside.**
- to assist the farmers in disseminating evidence of their activities in the media.**

In this thesis, it is assumed that the advisers have to advise in the same way in order to meet this IV. general requirement, as they have to advise to meet the second general requirement. The main difference between the two general requirements is in the motives why farmers might seek advice. The way in which FWAG advisers have to advise a farmer who feels a public pressure on him or her is similar to how they would advise a farmer who wanted to do conservation for another reason (apart from that they should inform the public about the farmers activities). At least, no adviser pointed out any difference, though all of them confirmed that this was an important reason for farmers to ask for conservation advice. It is assumed, however, that there is a difference, but that could not be uncovered in this work. Therefore, it can only be assumed that the statements given above for the second general requirement concerning the way FWAG advises the farmers, apply for this requirement, too.

In addition, there was one aspect of FWAG's work, which the advisers felt was particularly important to achieve this requirement. It is the public relations work which FWAG does for the farmers. One adviser said that the farmers themselves were not good at promoting their conservation activities. An example of FWAG's PR exercises are the competitions which many local FWAGs organize. In these awards, farmers can compete for the best conservation performance. The winners of the local awards can then compete in the national 'silver lapwing award'. The awards have good press coverage in the farmers' press and local newspapers. The same adviser mentioned further promotion: "We do little press releases along the way and give talks to different groups" (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.).

Another adviser is critical about FWAG's media work. She supports the farm competitions but feels that FWAG was not the right organisation to praise the farmers' environmental performance publicly. "[The farmers] would need somebody to say that farmers are brilliant, and we don't want to say that, because farmers are not that brilliant. (...) We sit too much in the middle [between farming and conservation] to say the farmers are wonderful" (LOMAS 2005, pers.comm.).

#### FWAG's advice with regard to compliance with environmental regulations

The general requirement for this sub-chapter is:

**General requirement V:**

**Conservation advisers need to inform farmers about**

- **which of the statutory agri-environmental regulations are relevant to their business,**
- **the contents, and**
- **the way to implement the statutory agri-environmental regulations in day to day work.**

**The advisers also need to make the farmers become confident in the environmental issues which they have to speak about with the staff of the conservation agencies.**

Apparently, the farmers do not ask the FWAG advisers out onto their farm for questions about environmental regulations. The farmers mostly turn to the advisers for another reason, and once they are on the farm, the farmers also have questions concerning regulations (LOMAS, 2005, pers. comm.). An adviser estimated that questions regarding the environmental regulations come up in about 80 % of the visits. Presently, this is especially the case because the farmers must claim their subsidies through the new Single Payment Scheme (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.). To receive the payments, the farmers have to comply with certain agricultural and environmental standards and specified legal requirements (cross compliance) (DEFRA 2004a). Many farmers are confused about cross compliance and want to become informed about it (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.).

How advisers advise about the regulations depends on the individual regulation. Generally, they make the farmer aware of the contents which are important for his or her farm and tell them how to implement the obligations in the everyday farming routine. The following quotation shows that apparently, some farmers are very uninformed: "They must [comply with the regulations] by law, but mostly they bury their head in the sand, and FWAG says, 'one day you must have all your paperwork done, how far are you with it? Can I help you'" (LOMAS 2005, pers.comm.). The advisers feel that it is a problem for the farmers that they

have too much paperwork. As they think, many farmers dislike paperwork in general and are therefore often very happy when the advisers help them (LOMAS, THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). Also the representative from the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), confirms that: “DEFRA sends so much information out. That confuses the farmers. And it saves them much time if they do not have to read through all that information (UNDERWOOD 2005, pers. comm.).

Apart from one-to-one advice on farms, FWAG also organizes workshops on environmental regulations. For instance in Somerset, there are workshops about the parts of cross compliance which concern the environment. These workshops are split up in a mainly theoretical indoor session in the morning and practical exercises outside in the afternoon (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.).

One project which FWAG has started is a response to a new waste regulation. The regulation will enforce the rules on how farm waste must be treated. With the project, FWAG offers farmers a way to recycle the black plastic film which is used to wrap up silage. The farmers can dispose of the plastic at collection places for a very cheap price. The cost of recycling will be met by the project partners and sponsors who work with FWAG on the black plastic project (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) spoke of a reaction that farmers show when they have received advice from FWAG. He said that the knowledge which the farmers got from the advisers was helping them to build up a ‘confidence’. This ‘confidence’ was something they needed in their correspondence with the specialists from the Environment Agency and English Nature. The knowledge is helpful given the above-mentioned expert-farmer knowledge struggle (see chapter 4.1.2). The farmers’ local knowledge is different from the specialists’ expert knowledge and both groups tend to depict the other’s knowledge as less valuable and less relevant. This could lead to communication problems, especially in a conflict between the farmer and the conservation agencies about the farmers’ environmental behaviour (MCHENRY 1997). In such a situation it can help the farmers, and make them confident, to have some environmental expert knowledge. FWAG offers the farmers a way to obtain this knowledge from them, and most farmers are more receptive to information from FWAG than to information from the conservation agencies (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

#### 5.1.3.2 The farmers satisfaction with the advice and the key factors to that

FWAG’s advice with regard to the farmers’ interest in conservation

In FWAG’s farmer feedback forms, the farmers were asked about their satisfaction with the advice. Table 6 details the questions and the answers of 79 farmers in the first and second quarter of the year starting at the 1 April 2004.

The data suggest that all questioned farmers found the advice given relevant or very relevant for their farming business. Almost all stated they had become more aware of the environmental potential of their holding, and a huge majority said that it was likely that they would incorporate the proposals given into their business. All respondents found that the advice was given in a professional or most professional manner, and the vast majority thought the advice had been value for money.

Did you consider the advice given to be relevant to your farming business?	More relevant			Less relevant	
	1	2	3	4	5
	26	37	16	0	0
Has the advice given made you more aware of the environmental potential on your holding?	More aware		No increased awareness		
	1	2	3	4	5
	25	30	10	2	1
Will you incorporate the proposals into your farming business?	More likely			Less likely	
	5	4	3	2	1
	31	36	9	3	1
Did you find the advice was given in a professional manner?	Most professional			Least professional	
	5	4	3	2	1
	54	24	2	0	0
Where you were charged for the advice given, did you feel it was value for money? Please comment if you feel it was value for money.	Most value for money			Least value for money	
	5	4	3	2	1
	11	11	4	1	0

**Table 6:** Farmers' satisfaction with FWAG's advice, in numbers of farmers (n=76, not all respondents answered to all questions) (according to FWAG's feedback forms).

There were two evaluations carried out and presented by FWAG (KNIGHT 2005) about the farmers' satisfaction with the Farm-BAP which they had received by a FWAG adviser. One was a telephone survey of 50 participants, the other was a postal survey with 14 respondents. Both groups were asked the same questions. The 50 farmers had been drawn at random out of all the farmers who had received Farm-BAPs in the UK. The 14 farmers of the postal survey were all the lettuce suppliers of Sainsbury's. Their satisfaction with the advice ranked fairly higher than the answers of the farmers of the sample of 50. However, because there was no reason given for the difference, the two samples are subsumed to one sample of 64 farmers. The results of the surveys are listed in Table 7. Although in the report the results were interpreted in percentage terms, here they are presented in numbers of farmers because the sample is small and because so they are kept in a consistent format with the statements taken from FWAG's feedback forms.

The answers with regard to the overall satisfaction and the perceived ease to understand and implement the advice clearly confirm the farmers' satisfaction with the advice. In the study, the figures were interpreted as "86 % [and 100 %, respectively for the lettuce growers] were very pleased with the Farm-BAP visit and report, giving a score of four or five out of five. (...) 76 % [and 100 %, respectively] of farmers found that the advice was very easy to implement. They gave a score of four or five out of five (KNIGHT 2005, 34ff). The more



evenly distributed responses to the question concerning the increase of the farmers' understanding of conservation issues on the farm was interpreted positively, too. The majority of farmers had increased their understanding of conservation issues considerably (giving a score of three out of five). Many respondents had even substantially increased their understanding. (ibid)

Overall, how satisfied with the Farm-BAP visit and report were you?	Very satisfied			Not satisfied	
	5	4	3	2	1
	26	31	6	0	1
How much has the visit increased your understanding of conservation issues on the farm?	Very much			Not much	
	5	4	3	2	1
	7	17	29	10	1
How easy was the information to understand and implement?	Very easy			Difficult	
	5	4	3	2	1
	21	31	10	2	0

**Table 7:** Farmers' satisfaction (in numbers of farmers, n=64) with the Farm-BAPs (no explanation regarding the ranking was given) (KNIGHT 2005, 35ff).

In the study, also other details were given, which were interpreted as signs of the farmers' high satisfaction with FWAG. The farmers were asked whether they would like FWAG to make contact again. 46 respondents answered yes, and 15 answered no (3 farmers of the postal survey had not given any answer). 35 respondents of the telephone survey were interested in receiving information about a FWAG membership. This question was not asked in the postal survey (KNIGHT 2005, 40ff).

Some further details concerning the farmers' satisfaction are given in the report. It is emphasised that the seven farmers who participated in the trial Farm-BAP were all highly sceptical before the plans had been drawn up (it is not explained what they had been sceptical about, but the subsequent positive reactions suggest what their scepticism had probably been about). After the trials, "all seven were, first of all, relieved – the reports did not compromise their commercial viability. They were enthusiastic, the process [of drawing up the Farm-BAP] was not lengthy and they were able to act on the recommendations" (KNIGHT 2005, 5).

An earlier independent survey confirmed equally good satisfaction of farmers. "Overall, respondents were very satisfied with the advice given at the time the Farm-BAP was prepared" (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 16). In the report 28 farmers were asked their opinion. It was found that 24 respondents were satisfied with the content of the Farm-BAPs. Of these, 16 also highlighted aspects of the Farm-BAP which they were less satisfied with. Four expressed outright dissatisfaction with the Farm-BAP. The sources of satisfaction of Farm-BAPs for farmers and growers were as follows:

- the focused and targeted approach, particularly on the key species which provides clear aims and purpose and something by which to judge progress;

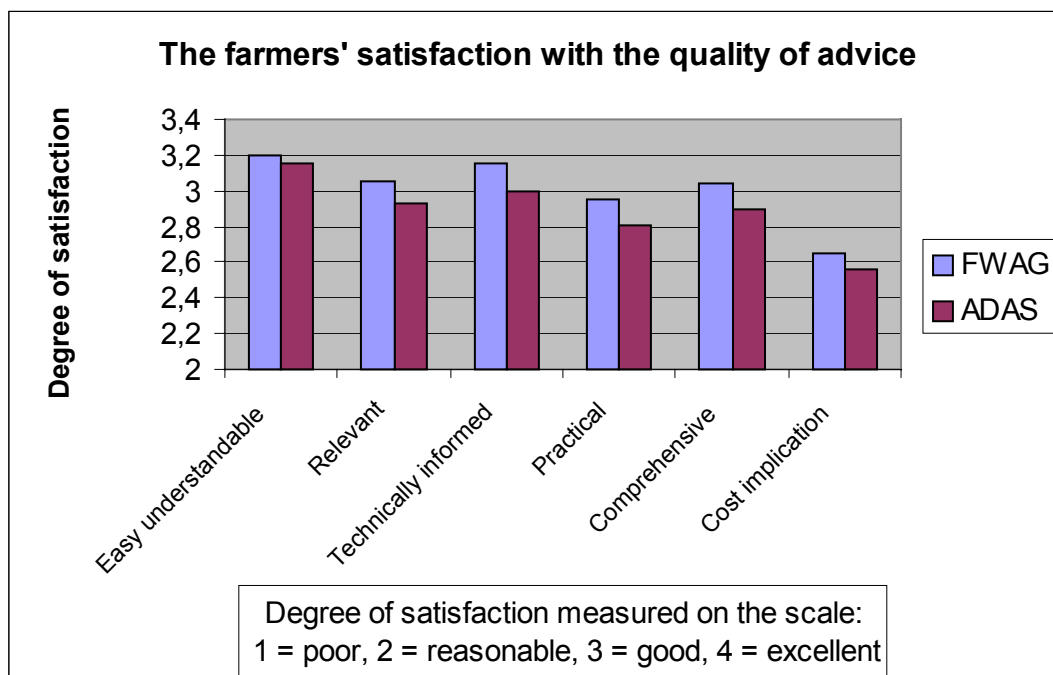
- the limited coverage is manageable and attainable;
- the personalised and farm specific advice, [which] at the same time places the farm in a broader context;
- the presentation provides a useful PR tool” (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 17).

One reason for the overall high satisfaction was the way the FWAG advisers carried out the advice visits and prepared the Farm-BAP with the farmers. “The contact with and input from the adviser was highlighted by respondents as key to their positive response to the process of Farm-BAP preparation. The enthusiastic and professional approach of advisers was particularly welcomed by farmers and growers. The on-site discussion between adviser, farmer/grower and staff was highlighted as an essential part of the process” (explicitly referred to by 9 respondents) (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 16).

The Economic Evaluation of Free Advice Programmes by ECOTEC (2000) also provides information about the farmers’ satisfaction with FWAG’s advice. It compared the performances of FWAG and ADAS, the other big organisation, which delivers conservation advice to farmers in England. Farmers were asked the question: “Were you happy with the service and would you recommend it to others?” (ibid, 55). 90 % of the farmers answered that they were happy, and 92 % said they would recommend the service to others. This example was better for FWAG than it was for ADAS. With their service, 85 % were happy, and 88 % would recommend it to others (ibid).

The majority of the recipients of conservation advice was satisfied with the content and the credibility of the advice. It was also reiterated that all the FWAG advisers were enthusiastic (ECOTEC 2000, 56). As can be seen in Figure 1, the farmers were asked to rate the quality of advice in six categories.

**Figure 1:** The farmers’ satisfaction with the quality of advice (ECOTEC 2000, 54)



The results regarding the first categories suggest an overall good satisfaction. Only the satisfaction with the information given to the cost implications performed between reasonable and good. In all categories, FWAG performs slightly better than ADAS (ECOTEC 2000, 54).

The farmers were also asked whether they felt they were provided with the right amount of information by the conservation advisers. Most of the respondents were satisfied with the amount. 11.1 % of the FWAG respondents stated it was not enough (9.0 % for ADAS), 84.7 % felt it was the right amount (86.6 % for ADAS) and 4.2 % found the information too much to absorb (4.5 % for ADAS) (ECOTEC 2000, 79).

One sign of satisfaction with the advice, which was assessed in the study by WINTER et al. (1996) is the farmers' willingness to pay for the advice. The proportion of surveyed farmers who would have been willing to pay for the free advice visits was found to be much higher among recipients of a FWAG visit (65 %) than among those who had been advised by ADAS (32 %). FWAG fared also comparatively well in the farmers' response to the question, whether they felt that the advice had had a positive effect on the value of the farm (47 % for FWAG and 31 % for ADAS) (WINTER et al. 1996, 91)

The respondents of the ECOTEC study also expressed which aspects of the advice they had not been satisfied with. Apart from the insufficient explanations about the commercial implications and costs, some farmers felt that some advisers were rather inexperienced. Some farmers said that the expertise of the adviser who had visited them was insufficient to assess the feasibility of certain conservation actions. They were also found to be overly optimistic of what a farmer could do for nature conservation, given the cost constraints and the lack of availability of grants. (ibid, 56).

Generally, representatives in the farmer organisations tend to speak highly of FWAG's expertise, although one representative of a farming organisation said that the farmers management expertise was not improved enough through the provision of advice (ibid, 52). The NFU commends FWAG for its role in environmental protection in the wider countryside (Winter et al. 1996b, 244).

HOWIE from the NFU confirms the farmers' and the NFU's satisfaction with FWAG. She praised the the positive way the FWAG advisers deal with the farmers (see above and chapter 5.2.1). Furthermore, she assumed that the FWAG conservation advice would make the farmers emotionally happy because they would see more sense behind their work if they enhanced wildlife on their farms.

### FWAG's advice with regard to public pressure and compliance with environmental regulations

In the context of this thesis, it is not possible to say whether the farmers are satisfied with how the FWAG advice influences their feeling to be exposed to public pressure. The advisers could not answer this question, and in none of the surveys was there any information about this question. Equally, no direct statements could be found concerning the satisfaction of farmers who received advice from FWAG on environmental regulations.

For both aspects, it can only be assumed, that the overall satisfaction with the advice includes satisfaction with these two interests.

**Discussion: Are the farmers satisfied with FWAG's advice and why?**

**Strengths:** The farmers' overall satisfaction with the advice appears to be very high. Key to this seems to be the trusting relationship between advisers and farmers, which is explored in chapter 5.1.1.

Most of the farmers were very content with the Farm-BAPs. The farmers liked the targeted focus on key species because it showed a clear aim which seemed attainable. The contact with and input from the enthusiastic and professional advisers during the on-site discussion was explicitly praised. The Farm-BAPs were found to be easy to understand and implement and to increase the farmers' comprehension of conservation. Many farmers were satisfied that the Farm-BAPs did not compromise the businesses' viability (MORRIS & WINTER 2002; KNIGHT 2005).

The farmers have found the Landwise free advice visits easy to understand, relevant, technically informed, practical, and comprehensive. The amount of information given on such visits was estimated to be the right amount (WINTER et al. 1996; ECOTEC 2000).

Most farmers stated their understanding and interest in conservation was raised after the advice (KNIGHT 2005). For many farmers the reason to call FWAG had been that they wanted advice about how to put a certain conservation project into practice. It was not mentioned specifically whether or not they were satisfied with how FWAG facilitated the implementation. Due to the overall satisfaction it is likely that they were satisfied with that aspect.

**Probably strength:**

It is not always possible to discern which parts of the advice made the farmers satisfied since the studies provided little information on that. No clear conclusion can be drawn on the effect which the advice had on the farmers' feeling of being exposed to public pressure. It is also not possible to tell how satisfied farmers are with the advice on how to comply with agricultural regulations. There are, however, indications that FWAG is in a good position to meet the farmers' needs regarding these two aspects. For the perceived public pressure, there are signs that farmers understand if they take up the advice and implement conservation works, this will be well received by the public.

With regard to the advice for the compliance with regulations, the trusting relationship farmers have with FWAG makes it probable that the farmers prefer to be advised on this issue by FWAG rather than by a government body. If the farmers think that the FWAG advisers have sufficient expertise on the regulations, it can therefore be assumed that they are satisfied with their advice.

**Weaknesses:** The advisers did not always give sufficient explanations about the commercial implications and costs of their proposals. Some appeared to be inexperienced in assessing the feasibility of certain conservation actions on farms (WINTER et al. 1996; ECOTEC 2000)..

## 5.2 The achievement of environmental aims

### 5.2.1 The achievement of the technical aims of conservation advice

#### 5.2.1.1 The quality of the advice

The general requirement with regard to the quality of advice is:

#### **General requirement VI:**

##### **Conservation advice must**

- **encourage the farmers to optimize the conservation outcome compared with what he or she would have done without advice**
- **deal with a comprehensive range of environmental issues and also have regard for social and economic implications**
- **written advice must be so that farmers can recall it well: concise, strikingly visualized, implementation oriented but containing objectives and a work programme**

##### **Where suitable to the farm situation, the advice should**

- **focus on the whole farm, not only on single features**
- **have considerable effect on priority conservation issues**

### **The way FWAG advises to encourage a good conservation outcome**

Apart from the trustful relationship between farmer and adviser, there are more personal qualities which help the advisers to encourage the farmers to optimize their conservation outcome. The following statements explain how four FWAG advisers work. However, there can be no generalization regarding how individual FWAG advisers work. The FWAG advisers interviewed for this work were chosen according to whom KNIGHT, the former technical director of FWAG, recommended as a successful adviser. Therefore, it can be assumed that in parts, the explanations mirror an optimal way of working. As KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) himself conceded, only 20 % of all the 120 FWAG advisers had very good advisory qualities, and 60 % had pretty good ones.

KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) sees the voluntary principle as the core of the spirit of FWAG. He thinks, it was a very important aspect in nature conservation with farmers that the farmers can do conservation because they want to and not because they need to. Therefore, he regarded *voluntary* conservation advice as a vital instrument beside incentivising instruments, such as the agri-environment schemes. To him, it seemed that the blend of encouraging farmers and remaining independent and confidential could be a favourable precondition to improve the conservation performance of farmers.

A very important skill for conservation advisers was judging how far a farmer can be taken in the direction of conservation at a certain time. The adviser THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) said: "You try to get the farmer to do a little step and then see if he also follows you to the next, and the next, and if then he says 'stop', you stop. And that varies with the farmer, the day,

their mood, how much money they get [for example from an agri-environment scheme].” To achieve this, it is vital to empathise with the farmer (ibid). THORNE emphasised, that patience was necessary for the advisers, because conservation was a “new territory” for many farmers and they needed gradually to see where they were led. Also KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) stated: “Once [the farmer] has done the first one or two things and sees that they are very simple, he is more likely to take more steps, but that takes time.”

Both KNIGHT and THORNE agreed that it was often essential not to give too much information on too many issues. KNIGHT said: “Sometimes, you should rather give one or two simple ideas. Keep it simple, farmers cannot cope with too much” (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). The adviser should ensure that the farmer ‘owns’ these few ideas. As THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) assures, this is important because the farmer will carry out the conservation work better if they are convinced that it is good to do them. To achieve this, it is essential to tell the farmers *why* the proposed measure is ecologically important. It is not so important to tell them the *hows* (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE suggests “Tell them what you want to achieve in terms of condition of land and vegetation, give the farmer a vision.”

FWAG sees a strong element in motivating farmers to “demonstrating that necessary actions [for conservation can] be undertaken and, particularly important, demonstrating that these actions delivered the required result” (KNIGHT 2005, 5).

The FWAG advisers try to get the farmers interested in and enthused about the wildlife on their farm because they hope that then they would like to do conservation. KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) tells how to achieve that: “You need to find a way to the farmer, to empathise with him. We praise him: ‘your farm is really important [for wildlife], these flowers you have here are not everywhere’. That gives him pride”. KNIGHT also told that he had showed a farmer the bats on his farm with a bat detector. Another adviser explained that she had told farmers that barn owles needed mice and mice needed tussocky grass. To show this, she had placed traps in tussocky grass. When the farmers saw the catch, they were convinced that the bit of tussocky grass they left was good for barn owls (MILLS 2006, pers. comm.). To encourage farmers by making visible the results of their work, FWAG devised a simple monitoring in the context of their Farm-BAP project. The farmers should record species by absence/presence and the quantity of their preferred habitats was measured. The assessment of KNIGHT was that the monitoring had undoubtedly encouraged the farmers to go on with their conservation efforts (KNIGHT 2005, 16).

To increase the conservation yield, also more active approaches from the FWAG advisers are needed. Good advisers must have negotiation and persuasion skills to make the farmer do a particular activity. KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) said: “a good adviser will look for what the farm needs, not only for what the farmer wants. The challenge for the adviser is to change what the farmer wants”. THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) added that a good adviser always had to satisfy the farmer’s agenda, but also needed to open the farmer’s eyes to further, more effective conservation options. KNIGHT gave an example for that: A farmer wanted to create a pond, but the FWAG adviser saw that the place to dig it was valuable wet grassland. The adviser persuaded the farmer to dig the pond in another place and told him that he better ought to prioritise the management of the wet grassland on his farm.

The FWAG adviser LOMAS (2005, pers. comm.) emphasised that conservation success on farms is often visible only in the long run. This is because conservation on farms, which are businesses, is bound to involve compromises. With a slight criticism to the conservationists,

she said: “[The success] rarely comes at the speed and with the commitment that nature conservationists would like to see.” THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) agreed: “I have a lot of anecdotes where I have been on farms years ago, and I thought ‘there is no way the farmer will ever do these [proposals]’, and I come back, and he has done them.”

### The conservation agencies’ satisfaction

Already in 1996, it was emphasised that FWAG advisers, in contrast to ADAS advisers, “are encouraged [by their line managers] to seek opportunities to provide advice on matters which have not been highlighted by the farmers in their requests for advice (WINTER et al. 1996, 56).

SPENCE, the programme manager for the FWAG farm advice grant in the RDS was positive about FWAG’s skills to deliver conservation focussed advice: “I don’t think FWAG gives advice in the way the farmers want to hear. They are committed conservationists, they really have a delivery ethic. I think you can’t always get the farmer as far as you would like, and at least [if advice is given in the way FWAG does] we have got something. It must always be that balance [between pushing farmers and leaving decisions up to them] and that’s why we feel it’s really important that FWAG has that credibility among farmers” (SPENCE 2005, pers. comm.).

ROBERTSON from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) thinks that FWAG could perform even better if the advisers were challenging the farmers a bit more: “We experience that most farmers are happy to go a bit further if you have the enthusiasm, the vision, the technical expertise. Maybe not at the cost of their business, but as long as they can achieve the same income, [you can take them far]” (ROBERTSON 2005, pers. comm.). He is also sceptical about the generally accepted view that FWAG was an appropriate organisation to ‘open the farmers’ doors for conservation’. This view is held by FWAG advisers (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.) and staff of the conservation agencies (SPENCE, TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.), who think that because of their trusting relationship to farmers, FWAG functioned as an avenue to bring farmers to conservation. With regard to that argument, he feels that most farmers are not so closed and difficult to persuade to support conservation (ROBERTSON 2005, pers. comm.).

ROBERTSON emphasises that the advisers are all very different in their approach, but that some advisers need to be more missionary about conservation and promote more difficult conservation management. He experienced advisers who helped farmers to obtain money for conservation which did not imply much change for their farming management. ROBERTSON is sceptical concerning the FWAG approach to start with easy conservation suggestions and then wait for the farmers to voluntarily do the more demanding works some years later. “With FWAG I don’t see that they necessarily pursue that strategy and always go back in a few years time” (ROBERTSON 2005, pers. comm.).

None of the other persons interviewed for this work stated such concern. Nevertheless, one of them gave a more careful negative comment on FWAG, concerning an overly friendly application for the Higher Level Scheme. In addition, an anonymous RDS member who was occasionally met and questioned, assured, that the FWAG adviser she was working with, was so overly farmer-friendly that he was clearly compromising the environmental gain his advice could procure.

Another negative comment is from WINTER et al. (1996, 69). They found that the written advice was very often bland, “and sometimes reflected an unwillingness by the adviser to

challenge a farmer's original intentions, which might have had more to do with profit, game, or visual preferences than with wildlife.”

**Discussion: Does FWAG encourage the farmers to deliver a better conservation outcome than they had initially intended?**

When asked if they think FWAG was good at encouraging the farmers to bring about a high conservation outcome, the conservation agencies gave contradictory responses. The reason for the contradictory assessment appears to be that the quality of all FWAG advisers varies. ROBERTSON (2005, pers. comm.) has obviously come across advisers who had a weaker approach to conservation advice than the advisers cited in this thesis. Some incidental comments from other conservationists strengthen this impression. However, all six conservationists, interviewed for this thesis have been asked about their criticisms on FWAG, and four have issued no concerns regarding their conservation motivation.

Another possible reason is that ROBERTSON applies stricter standards and wants FWAG to achieve a higher conservation outcome, which the other conservationists do not aim at (This aspect is dealt with in more detail in the discussion to FWAG's conservation motivation in chapter 5.2.3).

It seems to be logical that with encouraging, enthusing and persuading the farmers, the advisers will cause them to carry out a better conservation management than they initially had intended. That is because the advisers seem to take account of the importance of the personal aspect of advice. It seems natural that a trusting relationship between the farmer and the conservation adviser is a good precondition for achieving a positive outcome. This appears to be important for nature conservation since the subject seems to be sensitive for many farmers. Some farmers may even be unwilling to accept information from conservationists. Therefore FWAG is probably in a good position to get its message to the farming community.

An assessment on the 'average' FWAG adviser is impossible without a wider survey. Complaints were issued that some advisers were more interested in bringing about advantages for farmers than for the environment (ROBERTSON 2005, pers. comm.). Nevertheless, it is assumed that most FWAG advisers try to work in a way which is similar to the above described. This is backed up by the comments of WOODHOUSE and KNIGHT (both 2005, pers. comm.) that today more advisers have a conservation background than in the past.

**Rather a strength:** Overall, the capability to develop a trusting relationship with the farmers *and* to encourage, enthuse and persuade them to bring about a better conservation outcome, appears to be a **strength** of many FWAG advisers. However, it cannot be ruled out that possibly a few FWAG advisers are **weak** at that.

**FWAG's advice on a comprehensive range of issues**

In the evaluation which WINTER et al. published in 1996, the contents of FWAG's advice were categorised as 'wildlife', 'landscape', and 'access' issues. Resource protection issues were not mentioned. Today, FWAG's advice focusses more on resource protection issues than at that time (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). Between 1992/93 and 1998/99, the extent to which FWAG advisers dealt with this subject increased. Visits in which 'pollution control', 'fertilizer management' and 'pesticide management' were dealt with increased by 35 %, 24 %



and 20 %, respectively (WINTER et al. 2000, 40). However, there has been an overall increase in the frequency of advice provided by FWAG, so the seemingly high increase of cases where resource protections has been dealt with is not quite so high. Compared with species, habitats and landscape issues, resource protection is rarely dealt with (ibid).

SPENCE (2005, pers. comm.) from the RDS finds that FWAG advisers have a “geared knowledge of biodiversity management and specific conservation skills. Although they have some individuals who are good with water and soil resource management skills, we don’t perceive that as a strength of FWAG”. TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) from English Nature agrees with her appraisal of their biodiversity advice. LETTS (2005, pers. comm.) from the Environment Agency feels that FWAG advisers are often good at getting a ‘strategic overview’ of the farm’s different conservation needs. They see both problems with and chances to enhance wildlife, and at the same time know if resource protection issues need priority. Often they then find solutions which benefit several conservation resources at the same time. LETTS said further that the Environment Agency is responsible for resource protection on farms, and English Nature for species and habitats. FWAG was better than these two at “tying it all up together”. However, altogether it is a characteristic of FWAG that the advisers have very different backgrounds and skills, so that statements regarding their general quality are always uncertain (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

A weakness which has already been identified in chapter 5.1.3, is that FWAG does not advise comprehensively enough on the commercial implications of its conservation proposals.

TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) clarified that it is absolutely fundamental that conservation advisers who want to be funded from government departments must have regard for the three pillars of sustainability and FWAG does not have that. SPENCE agreed with him and added that FWAG had not tackled the interdependency of the environment and economic sustainability on the farms (2005, pers. comm.). For to achieve that, the conservation advisers do not need to have a high expertise in business advice. They need to understand the impacts of their conservation advice on a farming business and signpost farmers to more detailed business advice if needed. Some of the FWAG advisers have a sound comprehension of farm businesses. But the FWAG management neglected to bring those advisers who have such business skills together with those who do not have it, and share good practice across the organisation (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.). He demands that farmers need to be given ‘integrated’ advice and FWAG must offer an ‘advice package’. If FWAG could not offer that alone, they should establish corporate partnerships with other advisers for advice on issues which are not at the core of their competencies. This applies for business advice and resource protection (SPENCE 2005, pers. comm.).

What DEFRA wants from FWAG is that the advisers’ skills are improved consistently over the whole of the UK. The FWAG managers needs to define which skills all their advisers need, identify their knowledge gaps and react with training to bring all up to a certain level. For this purpose FWAG got a £ 250,000 grant from the DEFRA Environmental Action Fund in 2005 (CLAIRE, 2005, pers. comm.).

However, the conservationists have different views concerning the extent to which FWAG ought to develop skills which the adviseers as yet lack. There is a cost to training, and SPENCE from the RDS as well as PETER ROBERTSON from the RSPB consider that it would be best if FWAG was concentrating on what the organisation is best at: “The core of their business should be wildlife and biodiversity surrounded by resource protection, surrounded by business

management. They need to be aware of all the issues and give the advice in context” (ROBERTSON 2005, pers. comm.). Equally, TRUEMAN suggests “FWAG may decide that they want to have 100 excellent conservation advisers who can point the farmers to 100 agronomists if need be”.

#### **Discussion: Does FWAG advise on a comprehensive range of issues?**

**Strength:** According to the comments of the conservationists, the advice with regard to the conservation of species and habitats is obviously a **strength** of most FWAG advisers.

**Neither ... nor:** The organisation as a whole does not cover resource protection issues sufficiently, but it has not explicitly been identified as a shortcoming. Hence, it is neither regarded as a weakness, nor as a strength of FWAG.

**Weakness:** Advice on the commercial implications which can arise from the implementation of the proposed conservation measures is clearly a weakness of FWAGs advice provision. Although this does not directly concern the achievement of conservation aims, it does hamper the wider policy aims to be met and the long-term aim of achieving a sustainable farming. However, overall the influence which conservation advisers have on the viability of farms appears to be low. Therefore this is regarded as a weakness at the margin of its remit.

#### **Good (and bad) practice of the written advice**

The written advice is potentially important to help the farmers recall the proposals of the advice visits. In order to result in effective conservation, it should be adapted to the farmers’ likings and provide proper information on objectives and implementation of conservation works.

In the context of the delivery of the Farm-BAPs, it was mentioned that farmers learn better by pictures and practical exercises than by long texts (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 29). FWAG has realised this and strives for a good visualization. Beside a range of illustrated information sheets, a particularly farmer focussed form of information material are the ‘cab-cards’. The name comes from the tractor cabin, where the farmers should take the cards. The small portable weatherproof diagrams were prepared to illustrate best practice on the farm and help to guarantee that staff and contractors, too, became involved in the conservation work (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.). Characteristics, which make the visualization material more adapted to the farmers’ requirements, are conciseness, striking illustrations and implementation-orientation (KNIGHT 2005, 7f). Because of the good visualization and the clear definition of objectives, the overwhelming majority of FWAG advisers, who were questioned for the evaluation of the Farm BAPs, saw the Farm-BAP as a very useful tool for increasing awareness and understanding biodiversity issues (MORRIS & WINTER 1999, 29). Also TRUEMAN spoke positively about FWAG’s information material. He lauded especially the web-area Farmland Biodiversity (see chapter 3) to be instructive self-help material.

WINTER et al. (1996) compared the written advice provided by FWAG and ADAS. ADAS advisers were found to be more likely to provide the written advice in *letter* format, as opposed to a more comprehensive *report* format (87 % of the cases, compared with 69 % of the FWAG advisers). FWAG was also five times as likely as ADAS to include maps which showed areas to be considered for conservation management (51 % of the cases for FWAG

and 9 % for ADAS). This was interpreted as an indication, that the FWAG advice is somewhat more substantial (WINTER et al. 1996, 57).

The FWAG advice was not good with regard to the proportion of advice given on *existing* features, as opposed to the *creation of new* features. In one third of the written advice documents, no advice on existing features was given. This was regarded as worrying. FWAG fared worse than ADAS, with advice on existing features only being given in 63 %, compared with 71 % for ADAS (ibid, 61).

The specification of a clear conservation objective and the provision of a work programme were said to be indicators of a high quality advice. The numbers of cases in which objectives and work programme were given, were low. Only approximately 9 % of farmers advised by FWAG were given clear information about the conservation objective, and 15 % had received a work programme. ADAS performed even worse, they had done this in roughly half as many cases. The low numbers were interpreted as serious omissions (ibid, 62). In the site assessments, the surveyors found that the advice sometimes lacked imagination “in relation to the opportunities for genuinely creative conservation work”. Although the advice was generally favourable, the surveyors stressed their disappointment about the low amount of *excellent* advice and implementation. In FWAG’s defence, in relation to the three omissions, it was said that almost all the advice visits were first visits, all were free of charge, and often the farmers had had no experience with conservation before. In addition, it was pointed that conservation advisers do not only have to suit the advice to the site, but also to the interests of their clients. It was assumed that follow-up visits would include more excellent advice (ibid 72).

Overall, the result of the comparison of the written advice with the location on the farm to which the advice was given, was highly satisfactory. 96 % of the written advice was classified as good or fair advice. In the vast majority of cases, written advice had the potential for achieving benefit for wildlife and landscape, if it was implemented (ibid 71).

The farmers questioned by ECOTEC (2000, 52) regarded the quality of the FWAG advice as better in every category than ADAS’ advice, though differences were not pronounced. 89 % of the farmers visited by FWAG were happy with the service, compared with 82 % for ADAS. In this context, it was mentioned, that stakeholders from farming organisations, public bodies and the RSPB spoke highly of FWAG’s expertise. The vast majority of farmers ranked the FWAG advice as good in being “easy understand[able], relevant [to their business], technical[ly] informed, practical and comprehensive” (ibid, 54). The cost implications were found to be between reasonable and good.

### **Discussion: Is FWAG’s written advice appropriate to bring about a good conservation outcome?**

**Strength:** FWAG tries to tailor its technical information material to the farmer audience. This seems essential to encourage the farmers to consider the advice when making farm management decisions. The material was commended by FWAG advisers and TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) to be well suited to farmers and instructive.

The findings about the quality of FWAG’s written advice seem to indicate a strength. In 1996, FWAG’s written advice was concluded to be highly satisfactory, with 96 % being found good or fair and to be beneficial to wildlife when implemented. It was also found to be better than

ADAS' advice (WINTER et al. 1996). Also the ECOTEC study (2000) rated FWAGs advice as good overall.

Shortcomings were identified in the provision of conservation objectives and work programmes. Furthermore, FWAG advised considerably more on newly created landscape features than on existing ones. Though much good advice was uncovered, hardly any excellent advice was found. However, it was also argued that certain shortcomings in the advice were due to all visits studied being first visits. In these visits it would probably not be appropriate to expect too much detailed work. Furthermore, implementation of excellent advice could not be expected on mainstream farms which are constrained by financial conditions (WINTER et al. 1996). Against this background, the written advice of FWAG is concluded to be a satisfactory precondition for an effective conservation outcome.

On the whole, it appears to be a **strength** of FWAG to provide written advice which is likely to benefit wildlife; however, there are **weaknesses** in some of the details studied.

### **FWAG's whole-farm advice**

It is a general requirement that conservation advisers, in most cases, should pursue whole-farm advice. As explored in chapter 4.2.2, WINTER et al. (1996, 52) "classified advice as (...) whole farm (...) if the advice covered a wide range, not necessarily all, of the potential areas of a farm." No details can be given on how FWAG advisers proceed in giving whole-farm advice 'on the ground'.

In chapter 3, the operation of Landwise is explained. With this instrument, FWAG pushed ahead their delivery of whole-farm advice, after they had been much criticised in the 1980s for merely concentrating on cosmetic advice on individual features (WINTER 1996, 243). "FWAG advocates the whole-farm approach: through its 'Landwise' initiative, where a FWAG adviser undertakes a detailed analysis of the wildlife and habitat assets of the total farm environment, resulting in the farmer receiving a detailed report with recommendations for short and long-term management" (WINTER et al. 2000, 39). One advantage of the Landwise whole-farm approach was said to be to allow conservationists to pursue a targeted approach for connecting habitats over a wider range, as the distribution of farmland wildlife is viewed across a broader area (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.).

FWAG pioneered the whole-farm advice long before it was demanded by conservation agencies (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). KNIGHT explained that 18 years ago, he encouraged the FWAG advisers to look at the whole farm. The advisers thought that was not feasible, but KNIGHT insisted. To give whole-farm advice requires advisers to have a quick overview and to assess which features on the farm need attention. KNIGHT thinks that FWAG does whole-farm advice almost to 100 %. However, the reports the farmers get after the visits, should concentrate on the important issues (ibid).

The comments of the conservationists, regarding whether they thought FWAG was delivering whole-farm advice, were contradictory. TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) was of the opinion, that FWAG was good at that, and that they had indeed pioneered the whole-farm plan. He praised the positive co-operation of FWAG with MAFF and English Nature in developing the Landwise approach. Similarly, ROBERTSON (2005, pers. comm.) from the RSPB agreed with FWAG: "They claim that [the whole-farm approach] is their strength, and there is some truth

in that". SPENCE (2005, pers. comm.) from the RDS commented on this only very briefly: "On the whole, it tends not to be whole-farm, that is not their strength."

In 1996, WINTER et al. found that, based on the above definition, slightly more than 20 % of FWAG's written advice was in a whole-farm format. This was starkly at odds with FWAG's claim that the advisers were giving whole-farm advice in 65 % of their first visits. This figure comes from FWAG's own internal monitoring, which is entirely dependent on the returns of the advisers. In FWAG's defence, it must be pointed out that "FWAG adopt a *whole-farm approach* rather than claim to give advice leading to a *whole-farm plan*" (ibid, 58). 40 % of the farmers whose farms were subject to the assessment of the written advice claimed to have received whole-farm advice. The most likely explanation of the two discrepancies was suggested to be that the adviser and the farmer perceive the advice as whole-farm, because they walk, and talk about, the whole farm. Nevertheless, the subsequent report only refers to certain features and is therefore categorised as feature specific (ibid). In 2000, WINTER et al. commented more positively about FWAG's whole-farm approach (see above).

### **Discussion: Does FWAG pursue whole-farm advice?**

The comments conservationists give on the question of whether they perceive FWAG's advice as whole-farm vary. Some aspects in the interviews gave the impression, that positive comments should be given greater weight. TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) for instance commented positively and gave reasons for his assessment. SPENCE's (2005, pers. comm.) negative comment was given rather incidentally and all her other comments were in support of FWAG. Although ROBERTSON's (2005, pers. comm.) was very critical on some points, he was very supportive of FWAG on this issue. The differences are probably also due to the unclear definition of whole-farm advice. SPENCE could hold a more demanding view on whole-farm advice than TRUEMAN and ROBERTSON.

**Probably strength:** It seems likely that WINTER's (1996) suggestion is true that the advice was often given in a whole-farm manner – meaning that the farmer and the adviser had walked and talked about large parts of the farm - but not reported so. This assessment is backed up by the fact that FWAG claims that the whole-farm approach was its strength and that its advisers have been encouraged to pursue it for many years. Therefore, it would be very surprising if the advisers were not working according to the whole-farm approach. It certainly depends on the duration the advisers spend on a farm how 'whole-farm' the advice can be. Although it was mentioned that the FWAG advisers spend considerably longer visits than the advisers from ADAS (see page 58), some visits may not be long enough to touch on all the conservation issues of a farm. Despite these restrictions, it appears to be likely that it is a **strength** of FWAG to walk and talk about large parts of the farms and advise on several different features. Due to the unclear definition of whole-farm advice, however, it remains to the personal definition of each reader whether this approach to whole-farm advice satisfies his/her own demands or not.

### **Targeting priority conservation issues**

It would be positive, if the advice was targeted with a focus on priority conservation issues, such as rare species or habitats, or sites which are especially vulnerable to pollution from agricultural activities (HOOPER, LETTS 2005, pers. comm.).

Traditionally, the way in which FWAG works does not favour a targeted approach to conservation, because FWAG works reactively. The advisers wait for farmers to make contact. They only rarely approach farmers to pursue a conservation aim in a specific area. When the advisers walk around on the farm together with the farmers, they look for sites which need particular attention. It is sometimes only by chance that they encounter valuable habitats or become aware of other priority issues. The reason for the advisers' reactive operation is that they do not want to be a threat to the farmers, but they want to help the farmers, when they decide they need advice (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.).

In Somerset, the advisers work in a more targeted way. They work together with the Environment Agency who tells them which areas within river catchments are especially sensitive to diffuse pollution from agriculture. In these areas, FWAG proactively contacts the farmers and offers advice (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE made clear that such work is done often, and not only in his county. Also the case described in chapter 5.2.1, where English Nature asked the adviser THORNE to visit a farmer whose farm was in an SSSI and to encourage him to apply for the agri-environment scheme, is an example for a targeted approach. LOMAS is also aware, that the Environment Agency would like FWAG to be more targeted in its approach. Although she apparently prefers to wait until the farmers make contact with her, she said that there was a way to work proactively without imposing herself on the farmers. To achieve that, the Environment Agency contacts the farmer whose behaviour they want to change. In a letter, they tell him or her what they expect to be changed, and they suggest at the same time that FWAG could help them with a free visit (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.).

Once the farmer has made contact with FWAG, the advisers have means to find out about particular conservation needs on the farm, which the farmer may not be aware of. An opportunity for targeting is provided by the Natural Areas from English Nature. Natural Areas are sub-divisions of England, each with a characteristic association of wildlife and natural features. For the Natural Areas, features of conservation importance are described and conservation objectives are drawn up (ENGLISH NATURE 1997, 3). KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) mentioned, that the advisers use the landscape character maps and the explanations in the Natural Area profiles to find out about priority conservation issues in the area where the farm is situated. LOMAS (2005, pers. comm.) said that she works with the County Biodiversity Action Plan, which defines local target species and habitats. However, both advisers feel that also without these plans, the local advisers would know the locally important conservation issues, and would include them in their advice.

The Farm-Biodiversity Action Plan (Farm-BAP) (see chapter 3) aids the targeted approach. This plan suggests what should be done on the farm to enhance four target species or habitats. The farmer and the adviser choose the species and habitats from the local Biodiversity Action Plan. As the species and habitats in the local BAP are priority conservation targets, the Farm-BAP provides for a targeted conservation approach. However, some advisers raised concerns that those species and habitats, the enhancement of which would bring about highest conservation outcome, were not always chosen. Often those species were chosen, which were easiest to enhance (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 665). This complaint is sustained by Knight (2005, 26f). Farmers in a certain area all received Farm-BAPs focusing on the brown hairstreak - a butterfly "likely to be found on the majority of their farms" (ibid).

HOOPER (2005, pers. comm.) from the RDS identified it as one of FWAG's shortcomings that they do not target their advice to regional needs. Equally ROBERTSON (2005, pers. comm.)



(RSPB) wishes that FWAG was less reactive and would prioritise their advice more to target areas. He also felt that FWAG was rather weak at affecting threatened habitats.

In FWAG's defence it should be pointed out that targeting of priority conservation issues is not its avowed aim. FWAG's Mission Statement (see chapter 2.1) can be interpreted so that FWAG wants to enhance wildlife on the farms of its clients if the clients want that too (FWAG 2005c). With such a position, it is more likely to bring about enhancement of common species in mainstream farming land. Equally, one of the questions which FWAG wanted to answer in their Farmland Biodiversity Project, for which the BAPs were drawn up, was how to best enhance wildlife on intensively used farms (KNIGHT 2005, 4).

### **Discussion: How does FWAG target priority conservation issues?**

**Slight weakness:** Traditionally FWAG rarely targeted its work on certain farms which were situated in an area of priority conservation concern. The advisers waited until a farmer made contact with them and advised wherever the farm was. However, nowadays some local FWAGs do work with conservation agencies who want them to target certain areas, and THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) confirmed that targeted projects had become important. How many local groups work targeted cannot be said. In the past it was probably the exception rather than the rule, because the FWAG advisers did not want to threaten the farmers. The comments from THORNE suggest that FWAG is working more targeted today. Nevertheless the conservationists still feel that this aspect needs improvement. Because of this, and since FWAG traditionally worked reactive, it is assumed that not targeting farms of high conservation value is rather a **slight weakness** of FWAG. It is assumed, however, that gradually, the advisers come to work more targeted.

**No weakness:** Once the advisers are on the farms they use certain information to target those issues, habitats and species which occur on the farm. This can be the local Biodiversity Action Plans or Joint Character Area information and probably other documents from specialist agencies and conservation NGO's. However, in the process of selecting the species for the Farm-BAPs it came to light, that the advisers and the farmers do not always select the appropriate species (MORRIS & WINTER 2002). The decision which issues are targeted on a farm is sometimes more dependent on the farmer's choice than on the conservation priorities. The advisers said that this was because FWAG works on the principle that farmers will deliver a better conservation outcome if they have 'ownership' of the issue or objective they have set out to achieve. In most cases it is assumed that the FWAG advisers will target the significant conservation issues, make the farmer aware of them and pursue them through the advice given. Hence, the targeting once FWAG is on the farm is not regarded as a weakness. There is not enough evidence to say whether this is a strength.

One aspect should be mentioned at the end. Although the interviewed conservationists wanted conservation advice to be targeted towards threatened species and habitats, it could be argued that this is no appropriate indicator of success for FWAG. When assessing the value for money of conservation advice, it seems logical to apply this criteria. However, this criteria is less significant for an organisation, like FWAG, who delivers advice to all farmers, and especially to those in areas not covered by conservation and landscape designations (WINTER 1996, 243). Threatened species or habitats are often absent from intensive farms in the wider countryside. Thus they cannot be enhanced.

### 5.2.1.2 The impacts of the advice

The general requirement which is to be analysed in the following chapter is:

**General requirement VII: The advice needs to be delivered so that it results in**

- **an increased environmental awareness of the farmers**
- **a high implementation rate**
- **a good quality of the conservation works with a high potential benefit for wildlife**

**The advice needs to reach also those farmers who have not yet been dedicated to conservation.**

#### **The farmers' increase in environmental awareness**

The environmental awareness includes both the farmers' *understanding* of the aims of conservation and of the ways to achieve it, as well as their *interest and willingness* to incorporate environmental concerns in their decisions (ECOTEC 2000).

Although the FWAG advisers have not directly said, which of their qualities, they regard as relevant for the raising of the farmers' environmental awareness, it can be inferred which of FWAG's qualities probably contribute to that. FWAG advisers have answered in full detail to the questions, what they regard as relevant in achieving a trusting relationship and to encourage the farmers to bring about a good conservation output. Because they stated, that the increase of the farmers' environmental awareness is as much their aim, as the implementation of conservation measures, it appears to be logical that the same qualities of FWAG contribute to the achievement of both objectives.

In the context of 'teaching' the farmers environmental understanding and making them interested in conservation, the explanations in chapter 4.1.2 about the power struggle between farmers and conservationists about whose conservation knowledge is right, are important. Many farmers are disinclined to accept advice from people whom they perceive as conservationists (MCHENRY 1997). Therefore, FWAG, which is perceived as a farming organisation with a conservation remit (see chapter 5.1.1), is in a favourable position to be listened to by the farmers. Beside those of FWAG's qualities, which are the reasons for the trusting relationship with the farmers, some of the qualities contributing to a good conservation implementation (see chapter 5.2.1.1), appear to be important for this chapter, too. So, favourable methods to increase the farmers' awareness, which were outlined earlier, appear to be to explain to them the reason and the objectives for nature conservation and to practically show them what is supposed to be the outcome of the proposed conservation and enhancement. In this way, they try to create and raise enthusiasm for wildlife, and this is a vital precondition for increasing understanding and the willingness to consider conservation in farming decisions. It seems, that also the habit of the advisers of assessing the personality of a farmer and to carefully tailor the amount of information and knowledge, is beneficial for an increase in their environmental awareness. LOMAS (2005, pers. comm.) stated that there was always scope for raising the farmers' environmental awareness, sometimes only very gradually, depending on the farmer's reception. "There is always a way of finding a point of contact, especially if you can relate it to his love of his farm".

In the context of the delivery of the Farm-BAPs, it was mentioned, that farmers learn better by pictures and practical exercises, then by long texts (WINTER et al. 1999, 29). As explained



in chapter 5.2.1.1, FWAG has realised this and strives to adapt their information material to the farmers' liking. They make the material concise, visually striking, and with a view to implementation.

FWAG does public relation work through a range of media channels. They disseminate information about their projects and farmers' conservation works (MILLS, 2006, pers. comm.). The Farm-BAP project in particular has had a lot of press coverage. Information about the project has been disseminated by articles for internal and external journals, including a monthly series in 'Farmers Weekly', presentations on agricultural shows. A tool FWAG had invented for this purpose was the 'Virtual Farm Walk' on the internet, which showed case studies of best conservation practice on farms (<http://www.fwag.org.uk>) (KNIGHT 2005, 13).

### The conservationists' satisfaction

According to the ECOTEC study, FWAG has been very successful in enthusing farmers about conservation, with the share of those who were surveyed very interested in conservation, increasing by 16 % (from 47 % before the advice to 63 %). This is significantly better than the performance of ADAS. The share of the farmers who were very interested in conservation after an ADAS visit diminished by 1.8 % (ECOTEC 2000, 80).

Equally, WINTER et al. (1996, 51) found that those farmers who had been advised by FWAG were "more likely to say that their views on conservation had changed in the last few years [which was the time in which the advice had been given] and significantly more likely to expect an increase in conservation activities over the next five years" (for the last statement, the numbers were 47 % for ADAS and 55 % for FWAG).

The majority of farmers questioned in the survey by KNIGHT (2005, 35ff) stated that the Farm-BAP process had increased their understanding of conservation issues *considerably*, some even *very much*.

LETTS (2005, pers. comm.) thinks that FWAG has made a huge difference when comparing the awareness farmers had ten years ago with that of today. ROBERTSON (RSPB) (2005, pers. comm.) said that FWAG had done "pretty solid work" to raise the environmental awareness of the farming community. However, he also feels, that this task was important ten years ago, but that FWAG has been overtaken by the progress farmers have made in their environmental understanding and management. TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) did not answer to the question, whether he thought that FWAG was good at raising the farmers environmental awareness. He confirmed, that FWAG was good at visualizing wildlife with images of species and habitats, both with maps, plans, cab-cards and in the internet.

### **Discussion: Is FWAG good at raising the farmers' environmental awareness?**

**Strength:** Apparently, FWAG has been successful in raising the farmers awareness. In the studies from 1996 and 2000, FWAG was more successful than ADAS. The comments of the interviewed conservationists confirm their satisfaction, although some concern was expressed that FWAG has recently lagged behind the progress of the farmers' own environmental awareness. Overall, it appears to be one of FWAG's **strengths** to raise the environmental awareness of farmers.

It is assumed that a reason for FWAG's success on this issue is that farmers are receptive to the advisers' messages because of FWAG's positive reputation as the farmers' friend. The

way the FWAG advisers go about raising the farmers' environmental awareness is regarded as a favourable approach. The most important factor in achieving this is probably the personal contact between adviser and farmer. It is vital to explain and to show the farmers the reasons and the intended outcome of proposed conservation works, and to stir their enthusiasm for wildlife. To carefully tailor the amount of information is also considered to be important. In terms of bringing the subject of conservation to the farmers' agenda, FWAG's PR work is possibly also important as it informs a larger proportion of farmers than they reach with their advice.

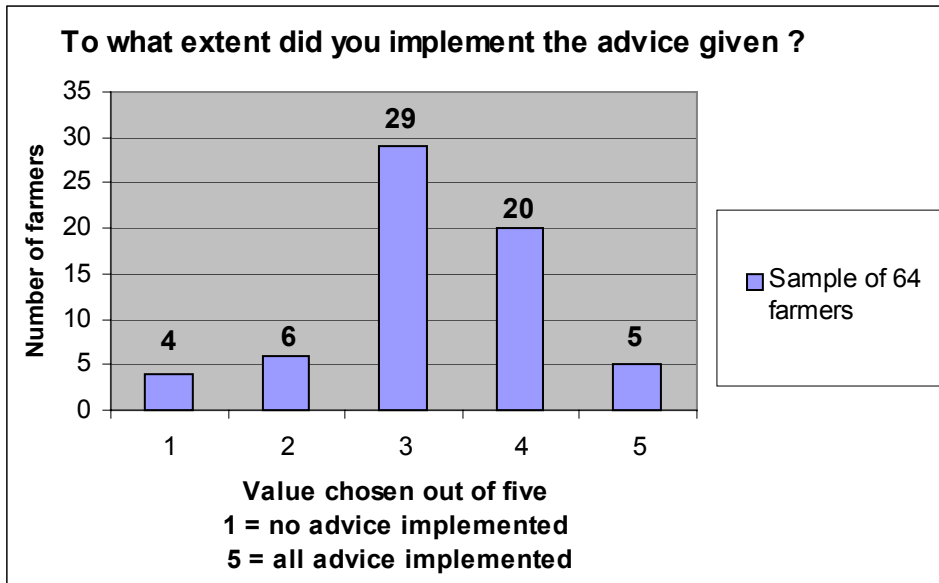
### **Good implementation of the advice**

It is important, that a large share of the proposals which the conservation advisers give to farmers, are implemented and bring about a good benefit for wildlife. The assessment of these criteria is based on the studies by KNIGHT (2005), ECOTEC (2000) and WINTER et al. (1996) (see chapter 2.3 for further details about these studies). None of the studies specified the time in between the visits and the interview or the site assessment.

In the study by KNIGHT (2005), farmers were asked about their satisfaction with the Farm Biodiversity Action Plans (Farm-BAPs) and with the advice, which FWAG gave in connection with the BAPs. (see chapter 5.1 for explanations about the Farm-BAPs and chapter 5.2.2 for the overall satisfaction). Two surveys were carried out, one with 50 farmers and another one with 14 (they are subsumed to one sample of 64 farmers, see chapter 5.2.2 for details). The implementation of the proposed farm management can be seen in Figure 2. The answers were scored from one: no advice implemented to five: all advice implemented. Five farmers had implemented all the advice, but also four had implemented none of the tasks specified in the Farm-BAPs.

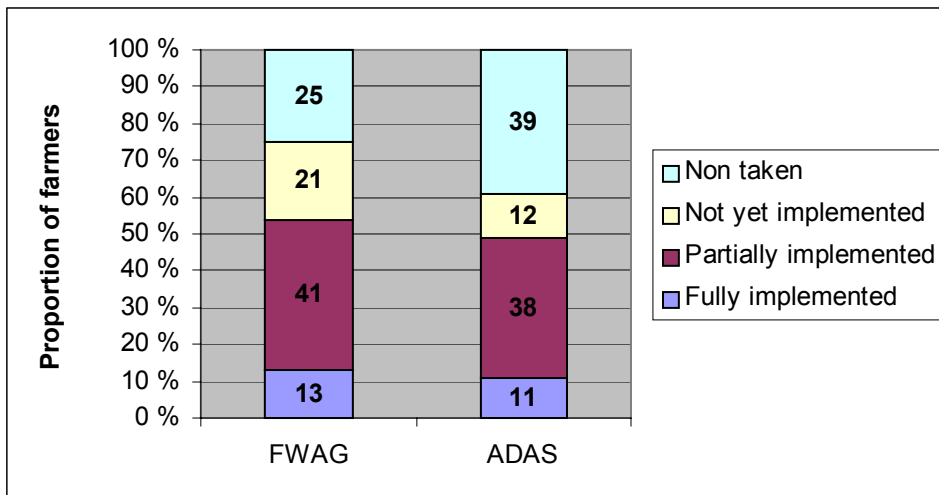
50 farmers were also involved in a simple monitoring of the results of their management. For the Farm-BAPs, the farmer and the adviser chose four target species. For these species, action to enhance their populations should be taken through the implementation of the Farm-BAP. The farmers recorded whether they perceived that the numbers of individuals of their target species had increased or decreased in the years after the implementation of the proposed management. 200 targets (56 different species and habitats, as some farmers had chosen the same species) were monitored. In 2 % of the cases (n=4), a general decrease had been found. In 62 % of the targets (n=124), the number of individuals did not change, 34 % of the targets (n=68) have had a general increase in individuals and 2 % of the targets (n=4) had a substantial increase (ibid).

**Figure 2:** Extent to which farmers had implemented advice (KNIGHT 2005).



In the ECOTEC study from 2000, it was found out, that the advice given by FWAG had slightly more effect on farmers’ behaviour than the ADAS advice with “25 % of farmers visited by FWAG doing nothing, compared to 39 % of farmers visited by ADAS. Approximately 13 % of the farmers had fully implemented the advice after a FWAG visit (10 % for ADAS). Around 54 % had implemented half of the proposals” (see Figure 3) (ECOTEC 2000, 81f).

**Figure 3:** Proportion of farmers who had implemented advice (ECOTEC 2000)



WINTER et al. (1996, 71) carried out an environmental site assessment on 70 farms after FWAG and ADAS advisers had visited them. The data from this survey is old, but the information about the the quality of the implemented advice can be regarded as more substantial than that of the more recent studies. This is because WINTER et al. have carried out a site assessment, whereas the other studies rely soly on farmer interviews.

In the study by WINTER et al. (1996), the ‘compliance’, the ‘quality of the work’ and the ‘potential benefit for wildlife’ was assessed. To assess the implemented works with consistency concerning these criteria, the surveyors were given the following advice: The criteria ‘compliance’ should “give a factual record of compliance of the work undertaken against the written advice. It should not involve a value judgement” (ibid, 68). The ‘quality of

the work' was assessed to "give a factual record of the competence with which the written advice had been implemented" (ibid). The 'potential benefits for wildlife' should "indicate the likely benefit to wildlife and landscape of the actions undertaken. It should not entail detailed evaluation, but should indicate whether there is a broad loss or gain

For a high quality of the implemented works, the quality of the written advice on that work is decisive. As written in chapter 5.2.1.1, 96 % of the written advice had been classified as good or fair, but hardly any was classified as excellent (WINTER et al. 1996, 71). In 87 % of the cases, the written advice given was potentially adequate to give benefits for wildlife and landscape (ibid, 72).

At the time, the assessment was carried out, 39 % of the proposed conservation tasks had been implemented with complete or partial compliance. The compliance rate of the farmers advised by FWAG was lower than for ADAS (35 %). This compliance rate was judged to be disappointing. The surveyors assumed that some of the tasks, which had not yet been put into practice, were likely to be implemented soon. They inferred that, eventually, an upper limit of implementation of 60 % of the proposed tasks would apply, and 40 % of tasks would not be acted upon (WINTER et al. 1996, 72).

The quality of the work actually undertaken was found to be broadly satisfactory, with 90 % achieving good or fair quality. *Good*' was defined as "*reasonably attainable good practice* rather than *outstanding* or *excellent*. (...) It implied that benefits to wildlife were being optimised rather than maximised - i.e. potential solutions were assumed to be agriculturally constrained. *Fair* advice was generally good, but omitted reference to key principles, and scope for potential improvements" (WINTER et al. 1996, 69).

87 % of the implemented works were concluded to provide fair or good benefits for wildlife and landscape (WINTER et al. 1996, 69).

An argument for FWAG's efforts to bring about effective conservation was issued by MORRIS & WINTER (2002, 668). In the 1980s FWAG had been "criticised for tokenism and promoting only a cosmetic approach to conservation without challenging the underlying methods of productive agriculture or the political power of farmers." Today, they stated, few would argue that case anymore.

### **Discussion: Is FWAG's advice implemented in good quantity and quality?**

Farmers definitely implement large parts of the advice. In the study by KNIGHT (2005) and by ECOTEC (2000), it was found that around 10 % and 13 %, respectively, of farmers had implemented all the advice given. About half of the farmers had implemented half of the proposals. The studies differed in that KNIGHT recorded 8 % of the farmers who had implemented nothing, and ECOTEC 25 %. In the ECOTEC study, FWAG rated much better than ADAS. The oldest, but most thorough survey (WINTER et al. 1996) stated a relatively low level of implementation. Only 39 % of the recipients of FWAG advice had put all or part of the proposals into practice. It was assumed that more work would be implemented, probably up to 60 %.

WINTER et al. found that 90 % of the implemented advice would be good or fair quality and 87 % provided fair or good benefits for wildlife and landscape. Farmers monitored the increase in numbers of the species to which the implementation was targeted, and found that the number of individuals of 34 % of the targets had generally increased (KNIGHT 2005).

When interpreting the amount and quality of implementation, the farmers' level of interests in conservation needs to be taken into account. The farmers surveyed by WINTER et al. (1996) and ECOTEC (2000) had received visits free of charge. They had asked for the visits voluntarily, but did not necessarily find them so important that they would pay for them. Many of them had not received conservation advice before. (WINTER et al. 1996, 71; ECOTEC 2000, 30). Not all of the farmers of the Farm-BAP survey had chosen to receive a Farm-BAP out of their free will. Some were driven by commercial considerations (MORRIS & WINTER 2002). These aspects show that not all farmers were keen on conservation. In addition, the authors assumed that the first visits did not always provide for the high degree of precision which would have been beneficial for an easy implementation (WINTER et al 1996, 71).

Taking these aspects into consideration, the implementation rate and the quality of implementation appears to be satisfactory. The benefits for wildlife appear to be satisfactory, too. However, they rely on two resources only. The data from WINTER et al. (1996) is relatively old, and the findings in the study by KNIGHT (2005) were derived from a very simple monitoring carried out by untrained farmers. Nevertheless, considering the statement from MORRIS & WINTER (2002, 668) that FWAG was no longer criticised for tokenism, it appears that nowadays FWAG tries to achieve the best possible outcome which can be attained within the farming constraints.

On the whole, it seems to be a **strength** of FWAG that its advice is implemented satisfactorily in terms of quantity and quality.

### **Effect on farmers who are not keen on conservation**

In the past, a common criticism of FWAG has been that the advisers only preach to the converted farmers and do not reach those who are responsible for environmental problems.

KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) reckoned that there were about 10 % – 20 % of farmers to whom FWAG would never come to speak to. 10 % - 20 % were keen on conservation and a middle layer of farmers would do conservation if the financial incentive was right. FWAG had access to the top and the middle layer (ibid). The adviser THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) agrees, that 10-15 years ago, FWAG only advised farmers who were aware of the environmental problems. Nowadays, he feels, FWAG reaches many more farmers and definitely does not just preach to the converted. As a possible reason for this he reckons the generally higher environmental awareness of farmers, and that many farmers feel for different reasons that they should have FWAG talking to them (see chapter 4.1.3). Since March 2005, the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) of the new agri-environment scheme opens a way for FWAG to get onto farms which they never would have come to without the scheme. That is because every farmer can apply for the scheme, and many farmers ask FWAG for help (ibid) (see chapter 4.2.3 1). In addition, the cold-calling (see above: Targeting priority conservation issues) helps the advisers in Somerset to get to farms they otherwise would not have come to (ibid)

LOMAS (2005, pers. comm.) agreed that FWAG was not good at teaching uninterested farmers in the past, but now the ELS will bring them to many farmers who are less inclined to do conservation. Another way how more farmers could come to FWAG is via the Quality Assurance Schemes (see chapter 4.1.1) where farmers are obliged to adhere to certain environmental standards for the processors or markets to which they deliver (ibid).

One example for an apparently successful case of Quality Assurance Scheme bringing farmers to FWAG who were rather uninterested in conservation is described in the report about the FWAG Farmland Biodiversity Project (see chapter 5.1). The Sainsbury's supermarket chain had informed their suppliers that they would like them to have a FWAG adviser on their farm to draw up a Farm Biodiversity Action Plan. Many of them had not been especially interested in conservation before, and partly participated in the Farm-BAP process only because the Sainsbury's wanted them to do so. Many of them stated afterwards that they were very satisfied with the Farm-BAP. They proved keen to manage biodiversity alongside commercial activity (KNIGHT 2005, 31)

LETTS (2005, pers.comm.), from the Environment Agency, expressed a complaint that on farm walks and workshops of FWAG, there are only those farmers coming "who are already good; the bad ones who pollute don't come." He wants FWAG to be more efficient in attending those farmers who are causing pollution. However, he confirmed that in a way FWAG is already better than others. "If I pay ADAS for a workshop and 50 farmers come and 5 % are bad farmers [that is not very efficient]. I am better off giving FWAG the money and they go directly to the bad farmers. [FWAG] are on the ground and know the [bad] farmers."

#### **Discussion: Does FWAG reach those farmers who are not keen on conservation?**

There was very little information to judge whether FWAG is good at reaching the farmers who are causing the most harm to the environment. LETTS (2005, pers. comm.) demanded that FWAG needed to improve in reaching 'the bad farmers who pollute', even though he sees FWAG as well-positioned to influence these farmers. It can be inferred from other comments of his that he thinks this because FWAG knows many farmers personally and has a good relationship with them. It can be expected that the trusting relationship FWAG has with many farmers places the organisation in a good position to reach the less interested farmers.

The FWAG advisers said that they did not only reach the keen farmers, but they also talked to a 'middle layer' of medium motivated farmers since the issue of conservation had become more important. One of the main reasons for that was cited to be the new Entry Level Stewardship which is a factor external to FWAG's influence.

Strength: It appears to be a **strength** of FWAG to reach a wide constituency of farmers and not only the top 10 % highly motivated farmers.

Weakness: To reach those farmers who are least interested in the environment and potentially the worst polluters is difficult for FWAG. Knight once guessed that these were 10 % – 20 % of the farmers. To FWAG's defence it should be mentioned that LETTS conceded, to reach these farmers to improve their management was probably difficult for any organisation.



### 5.2.1.3 The improvement of the agri-environment scheme's effectiveness

The general requirement by which FWAG is measured, reads:

**General requirement VIII:**

**Conservation advice must help to put the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) into practice. In particular, it must**

- **enable the complex HLS to function**
- **increase the uptake of ELS and HLS**
- **improve the environmental gain of ELS and HLS**

The role which the FWAG advisers have with advising for the two parts of the scheme is explained in chapter 5.1.2. The advisers take a vital role for the functioning of HLS because the farmers could probably not understand the scheme and prepare the Farm Environment Plan and the application documents on their own. Also to choose the HLS conservation work options for the farm requires specific expertise that most farmers lack (KLÖPPER 2006). Many FWAG advisers presently work almost exclusively to prepare farmers' application documents for the HLS (THORNE 2005, pers. comm). Also for the Entry Level Scheme FWAG advises and so contributes to a high uptake (THORNE 2005, pers. comm) (for the details on how they advise, see chapter 5.1.2).

Compared with other organisations, FWAG is very important in helping farmers to draw up applications. Almost half of the agreements submitted in 1999 were completed by FWAG (see Table 3) (WINTER et al. 2000, 36). FWAG's significance is also supported by the fact that in 2004, FWAG helped farmers to access schemes worth over £ 106 million (KNIGHT 2005, 18).

Concerning the increase of environmental gain of the scheme, the FWAG advisers claimed that the farmers for whom they were doing the applications were doing a better conservation than those of advisers from other advisory bodies. The adviser LOMAS (2005, pers. comm.) said that FWAG's aim is to explain to the farmers the sense the scheme has for wildlife and conservation. If the farmers knew this, they would do the work required for the scheme better. KNIGHT (2005 pers. comm.) confirmed this and claimed that FWAG advisers would "give added value to the scheme applications". He admitted that there was a pressure to get on to the next client rather than spending much time with one farmer and making his result better. Nevertheless, he felt that FWAG was "still better with this than every other organisation" (ibid).

With regard to the ELS, FWAG advisers claim that they improve the environmental gain through encouraging the farmers to choose a wider range of conservation work options, and preferably those options which bring optimal benefit for the environment (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). However, one (anonymous) adviser thought that many FWAG advisers may first of all choose those options which the farmer carries out anyway, in order to minimise the management effort.

Comments from RDS officers suggest that the HLS applications which some FWAG advisers prepare, do not offer good conservation value. "I did find some very farmer tended and not environmentally positive applications of FWAG when I worked as a RDS adviser" (CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.). An anonymous RDS officer explained an example that a FWAG adviser had exaggerated the value of the landscape features on the land of his client because he hoped

to be more likely to get the farmer into the scheme. FWAG advisers had also exaggerated the potential benefit that the farmers could bring about for wildlife through the implementation of the conservation works which the advisers had outlined in the application. The RDS officer had much work with controlling the truth of the applications submitted by FWAG (CLAIRE, anonymous RDS officer, 2005, pers. comm.)

UNDERWOOD (2005, pers. comm.) (CLA, formerly FWAG adviser) explained that his aim with implementing a scheme on a farm has always been “first of all not to affect the farming system, but to have as much environmental gain as possible, to weigh those two up. You need to try to convince the farmer of conservation by using his line of arguments. Put a margin here, your crop is overshadowed by the trees anyway and you get 500 pounds.”

**Discussion: To what extent does FWAG contribute to the agri-environment scheme?**

**Strength:** It appears to be clear that FWAG contributes to the operation of the complex HLS. If there were no conservation advisers of any kind the scheme would not work because most farmers could not prepare the application for the scheme since they lack the specific conservation expertise. Due to FWAG’s large size, its contribution to HLS is significant. Hence, FWAG’s existence is a vital precondition for HLS to function, and its work increases the uptake of the scheme. FWAG probably also contributes significantly to raise the uptake of ELS since the advisers help many farmers to access the scheme. Conclusively, it is a **strength** of FWAG to raise the uptake of both parts of the scheme.

**Neither... nor:** To what extent FWAG improves the environmental outcome of the scheme is not clear. It depends on the approach of each adviser. If advisers explain the environmental sense behind the scheme and raise the farmers’ enthusiasm, it is likely that a better conservation outcome will be delivered. Probably many FWAG advisers do that. However, FWAG is sometimes required to compromise the scheme’s potential environmental gain because of the need to achieve the maximum financial gain for the minimum effort invested by the farmer. It is not possible to state how many of the FWAG advisers behave in which of these two different ways; it will probably vary farm by farm.

### 5.2.2 The public value for money of the advice

The general requirement drawn up to measure FWAG’s efficiency is:

**General requirement IX:**

**The conservation advice needs to result in a conservation outcome which is worth the state spending. That means that the advice should be effective, however, it should be delivered at a reasonable cost.**

**It needs to lead to the implementation of conservation works which would not have been implemented in the absence of advice.**

The cost-effectiveness of the advice is looked at because a significant proportion of the cost to deliver the advice is paid for with tax money. There is not much information available about the cost-effectiveness of conservation advice offered by FWAG.

The study by ECOTEC sought to answer whether there was an economic justification for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) to finance the provision of conservation



advice by FWAG (and ADAS) to farmers so that they could receive advice free of charge. The study acquired the relevant information apparently from interviews with stakeholders (not further specified in the study). Calculations were not conducted for the study. The report did not provide an elaboration of the work procedure to reach the reported results. However, it was clearly a logic line of arguments that the authors followed. The achievement of environmental conservation on farmed land, they argued, was a public good, which should not only be paid for by the individual farmer. Since there are costs of acquiring conservation information, these should be overtaken by the public. All stakeholders consulted in the study approved of the idea of *free* conservation advice to farmers (ECOTEC 2000, 33). The study concluded, a strong economic case could be made for supplying free conservation advice because it promotes the production of public goods that benefit society at large. However, the benefits are difficult to quantify (ibid).

The study undertaken by WINTER et al. (1996) discussed the actual accounting costs which the provision of free conservation advice amounts to for the public financiers. These costs are compared against different measures of effectiveness, of which the measure 'work undertaken as a result of advice' is relevant for this thesis. Apart from that, the study discussed the additionality of conservation advice (ibid, 77).

The notional unit cost for FWAG advice for the financial year 1993/94 was calculated as the total expenditure of FWAG England divided by the number of full-time equivalent advisers. The cost per adviser per year roughly approached £ 30,000. The costs per advisory visit were estimated to be approximately £ 300 (WINTER et al. 1996, 79).

In the same period, 193 farmers, who had received advice from the FWAG advisers, had implemented 299 conservation work tasks. Projecting the 299 tasks to the number of 35 full-time equivalent advisers, the study concludes that 5,422 tasks have been completed as a result of the FWAG advice in the financial year 1993/94 in the UK (ibid, 81). This amount divided by the 35 full-time equivalent advisers results in, on average, 155 tasks implemented, which every adviser has contributed to. The advice cost per implemented task amounts to £ 194 when the total number of tasks (155) is divided by the £ 30,000 annual cost per adviser. (the last steps of the calculation were carried out by the author, and were not included in the study).

Certainly, out of the above 5,422 tasks, which according to WINTER et al. (1996, 81) had been implemented after the FWAG advice, some could have been put into practice also if the farmers had not received advice. In the study, farmers had been asked what they would have done with the conservation idea which had made them contact FWAG if the FWAG advice had not been available. "47 % would have sought other advice, 29 % would have gone ahead with the project regardless, 12 % would have proceeded in a different manner, and only 12 % would not have embarked on the project" (ibid, 94). From this, WINTER et al. suggested, it could be inferred that 76 % of the farmers (those seeking other advice and those going on regardlessly) would not have needed the FWAG advice to be encouraged to do the conservation work. However, the authors of the study warn of such an assumption. Firstly, because it is not guaranteed that conservation advice from other sources would have been available. Secondly, the advice which had been given, was found to have brought about additional value to the quality of the subsequently implemented tasks. The tasks may have been put into practice without the advice, too, but the advice offered significant opportunity for the modification of the conservation measures. Many farmers had stressed how the advice improved on what they otherwise would have done (ibid).

In the study by MORRIS & WINTER (2002) about Farm-BAPs, only five (18 %) of the 28 questioned farmers said that their Farm-BAP led to or was likely to lead to the implementation of new tasks. 14 (50 %) said it would lead to *some* new actions. For nine (32 %) it would not lead to new actions. However, the authors found that this result was not quite so negative because the majority of the farmers who said that the advice was only leading to *some* new tasks or not likely to lead to new tasks, stated that this was the case because they had already intended to implement the recommendations as a consequence of previous conservation advice visits. In addition, the advice had positive impact on improving planned works and putting them into practice more quickly (MORRIS & WINTER 2002, 664).

KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) argued that FWAG's work was achieving additionality. He claimed that FWAG was successful in persuading the farmers of doing a better conservation than they initially wanted (explained in more detail in chapter 5.2.1.1). This is also the case, because the advisers preferably suggest low or zero cost works to the farmers, and these are very easy to implement, though effective. Many other advisers, too, stress the effectiveness of zero or low cost options on biodiversity (ECOTEC 2000, 13).

### **Discussion: Does the FWAG advice achieve value for money?**

**Strength:** Cost-benefit analyses for conservation advice are only rough estimates (WINTER et al. 1996). Figures were presented on how many tasks farmers implemented *after* they had received advice (this is not to say that the farmers implemented the tasks *because* of the advice). The contribution of each adviser to the implementation of on average 155 tasks per year (WINTER et al. 1996) can be considered to be a successful performance. Also the advice cost of on average £ 194 per implemented task appears very low, even though the nature of the tasks was not specified. From this one (and only example calculation which could be obtained) it can be concluded that the advice results in conservation benefit at very low costs.

The question remains to what extent the farmers implemented the tasks *as a consequence of* the conservation advice.

In the study by WINTER et al. (1996), the number of conservation tasks which the farmers put into practice *because* of the advice appears to be low. (without advice, only 12 % of farmers would not have embarked on their conservation project). However, the authors refused the interpretation that 76 % of the farmers would not have needed the FWAG advice because the advice had definitely improved the quality of the implemented tasks and had speeded up the work. Also, those 47 % who would have sought other advice, would maybe not have found other advice. All these arguments seem reasonable. It can be assumed that of the 47 %, some would either have turned back to the FWAG advisers, or they would not have gone on with the conservation work they had intended. In these cases, the works would have been attributable to FWAG's advice.

The numbers in the study by MORRIS & WINTER (2002) seem to be a bit more promising. (18 % of farmers said the Farm-BAP led to/was likely to lead to implementation of new tasks; 50 % said it would lead to *some* new actions). Some farmers said they had not done conservation as a result of the Farm-BAP because they already knew what to do from earlier visits. If these earlier visits had been FWAG visits (it could have been from ADAS, RDS or others, but due to the large size of FWAG a fair chance remains that it was FWAG), they had also showed the additional benefit of FWAG's service.

Another argument to support the additional benefits of FWAG's advice is that the above mentioned low figures do not reflect that probably the FWAG advice has kept some farmers from detrimental activities. In addition, it is probable that the advice has contributed to an increase in environmental awareness and may have further long-term conservation effects.

So, it seems likely that the additional benefits of the advice is higher than the figures suggest. However, these are only assumptions and it is always difficult to attribute the farmers' activities directly to the advice. LETTS (2005, pers. comm.) said that the link between advice and action was difficult to prove for all providers of advice. Also KNIGHT (2005, 37) concluded that no indication can be given whether recently received Farm-BAPs would stimulate subsequent implementation. When pressed on this issue, he said that it was simply not known what the final reason was for farmers to do conservation.

Both the study by WINTER et al. (1996) and by ECOTEC (2000) conclude that conservation advice benefits the society at large.

**Strength:** Although the benefits are difficult to quantify, a case can be made that it is a **strength** of FWAG to offer conservation advice that produces environmental gain at a price which is low enough to result in value for money for the whole society.

### 5.2.3 FWAG's transparency and conservation motivation

#### **General requirement X:**

**As the conservation advice is to a great extent financed publicly, the advice body should operate in a transparent way. For this they should work strategically and plan their work with project plans which would detail their outcome aims and the advisory instruments, timing, personell, and costs entailed to achieve the aims. They have to monitor and report the result of their advice.**

**The advisory body also needs to strive for offering its service in the most possible consistent quality and quantity throughout the country.**

**To secure the satisfaction and the (financial) support of the conservation agencies, the advisers need to act in a way which shows that they have a genuine conservation motivation.**

#### FWAG's strategy and consistency

With regard to the question on what FWAG does to work transparently so that the conservation agencies are informed about their proceeding, no information was obtained from FWAG. Therefore, the following information was not complemented with potentially contrasting statements from FWAG managers or advisers.

From what SPENCE, HOOPER, and CLAIRE (2005, pers. comm.) said, it was clear that they were missing a strategic approach in FWAG's work. They complained that FWAG was not good at detailing transparently which conservation targets and priorities the advisers pursued and that it was on the whole not clear what the national, regional, and local levels were working at. They were missing explanations about which methods FWAG used to achieve the targets, about the staff to carry out, and the timing and the costs of certain works. "We had no

means of control, we never knew what they were advising about, were they promoting their own interest or the environment's one?" (HOOPER 2005, pers. comm.).

An anonymous person who knows FWAG very well said about the role of the head office: "Each little FWAG is its own business. Most [FWAG advisers] think FWAG should be small in head office and big in the county groups. Some say 'if the head quarter left tomorrow, we could still keep going'. A lot of groups are just doing their own thing. If one is very good at something, then he does that and nobody will say we are not meant to do that stuff" (anonymous 2005, pers. comm.).

This links in with another strong complaint of DEFRA and the RDS. The officials think it was hardly possible to see how the work FWAG did on the national level was mirrored in the activities of the local groups since they were all independent and their work was contingent upon their own likings and talents. This is not only the personal impression of the conservationists. Also in the ECOTEC study (2000, 13), it was found that FWAG's advice quality varied from county to county. Furthermore, the advice is unevenly distributed across the counties (WINTER et al. 2000, 39) with some counties having five to eight advisers and others only one (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

HOOPER, CLAIRE, and SPENCE (2005, pers. comm.) from the RDS and DEFRA explained why they wanted the advice to be consistent in terms of quantity and quality. "When DEFRA gives money to FWAG, we want to rely on that they always deliver consistently" (CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.). HOOPER said, "If we gave money for 2000 free visits to FWAG and they allocated very much to Somerset and hardly any to Dorset as they have only one person there, this is not the way to have a nationally coordinated approach to it." CLAIRE spoke of a region where the FWAG adviser worked only for arable farms since he felt he had the expertise for that, but would not know enough about the uplands. Therefore, he missed out a large area of the county.

## Monitoring

FWAG monitors the farmers' satisfaction with the advice. They do this with their farmer feedback forms which have been used in chapter 5.1 to determine the farmers' satisfaction with the advice. No regular monitoring is done of the conservation work which farmers carry out as a result of the advice (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

For the Farmland Biodiversity Project, FWAG developed an approach to monitor the results of the advice on farms. Requirements, which the monitoring needed to meet were that it should be without major costs, easy to apply, and not time consuming. It should be used by farmers who were not experts in species identification and monitoring, and it should not require farmers to be trained. The first monitoring form was designed to measure improvements in habitat quality. Species should only be measured by presence/absence and the quantity of their preferred habitats should be recorded. The recording of species numbers was felt to be impractical. The next stage of monitoring was a trial course run over four days to train lay volunteers in bumblebee monitoring. Already after just two and a half days, all trainees were deemed sufficiently competent (KNIGHT 2005 15f). To what degree FWAG makes the farmers monitor their conservation outcome apart from those who took part in that project, cannot be stated.

TRUEMAN, SPENCE, HOOPER, LETTS, and CLAIRE (2005, pers. comm.) all agreed that FWAG was not good at monitoring and demonstrating its achievements. TRUEMAN commented on

FWAG's monitoring: "What FWAG intuitively says and captures through its questionnaires is that farmers like them, and that farmers have become more aware and tailor their management so that somewhere down the line there will be benefits for wildlife. But they never demonstrate hard evidence of their advice success". Also LETTS claimed that FWAG needed to improve on showing how the farmers reacted and what they changed as a result of the advice. This was vital if the Environment Agency should go on to pay FWAG.

TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) made clear that it would be worthwhile for FWAG to monitor its success: "If FWAG could show evidence that the way they work produces the effects that the government wants, then they would have a clear market advantage as they have done the job for so long and they are so big. No other organisation has done that so far." He said he had the sense that FWAG was brilliant in what it did, but there was no hard evidence to back it up (ibid).

### FWAG's conservation motivation

FWAG is set up to satisfy the needs of two interest groups with potentially differing demands. To consider the advisers' conservation motivation, it can be instructive to explore for which of the groups' interests the advisers think they work. Traditionally, FWAG has been recognised as a farming organisation. Albeit, when the advisers are asked about their position the answers also prove a high concern for the environment. "I see every situation where we can't go onto a farm, because we would have to charge and the farmer can't afford it, as a lost chance for the environment. Forget the money, just get onto the farm! FWAG is not a consultancy for making money, it is for making environmental gain on farm land. If we are not true to that charitable purpose, then, what is it? Only a consultancy!". "Sometimes you feel 'I could go home now, but I really want to get this done'. We really often feel the farmer should do this. If we see farmers abusing the environment needlessly, we say we serve the environment (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). Asked about the self-understanding of advisers, KNIGHT (2005, pers. comm.) said: "I guess more would say they do a service for the environment." He reckons the organisation sits right in the middle between farmers and conservationists, but understands both sides. "If you sit in the conservation chair you'll say FWAG is a farming organisation, if you are in the farming chair you say it's a conservation organisation" (ibid).

The comments which the conservation agencies' representatives gave about the overall conservation performance of FWAG reflected general satisfaction. SPENCE (2005, pers. comm.) thinks that FWAG did as much as it could to encourage farmers to do conservation. "It would not be one of our criticisms that FWAG does not do enough in the direction of conservation. We are satisfied with most of what they do on the ground (ibid).

A proof for DEFRA's overall satisfaction with FWAG became obvious when DEFRA gave an extra grant to FWAG because they did not want the organisation to disappear. This had become necessary after FWAG had failed to secure the conservation advice contract which DEFRA had put out for competitive tender (see chapter 6.1) (CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.).

JOHN COUSINS, the director of the County Wildlife Trust Suffolk is also supportive of FWAG. The Wildlife Trust in Suffolk had worked together with the local FWAG for many years and was satisfied with the conservation motivation of the advisers (COUSINS 2005, pers. comm.).

ROBERTSON (2005, pers. comm.) from the RSPB was not quite so satisfied with FWAG. He complained that the delivery of the organisation was not led by targeting towards

conservation aims. He pointed out that FWAG had nowhere stated that it existed to deliver environmental objectives. In its mission statement it is written: “FWAG exists to provide farmers (...) with the best opportunity for environmental gain through cost-effective quality solutions” (FWAG 2005c). ROBERTSON found that such a statement did not show a strong ambition to serve the environment. He commented: “This is a mission statement of a consultancy, not of a wildlife organisation. The quality of their advice is measured by the benefit to their clients, not to the environment. It is only a process objective, not an outcome objective. How can you say whether you are successful or not in delivering an environmental outcome if you haven’t got an objective to deliver environmental outcome.”

Another point of dissatisfaction for ROBERTSON (2005, pers. comm.) was that he experienced some advisers who were apparently not keen on delivering environmental outcome. From his account, one co-operation project between FWAG and the RSPB was planned to run for three years and was finished after two years because the FWAG adviser did not deliver the outcome the RSPB desired. According to ROBERTSON, this was no exception. In several projects where the RSPB had worked with FWAG advisers, the RSPB employees found the FWAG advisers unmotivated to work with them and not ambitious to achieve a proper conservation aim (ibid).

A rather low conservation motivation is also supported by complaints of two RDS officers. They explained that in the application process for the agri-environment scheme it had become apparent that sometimes the FWAG advisers worked overly farmer-friendly and neglect their responsibility for the environment (see chapter 5.2.1.3) (CLAIRE, one anonymous RDS adviser 2005, pers. comm.).

#### **Discussion: Is FWAG’s work transparent for the conservation agencies?**

The representatives of the conservation agencies believe that FWAG was not good at working strategically. They said FWAG did not explain its objectives and activities and did not report its achievements properly. Furthermore, the conservationists complain that FWAG did not co-ordinate its local groups’ activities in a consistent way and the advice of each group was an incidental result of the individual adviser’s strengths and weaknesses.

In FWAG’s defence, it is reminded that the FWAG management has recently started to address this issue and improve the advisers’ competencies in a consistent way (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.). LOMAS (2005, pers. comm.) mentioned that her group had received some training organized from the head office some years ago.

Nevertheless, it appeared that on the whole, SPENCE, HOOPER, and CLAIRE had the impression that FWAG ‘muddled along with not much co-ordination and strategy’. The comment from the anonymous insider, that some FWAG advisers say they could go without the head office, confirms this impression. Also the FWAG management has apparently recognized this shortcoming. It seemed clearly that the conservationists’ impression could negatively impact their willingness to fund FWAG.

The question remains what the reasons for the conservationists are to demand a strategic approach. It is probably not in the first place to improve the environmental outcome of the advice because even if the advisers were not co-ordinated well, they could still give very good advice. Certainly it sounds fair to expect that the advice would improve if FWAG identified the weaknesses of each single adviser and train her or him accordingly. However, it appears

that the main reason to demand a strategic approach is more of an administrative nature and merely indirectly to improve their environmental outcome. As the public conservation bodies give money to FWAG, they need to make sure that it is traceable which targets FWAG pursues, how FWAG works to pursue the targets and to what extent and how efficient the targets are being achieved. Furthermore, it should be guaranteed that FWAG's services are available to all farmers nationally.

All the conservationists were unsatisfied with the fact that FWAG did not demonstrate any hard evidence of its conservation outcome. TRUEMAN had worked with FWAG on the project for which the monitoring trial had been carried out. The fact that he did not mention the trial as a good example could be a sign that it did not meet his expectations.

Weakness: It is concluded to be a **weakness** of FWAG not to work strategically and not to coordinate the organisation's activities in a consistent way. FWAG is apparently also **weak** at monitoring its outcome in a satisfactory way.

### **Do the conservation agencies think FWAG has a genuine conservation motivation?**

**Slight strength:** The picture drawn by the conservationists of FWAG's conservation motivation is somewhat contradictory. Most are satisfied, but ROBERTSON thinks that some advisers have a relatively low conservation motivation and possibly saw their role in bringing about the best (financial) benefit to the farmers at the lowest possible effort. His view is supported by two RDS advisers.

One of the reasons may be that there are very different advisers and some are less conservation minded than the conservationists would like them to be. It may have to do with the FWAG advisers' self-understanding as a service provider to the farmer. This understanding is possibly increased by the incorrect feeling that they are paid for by the farmers. As explained in chapter 6.3, about 30 % of FWAG's income is from charges from farmers, but the farmers get most of the money back from the RDS. Hence, FWAG advisers may feel that they are paid by the farmers but they are in actual fact mostly funded publicly.

Another reason seems to be that ROBERTSON applies a stricter standard than for instance SPENCE. As he said, the RSPB targets the top end of conservation with its activities; maybe he would also like FWAG to achieve similarly high results. SPENCE, in contrast, acknowledges that there are constraints which hamper farmers to do conservation and if FWAG achieves something, she said, that was better than nothing.

ROBERTSON thinks that FWAG's mission statement does not show that FWAG exists to produce environmental outcome but to provide farmers with an *opportunity* to produce environmental outcome. However, FWAG's former chief executive interpreted this differently. He wrote "FWAG's core business remains the provision of quality conservation advice with the aim of environmental gain, as demonstrated by the last mission statement" (BETTLEY-SMITH 2000, 95). Also THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) protested heavily. He said that FWAG does exist to achieve environmental gain on farmland, not just to serve the farmers.

It is very difficult to judge how many advisers have a low conservation motivation. Some of the negative comments are probably justified. However, the advisers' self-understanding expressed by THORNE and KNIGHT appears to reflect FWAG's position in the middle ground



between farming and conservation and conveys the impression that many FWAG advisers are genuinely conservation minded. The conservation agencies' views are dominated by positive opinions about FWAG. In addition, it should be borne in mind that FWAG is not only working with farmers who are absolutely keen to implement conservation, but many who are rather sceptical. The advisers could not reach those farmers, if they were pure conservationists.

Taking into account that FWAG is publicly seen as a farming organisation - and probably needs to be seen so because that is vital to bring conservation closer to the farmers - the comments on their conservation motivation appear to reflect a slight **strength**.



## 6 FWAG's sources of finance

### 6.1 FWAG's financial situation

The financing of conservation advice is problematic. The director of FWAG England, MICHAEL WOODHOUSE (2005, pers. comm.) said that FWAG had to work hard to get enough income to pay all its advisers. He mentioned several reasons for the difficult financial situation: First of all, sufficient finance was generally difficult to obtain for charitable work because charitable service was not a market commodity. Therefore, FWAG was dependent on public money, sponsorships, and donations. Secondly, the general unwillingness of farmers to pay for advice was a problem for FWAG. Conservation advice was often something the farmers wanted to be given but they did not consider it important enough to pay for. This was even more the case because by its charitable purpose FWAG was also bound to serve farmers in areas of the UK where farming was unprofitable. In those areas, farmers were even less able and willing to pay. Thirdly, the market place for conservation advice was changing. More organisations than previously were offering conservation advice and they competed with each other for public funding. In FWAG's case, this had led to a reduced government funding over the years (ibid).

WINTER et al. (2000, 39) assessed the funding situation of FWAG as precarious. They thought that FWAG was effective at the county level, but nationally and regionally under-resourced.

An important national source of funding which came to an end in March 2005 was a grant of about £ 600,000 annually. FWAG had obtained this from DEFRA to enable free advice visits to farmers (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.). The conditions of the grant only specified how many farmers FWAG should visit and not with which advice methods or in which areas the money should be used. DEFRA wanted to support the delivery of conservation advice in a more controlled way and therefore ended the grant. Currently, the financing of conservation advice is regulated through a contract that specifies more clearly what has to be delivered in return for public payments. The contract was put out for competitive tender and ADAS won the tender. That was a great loss for FWAG (SPENCE 2005, pers. comm.).

The reasons why FWAG did not win the contract could not be determined in detail. In this context, HOOPER, SPENCE, and CLAIRE mentioned FWAG's lack of proper strategic business planning and its local groups inconsistency, as set out in chapter 5.2.3. These deficiencies have contributed to that FWAG did not win the contract (HOOPER, SPENCE, CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.).

### 6.2 Local fundraising, charitable status, and membership

One characteristic aspect of FWAG's financing is that the local groups are quite independent in the way they work and that they are responsible for their own funding. As KNIGHT expressed, this worked better as if the head office raised money nationally. Although the head office secures some funding from national institutions, the local offices give a share of their income to the national level. Hence, the leaders of the local groups have to fulfill the role of a fundraiser. Some groups have employed a project officer to deal with the fundraising (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). THORNE (2005, pers. comm.), who is responsible for funding the Somerset FWAG, explained what he regarded as essential to make the fundraising work. It was important to him to have good communication skills, to know the right people in the

relevant organisations, and to have a certain ease to approach potential financial backers. A fair understanding of the institutional functioning and structures of the possible funding organisations combined with an inventive genius to see the scope for co-operation with potential project partners were beneficial to each local FWAG fundraiser (ibid). To achieve a good financial basis, the voluntary steering groups are a significant element to help finding appropriate funding sources in many county FWAGs. This is because the volunteers have been living in the area for a long time and know the structures in the institutions and many important people (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

The charitable status enables FWAG amongst other things to have a membership system, to accept donations and legacies, and to reduce its tax burden. Moreover, some organisations obviously like to co-operate with FWAG because they wish to work with a non-profit making organisation (WOODHOUSE, 2005, pers. comm.). For example, many of FWAG's local groups get support 'in kind' from local authorities, mostly in the form of free office use (WINTER et al. 2000). It is unlikely that this would be the case if FWAG was a consultancy for making money (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

Nevertheless, both THORNE and WOODHOUSE think that charitable status is not as influential as it could be for FWAG and that the organisation should make more out of it. FWAG could raise more funds from donations and legacies which as yet is not done proactively (ibid).

FWAG has personal members (farmers and other private persons) and corporate members (businesses, NGO's and public bodies). There are 9,000 – 10,000 personal members who pay an annual membership fee of £ 40. For that, members get a free visit with advice from a FWAG officer, reduced prices on chargeable work and a discount on FWAG's educational group activities, such as workshops, farm-walks, etc. Since most members stay with FWAG for many years but do not ask for advice regularly, this system is worthwhile for FWAG (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). The members are registered in the local groups and their membership fees remain in the local groups' budgets. The county group in Herefordshire, for instance, gets 12 % of its income from personal members (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.). The corporate members pay more. For example DEFRA pays £ 7,500 annually (FWAG 2005b) and the RSPB £ 10,000 (ROBERTSON 2005, pers. comm.).

### 6.3 The contribution of the different financial resources

The total income of FWAG UK for the year which ended on 31 March 2005 was £ 5,709,000 (FWAG 2005b, 15). The main sources were

Income resources	Income in £	Income in %	Payed for by
Donations and gifts	£ 163,699	3	Private
Grants	£ 2,003,140	35	Public
Project income	£ 1,452,279	25	Public and private
Sponsorship and membership	£ 424,658	7	Farmers, public and corporate bodies
Charges	£ 1,590,055	28	90 % farmers (who receive parts from public sources)

**Table 8:** The main sources of FWAG's income in 2004/05 (FWAG 2005b, 15)

Donations and gifts come from organisations and individuals sympathetic to FWAG's charitable work. Grants are made available by government bodies and local authorities without clearly specifying the works to be delivered in return. Project income in comparison, is for a clearly specified purpose from organisations which co-operate with FWAG in a project. Sponsorship is given from private financiers to support a certain product of FWAG, for instance a conference or a leaflet. Roughly 90 % of the charges come from farmers. About 10 % is from firms who buy FWAG's services, such as agronomists or consultants whom FWAG teaches on certain environmental issues (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.).

It is difficult to say how much of FWAG's income is from local or central government departments and agencies. Public money is included in the following items of Table 8: the complete sum of the grants, a part of the project income, and a part of the charges. For the charges, this is the case because the farmers often get paid a certain amount of money from government departments and agencies which they pass on to FWAG in return for an advisory visit. An example where that is made is when a farmer applies for the agri-environment scheme HLS and needs to pay an adviser to prepare the application. In FWAG's income calculation this money is listed as charges, but it comes as a public contribution from DEFRA. In addition, when farmers pay FWAG or when they become a member they often do so because some kind of government agri-environment money incentivises them. A very rough estimate is that between 80 % and 90 % of FWAG's income originates in one way or the other from public sources (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

#### The farmers' willingness to pay

The farmers' willingness to pay depends on the benefit they get from the advice. They are more willing to pay if "they either generate income, save money (...) or avoid falling out of the law" (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.). Very few only pay for the advice because it simply fulfill s their interest for wildlife. About 90 % of the farmers pay FWAG as they get the money back from another source (ibid). THORNE (2005, pers. comm.) says "charging is

getting difficult if the farmer does [conservation] at the goodness of his heart or if you cold-call a farmer. If it is for voluntary reasons we [advise] for free and hope that in future the farmer comes again [and asks for chargeable advice]" (ibid). KNIGHT assumes that "If you set out with an entirely commercial FWAG paid for only by farmers, you would have 10 advisers across the UK."

Also in the ECOTEC (2000, 26) study, it was found that most of the farmers who had received free visits funded by MAFF would not have paid for the FWAG advice. By means of contrast, the study by WINTER et al. (1996, 86f) found that of the recipients of free advice, 31 % would not have been willing to pay, whereas 65 % would have been prepared to pay. Most of these deemed a price between £ 100 and £ 200 worthy to pay.

If the advisers make a visit which they do not charge the farmer for, they must cover the costs from another source. This can be a project which provides funding for free visits on a specific issue. If, for instance, a FWAG group has a project with the Environment Agency to give advice in a certain area on diffuse pollution they can afford to visit farmers in that area for free. During the visits they can advise both on the issue because of which the farmer has called them and on diffuse pollution (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.). The normal rate at which FWAG charges a farmer is £ 45 per hour (£ 350 per day) for non-members and £ 38 per hour (£ 300 per day) for members (ibid). Most advisers use this as a guideline and adapt it to the farmer's situation. Often, the first two hours of the visit are for free (KNIGHT 2005, pers. comm.).

### The national funding from DEFRA

After FWAG had not managed to secure one of the conservation advice contracts, DEFRA developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with FWAG. This is a £ 450,000 contract which specifies the delivery of group advice. For the allocation of the finances, each region receives a certain sum to be given to the local groups. The regional FWAG managers must make a regional plan which specifies exactly which workshops, farm-walks, etc. are to be organised with the money (DEFRA 2005c). DEFRA funds FWAG no longer for face-to-face advice (CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.).

The second national funding from DEFRA is a £ 225,000 annual grant from the Environmental Action Fund. This money is given to FWAG for improving certain competencies and work processes. Presently, the advisory body uses it to develop a plan how to bring the skills of its advisers up to a consistent standard. Further examples where FWAG used the money in earlier years were to bring its IT equipment up to a similar level across the whole organisation and improve its web site (CLAIRE 2005, pers. comm.).

### Further funding from government agencies

Almost all county councils offer financial assistance, or assistance in kind to FWAG. Many local FWAGs can use offices in county council buildings (WINTER et al. 2000, 44).

In 2004/05, local authorities gave £ 800,851 to FWAG in form of local grants (FWAG 2005b, 18). The local authorities have to meet targets for supporting rural businesses and for nature conservation. Since their resources would not allow them to have a conservation adviser employed, they support FWAG to do that for them (UNDERWOOD 2005, pers. comm.).

### Projects with various partners

Project income results from various co-operation projects that most local groups have with local, regional government agencies, conservation and farming organisations, and private firms for specified advice. Among the public agencies, English Nature and the Environment Agency are important project partners (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.).

LETTS (2005, pers. comm.) explained that for the Environment Agency FWAG often serves as an intermediary between the Agency and farmers. To LETTS' mind, it belongs to the Environment Agency's remit to make the farmers understand *why* they are supposed to comply with certain regulations. Since FWAG was much better in telling this to the farmers than the Agency, many local branches of the authority work together with FWAG (ibid).

LETTS gave an example where the Environment Agency used FWAG as a contractor: "In Cornwall there are many intensive dairy farms and they can cause severe nutrient leach into the rivers. To tackle that, we got money from the EU, and FWAG delivered the advice" (2005, pers. comm.). He could not say how many projects there were between the Environment Agency and FWAG and how much money the Agency gave to FWAG. However, provided that the individual adviser was appropriately skilled, he felt that FWAG was a significant partner organisation of the Environment Agency (ibid).

TRUEMAN (2005, pers. comm.) said that English Nature had about 35 projects with FWAG at any one time. English Nature has given £ 134,835 to FWAG in 2004/05. This is a decline compared with £ 247,776 in 2003/04 and £ 272,268 in 2002/03. The project contributions were between £ 500 and £ 17,000 per single project (ENGLISH NATURE 2005). The projects covered were principally about encouraging farmers to adopt a more environmental friendly management in SSSI or for work on particular species or habitats (TRUEMAN 2005, pers. comm.). For example in Somerset, English Nature and the RSPB worked together with FWAG to communicate with farmers about the raising of the water level on low lying moor grassland in an SSSI (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.).

There have been several firms who made projects with FWAG. The most prominent project was with the retailer Sainsbury's. This project has been dealt with extensively in chapter 3. A similar project was done with the black currant juice producer Ribena. Presently, FWAG develops an advice package for McCain's potato growers and they have a project with Unilever (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.).

The conservation organisation RSPB only has a few projects with FWAG. ROBERTSON (2005, pers. comm.) estimated that it would be about 1 – 2 at any time. The RSPB itself has 25 farm conservation advisers. Their advice generally targets "the top end of environmental outcome with threatened bird species and restricted habitats" (ibid). There were projects in the southeast of England where the RSPB paid FWAG to deliver advice on the needs of songbirds like field sparrow and corn bunting in arable areas (ibid). Another example for a project between FWAG and a conservation organisation was a project with the Wildlife Trust in Suffolk. The Wildlife Trust wanted to preserve corn buntings and found it cheaper to pay a FWAG adviser for the job than to take on and train a new employee (COUSINS 2005, pers. comm.).

The local FWAG in Somerset is a good example for how different the project partners can be who can potentially benefit from FWAG's service. One rather unusual project which the leader of the Somerset group initiated is with the highway authority and a district council. The

trigger to the project was the problem that in hilly areas heavy rainfalls caused soil wash-off from arable fields. The sediment was deposited on roads, in ditches and in drain pipes. This sometimes led to local flooding and high costs were caused to both authorities to clean the roads, ditches, and pipes. In 2001, the cleaning had cost around £ 1.000.000. Therefore, they developed a partnership with the local FWAG group to advise the farmers on how they could avoid wash-off. For its advice FWAG receives £ 15.000 per year (THORNE 2005, pers. comm.)

Another financier in Somerset is the private water supply company Wessex Water. They usually give a small amount of money to FWAG from their biodiversity fund which they have for their 'green credential'. Once FWAG had a one-off job with them when they needed to flush out a water main that was silted up. The company needed to flood a big area of land and asked FWAG to negotiate with the farmers for it. In a further small project in Dorset, the local FWAG works with a fly-fishing club. They advise the farmers adjacent to the river how to manage their fields to minimise soil erosion (ibid).

### The agri-environment scheme and other rural development schemes

In chapter 5.1.2 it has been described in full detail how FWAG advises for the new agri-environment scheme Environmental Stewardship. FWAG advises the farmers who want to apply and the farmers get a part of the money that they pay to FWAG back from DEFRA. Presently, advice on the scheme is the most significant source of income for FWAG. In the long run, the FWAG advisers anticipate, the Environmental Stewardship will boost their income from chargeable work (WOODHOUSE 2005, pers. comm.).

The Environmental Stewardship is one out of 10 schemes from the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) which furthers sustainable development in the countryside. Another scheme is the Vocational Training Scheme which funds projects to train occupational skills and competences of farmers and others involved in farming (DEFRA 2003b). The local FWAG in Herefordshire offers workshops to farmers which are funded through the Vocational Training Scheme (LOMAS 2005, pers. comm.).

Another ERDP scheme relevant to FWAG is the Rural Enterprise Scheme. It provides assistance to support the development of more sustainable, diversified and enterprising rural economies and communities (DEFRA 2003b). In Surrey, a group of farmers who wanted to sell their meat in local butchers had their marketing funded by the scheme. The county FWAG should provide the environmental credentials to the project by advising the farmers on how to take the target species of the Biodiversity Action Plan into account. The work time of the adviser was paid for through the scheme (UNDERWOOD 2005, pers. comm.).

### **Discussion: The strengths and weaknesses of FWAG's funding.**

**Weakness:** Central to the recent development of FWAG's finances is that the national core funding from DEFRA decreased. The reason is that the government agencies want to have more control about what happens with the public spending (SPENCE 2005, pers. comm.). The free advice visits have come to an end and FWAG has not managed to secure one of the advice contracts. According to HOOPER, SPENCE, and TRUEMAN (all 2005, pers. comm.), this mirrors FWAG's problem to work in a nationally co-ordinated way and to deliver advice across the whole country consistently.

**Strength:** Most money is raised from the local groups. The FWAG advisers think that for this their local grounding and the independence of the groups is an advantage. Apparently, this approach secures a good funding basis for most groups. No interviewee complained about financial problems attached to this working method. Most groups rely on funding from several different sources. The fact that every group has to secure its funding itself makes it necessary that the regional and local group managers look for potential funders and convince them of the usefulness of FWAG's work. It also puts a pressure on the advisers to work successfully to satisfy their financiers. This apparently works well. FWAG has found many different funding opportunities. KNIGHT (2005 pers. comm.) mentioned, the local funding from many sources had the advantage that FWAG was not so vulnerable if a funder would cease its support.

However, not all advisers are good fund-raisers and so it can be assumed that some groups with good advisers are poorly funded. This contributes to FWAG's inconsistent advice coverage. In addition, if the groups are all funded by different partner organisations in different advice projects, this could also contribute to the advice being inconsistent. Hence their independent local funding is possibly counterproductive to achieve a better consistency. This could compromise the conservation agencies' willingness to nationally fund FWAG.

## 7 Summary table of the discussions

The findings from the single discussions have been summarized in a table. The table shows the general requirements, FWAG's performance and its relevant qualities and skills.

**Table 9:** Summary table of the general requirements, FWAG's performance and its relevant qualities and skills

Performance in relation to the general requirements: ++ very good; + good; +/- both positive and negative aspects; - unsatisfactory; ? no decision possible; +/(?) probably good but no clear evidence

General requirement for successful conservation advice	Ranking of FWAG's overall achievement	Positive and negative details	Skills and qualities that hamper (-) and contribute (+) to FWAG's success
General requirement with regard to the farmers' satisfaction			
Advice agency should develop a trusting relationship with the farmers	++	+ Farmers see FWAG as an organisation which serves their needs, farmers trust FWAG	+ FWAG is farmer-led, locally based; advice is independent from statutory power, confidential, voluntary, sensitive; advisers have passion for farming, do not ask too much of farmers, praise, suggest, and enthuse but do not decide, advisers have regard for farmers business
Advice agency should satisfy farmers demand for financial benefit	+/-	Financial opportunities limited, availability of funds in the past unsatisfactory, better with new agri-environment scheme, quality assurance schemes not optimal, cost saving limited, demand for advice on alternative income rare	Depends on effects outside FWAG's influence



Summary table of the discussions

General requirement for successful conservation advice		Ranking of FWAG's overall achievement	Positive and negative details	Skills and qualities that hamper (-) and contribute (+) to FWAG's success
Advice agency should fulfill the farmers personal conservation aims		++	+ farmers overall satisfied, advice increases farmers' environmental awareness and interest, facilitates implementation of personal conservation projects - not sufficient advice on business implications of the conservation proposals	+ advisers build a trusting relation, are enthusiastic, professional; good at making advice which is easy to understand and implement, fits in with business, technically informed, comprehensive, not too much and not too little information. - business expertise not sufficiently applied
Advice agency should satisfy farmers' need for information on compliance with environmental regulations		+/(?)	Probably farmers are satisfied, but no evidence	+ trustful relationship (to what extent FWAG has knowledge about regulations is unknown)
Advice agency should help farmers to respond to public pressure concerning the farmers' environmental performance		+/(?)	Probably overall satisfaction applies here, too, but no evidence	Same as for personal conservation aims
General requirement with regard to the achievement of environmental aims and the conservation agencies' satisfaction				
The advice should be of such a quality that it	encourages farmers to deliver a better conservation outcome than they had intended	+/?	It seems logical that FWAG's qualities lead to better conservation outcome but it could not be proven	+ trusting relationship, encourage, enthuse and persuade - Some advisers not conservation minded
	covers a comprehensive range of issues	+/-	+ species and habitats +/- resource protection - economic implication	?

Summary table of the discussions

General requirement for successful conservation advice		Ranking of FWAG's overall achievement	Positive and negative details	Skills and qualities that hamper (-) and contribute (+) to FWAG's success
The advice should be of such a quality that it	Results in good conservation outcome (written advice only)	+	+ 96 % good or fair quality and mostly beneficial for wildlife - no objectives & work programmes	+ FWAG knows how to adapt written advice to farmers
	is whole-farm advice	+	+ walk and talk about large parts of farm, advice on several features	?
	targets priority conservation issues	+/-	- traditionally, FWAG rarely selects farms because of their value, but waits that farmer makes contact + nowadays probably more targeting +/- once advisers are on farm they target	- advisers want to service farmers, not threaten them
The advice should lead to	an increase in the farmers' environmental awareness	++	+ all agreed that FWAG raised farmers' understanding and interest for conservation	+ trusting relationship, explain & show intended outcome, enthuse for wildlife
	a good implementation	+	+ good/fair quality & benefit for wildlife +/- medium implementation rate	+ trusting relationship, explain & show intended outcome, enthuse for wildlife
	An effect on farmers who are not keen on conservation positively	+	+ effect on wide constituency of farmers - 'worst polluters' not effected	+ FWAG has the positive reputation of being the farmers' friend

Summary table of the discussions

General requirement for successful conservation advice	Ranking of FWAG's overall achievement	Positive and negative details	Skills and qualities that hamper (-) and contribute (+) to FWAG's success
The advice should improve the effectiveness of the agri-environment scheme	+ ?	+ FWAG makes it possible that HLS works, raises uptake of ELS & HLS ? improvement of environmental outcome depends on individual adviser	+ try to enthuse for objectives behind scheme - some advisers too farmer-friendly
The advice should bring about value for money	+/(?)	+ benefits for society, but difficult to quantify + low price per implemented task - additionality uncertain, probably medium	?
The advice agency should work transparently	-	- conservation agencies are dissatisfied, feel uninformed & not in control, advice inconsistent in quality and coverage, no hard evidence of achievements	- no sufficient strategic planning, little co-ordination between national level & local groups, no consistent delivery, no monitoring
The advisers should have a genuine conservation motivation	+	+ taken into account FWAG's twin remit, its conservation motivation is good	+ overall good conservation motivation - some advisers too little conservation minded
FWAG's financial situation			
The core funding from government	-	- core funding has ceased, FWAG did not win a tender for a national advice contract	FWAG's local groups do not work consistently, nationally FWAG does not work strategically
The funding of the local groups	+	+ local funding seems to work well	+ local group leaders are incentivised to secure their own funding because otherwise groups are not financed

## 8 Conclusion

The conclusion returns to the start of this thesis and answers the three questions which were set out in the introduction.

1. Is FWAG successful in delivering nature conservation advice in the way that it
  - a. meets the farmers' requirements with regard to financial benefits, information about conservation and about compliance with environmental regulations
  - b. and fulfill s the demands of the government departments and agencies with responsibility for the environment to deliver a sound outcome for landscape and wildlife, raise the farmers' awareness, and bring about good conservation value for money?

### Question 1, part a.:

The farmers are satisfied with FWAG's advice. It increases their knowledge about conservation and most probably facilitates the implementation of their conservation projects. It is likely that the advice satisfies the farmers' needs for information about environmental regulations. It probably also relieves the farmers from the pressure which they feel from the public concerning their environmental performance. Whether or not FWAG satisfies the farmers' financial desires depends mainly on the availability of funding sources. Due to the new Environmental Stewardship, the opportunities have become better than in the past; however, compared with the farmers' demand, opportunities are still relatively limited.

**The thesis concludes that FWAG is very successful in delivering conservation advice that satisfies the farmers' needs.**

### Question 1, part b.:

Overall, the advice quality is good. The advice improves the benefit for biodiversity and landscape compared with what the farmers would have done without advice. The quality of the conservation works which were implemented as a result of the advice is good and the works are appropriate to bring about sound benefit for wildlife. However, the implementation rate of the advisers' proposals is only satisfactory. The advisers are very successful at increasing the farmers' environmental awareness. They think they affect many farmers who are still unexperienced in conservation, but they do not seem to reach those who are the 'worst polluters'. The advice raises the uptake of the agri-environment scheme and makes it possible that the complex Higher Level Stewardship works. Probably, FWAG improves the scheme's environmental outcome but this depends on the individual adviser. The advice appears to yield benefit for society at large, even though no information as to the quantification of the benefits could be obtained. Most conservationists were satisfied with the FWAG advisers conservation motivation.

Apparently, FWAG does not cover resource protection and the commercial implications that can arise from conservation works sufficiently. The advisers often do not target their advice to the farms most in need of advice but react 'incidentally' towards farmers requests. Some

conservationists perceive the conservation motivation of some FWAG advisers as disappointingly low.

**FWAG is successful in raising the farmers' awareness and in most cases stimulates the farmers to produce a sound outcome for landscape and wildlife. Probably their advice brings about good conservation value for money.**

## 2. Which qualities and skills contribute to and which hamper the success of FWAG?

**In relation to the farmers:** FWAG's good reputation among farmers is the most important factor for the farmers' satisfaction with the advice. This is largely due to FWAG being led by farmers and its advisers having a good understanding of, and a passion for, farming. The advisers show the farmers that their person and their farm are at the centre of the advice. Vital for the trust of the farmer is that the advice is independent from statutory power and is voluntary. Most advisers praise the farmers' conservation attempts and suggest ideas, but try not to overburden the farmers. FWAG's written advice is tailored to the farmers' needs. Farmers judge the advice as professional, comprehensive, and easy to understand and implement.

**In relation to conservation aims:** The above qualities which contribute to FWAG's trusting relationship with the farmers also contribute to improving the environmental gain of the advice. The positive relationship is essential to ensure that the conservation proposals are acted upon because the acceptance of advice depends on the person who delivers it (MCHENRY 1997). Further significant skills to improve the conservation outcome are that the advisers encourage, enthuse and persuade the farmers. For that, the adviser's passion for the environment is vital.

A quality that hampers the achievement of conservation aims is that a few advisers are very passionate for farming and not as strong on the conservation side of their business. These advisers do not challenge the farmers' readiness to put conservation into practice enough. Furthermore, some FWAG groups would achieve higher environmental benefits if they targeted their advice to farmers in areas particularly in need for environmental improvement.

**In relation to the satisfaction of the conservationists:** The conservationists from DEFRA, the RDS and English Nature are very dissatisfied with the transparency of FWAG's work. They think that FWAG does not have a sufficiently strategic approach to its work with outcome aims, a description of the advisory methods to achieve the aims and a monitoring system of their conservation outcome. Furthermore, FWAG does not nationally co-ordinate the work of the local groups so that they would all give advice in a consistent quality and quantity throughout each county. The main reason why the conservationists want FWAG to improve in these fields appears to be to make it traceable how, where and with which results the public spending is used. If FWAG improved these aspects, it could indirectly influence FWAG's environmental performance, particularly because it would become visible where money is spent inefficiently.

**The most important qualities for FWAG to achieve the farmers satisfaction is the trusting relationship they build with the farmers.**

**This quality is equally important for FWAG to achieve a good conservation outcome. Additional qualities for this are to encourage, enthuse and persuade the farmers.**

**FWAG does not work in a transparent, strategic way and the quality and quantity of the local groups advice is very inconsistent.**

From the answers to the first two questions, a further question can be raised and answered:

Does FWAG balance the needs of the farmers and of the environment?

None of the interviewees suspected that FWAG disregarded the farmers' needs, but some conservationists complained that some FWAG advisers tried to achieve the maximum financial gain for the farmer (e.g. through the Environmental Stewardship) with the least effort in return. By that, the maximum potential gain of the agri-environment scheme was not always realized.

Without a wider survey of FWAG advisers, it cannot be said how large a proportion of FWAG advisers advise in such a farmer friendly way that the potential environmental benefits are compromised. However, this aspect should not be overestimated because it is only important in cases when a farmer asks for the advice for financial reasons (as with the agri-environment scheme). In many other cases this problem does not occur because the farmers call FWAG to get advice on a conservation project which they want to implement on their own volition (and not in order to earn money).

The majority of the interviewees made positive comments on the FWAG advisers' conservation motivation and information from literature confirmed a positive impression, too. Therefore, it is believed that most FWAG advisers have a balanced approach to serve both the farmers and the environment.

The FWAG advisers and some conservationists made a strong case that it would be essential for FWAG to act as 'the farmers' friend' in order to bring conservation to farmers. This would imply that the advisers could not always pursue the best possible option for the environment but needed to have regard for the personal conservation intentions of the individual farmer and for his or her economic constraints. Such a farmer friendly advice would result in the highest acceptance among the farmers but the environmental outcome could be – although not in any case – compromised. The crucial question is how environmentally targeted the advice can be given to find the optimal balance between the farmers' acceptance of the advice and the best possible conservation option.

Considering this fact, this thesis concludes that FWAG's environmental performance in terms of conservation works put into practice can be ranked from satisfactory to good and the improvement of the farmers' awareness from satisfactory to very good. However, the basis on which this is judged is very thin. Firstly, only a few FWAG advisers could be interviewed. Secondly there is no outcome monitoring of FWAG's advice. It is absolutely vital that FWAG monitors its environmental achievements so that clear statements can be made regarding its performance.

**Overall, FWAG appears to be successful in balancing the needs of the farmers and of the environment. There can be a slight tendency to act in favour of the farmers, but this is concluded to be necessary to 'bring the farmers to conservation'.**

Question 3: What are FWAG's key strengths and weaknesses with regard to a secure funding?

FWAG relies on a range of income sources. Their receipts are from grants of local and central government agencies, projects with various public and private partners, charges and membership fees from farmers, donations and sponsorships.

It appears to be an advantage that FWAG relies on many different funding sources. Every local group is responsible for its own funding. This seems to work well. The regional and local managers developed many local and regional co-operation projects with various project partners. If they did not do this, their groups would not have enough funding. Apparently the need for local fund-raising increases the FWAG managers' activities to find project partners and increases the numbers of projects FWAG works on. Therefore it does not matter so much if one funder ceases to support FWAG.

A problem for FWAG's financial situation is that the core funding from DEFRA has ceased. DEFRA has stopped the payments for free advice visits because they wanted to finance the delivery of farm conservation advice in a more co-ordinated way with one national contract. This was put out for tender and FWAG failed to win it. No exact information about the reasons for the failure were available, but according to the conservation agencies' representatives, the case mirrors FWAG's insufficient ability to work in a transparent, strategic, and consistent way. If FWAG would not improve this shortcoming, the motivation to publicly fund FWAG could probably decrease.

## 9 Selected recommendations for more conservation advice in Germany

In der Einleitung dieser Arbeit wurden Naturschutzverbände, der Rat von Sachverständigen für Umweltfragen der Bundesregierung sowie Fachleute einiger Konferenzen zitiert, die ein vermehrtes Angebot von Naturschutzberatung für Landwirte forderten, um Naturschutz besser auf landwirtschaftlich genutzten Flächen zu integrieren. Diese Forderungen bezogen sich insbesondere auf Möglichkeiten zur Verbesserung der Wirkungen der Agrar-Umwelt Programme durch Naturschutzberatung. Die Erfolge von FWAG zeigen, dass die von den deutschen Akteuren erhofften Effekte durch Naturschutzberatung erreicht werden können. Im Folgenden sind einige aus der Situation in England abgeleitete Hinweise für Naturschutzberatung in Deutschland gegeben.

### **Einführung von Naturschutzberatung für die Agrar-Umwelt Programme**

Die Naturschutzberatung kann die Umsetzung von den Agrar-Umwelt Programmen verbessern. Einerseits können die Berater den Landwirten die Programme verständlich machen und dadurch kann die Inanspruchnahme der Programme gesteigert werden. Auch eröffnet Naturschutzberatung die Möglichkeit, komplexere, zielgerichtetere Programme anzubieten, die die Landwirte ohne Beratung nicht so leicht verstehen und folglich nicht in Anspruch nehmen würden. Naturschutzberatung kann auch den Naturschutzeffekt der Programme verbessern und dadurch die Effizienz des Finanzmitteleinsatzes steigern. Den FWAG-Beratern zufolge erreichen sie dies dadurch, dass sie die Bauern für den Sinn und Zweck der Naturschutzmaßnahmen begeistern. Die Landwirte seien sehr viel motivierter an den Agrar-Umwelt Programmen teil zu nehmen, wenn sie verstünden, mit welchem Ziel welche Maßnahme durchgeführt werden sollen. Der Umstand, dass einige FWAG-Berater die Bauern so beraten, dass sie bei möglichst wenig Arbeitsaufwand eine möglichst hohen Einnahme aus dem Agrar-Umwelt Programm erzielen, sollte nicht zu einem generellen Argument gegen Naturschutzberatung für Agrar-Umwelt Programme erhoben werden.

- Naturschutzberatung ist als ein Instrument zur Umsetzung der Agrar-Umwelt Programme geeignet und sollte in jedem Bundesland eingeführt werden.

### **Einrichtung von Naturschutzberatung innerhalb einer mit der Landwirtschaft assoziierten Organisation**

Die eindeutigste Schlussfolgerung der Arbeit bezüglich der Anforderungen an eine erfolgreiche Naturschutzberatung ist diejenige, dass Naturschutzberater eine vertrauensvolle Beziehung mit den Landwirten aufbauen müssen. Diese Vertrauensbasis ermöglicht es den Beratern, eine breite Schicht von Bauern zu erreichen und erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass sie die Beratung annehmen und umsetzen. Vielfach wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass FWAGs Situation als eine von den Landwirten als landwirtschaftsnah angesehene Institution für die Vertrauensbildung sehr wichtig ist. Eine Empfehlung für neu einzurichtenden Naturschutzberatungsorganisationen ist daher:

- Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen sollten an der Entwicklung von Strukturen für die Naturschutzberatung beteiligt werden. Es könnte sinnvoll sein, Naturschutzberatung innerhalb von Institutionen zu verankern, die sowohl als landwirtschaftsnah angesehen werden, als auch über ein positives Ansehen bei den Vertretern des Naturschutzes verfügen. Mögliche Organisationen, die in diesem Zusammenhang von



Fachleuten in Niedersachsen genannt wurden, sind die Anbauverbände der Biobauern, die Landwirtschaftskammern, sowie die Landschaftspflegeverbände (MEYERHOFF 2006, pers. comm.). Allerdings ist dies nur als ein Hinweis zu sehen; es wurde nicht der Frage nachgegangen, inwieweit die genannten Organisationen tatsächlich für die Ansiedlung von Naturschutzberatung geeignet wären.

### **Allianzen mit landwirtschaftlichen Organisationen**

In England haben einige Vertreter der Landwirtschaft erkannt, dass Naturschutzberatung ihnen helfen könnte, ihre politischen Anliegen umzusetzen. Diese Landwirtschaftsvertreter (namentlich von der National Farmers Union, NFU) denken, dass Naturschutzberatung dabei helfen könnte, die Landwirtschaft umweltpolitisch in ein besseres Licht zu rücken. Mit dem Bild einer umweltfreundlichen Landwirtschaft versprechen sie sich, besser für eine Aufrechterhaltung der Landwirtschaftssubventionen argumentieren zu können. Außerdem hat es sich in England gezeigt, dass die Landwirtschaftsverbände die Ministerien davon abhalten konnten, strengere Umweltauflagen durchzusetzen, da die Bauern mit Hilfe von Beratung von Seiten der NFU dazu gebracht werden konnten, freiwillig höhere Umweltstandards einzuhalten. Daher stehen Landwirtschaftsorganisationen in England dem Konzept der Naturschutzberatung grundsätzlich positiv gegenüber (HOWIE 2005, pers. comm.). Aus dieser Situation heraus wird für Akteure, die in Deutschland Naturschutzberatung aufbauen wollen, folgendes empfohlen:

- Es sollte geprüft werden, ob es regional landwirtschaftsnahe Institutionen gibt, die sich einen Nutzen von Naturschutzberatung versprechen könnten, und mit denen zusammen zu arbeiten förderlich sein könnte. Wenn es solche Organisationen gibt, sollten diese vom Nutzen der Naturschutzberatung für ihre Zwecke überzeugt werden und Möglichkeiten einer Allianz geprüft werden.

### **Die Berater müssen weit gefächerte Fähigkeiten haben**

Die FWAG-Berater betonten, dass Naturschutzberater Erfahrung mit landwirtschaftlicher Arbeit oder ein gutes theoretisches Verständnis für die landwirtschaftlichen Tätigkeiten haben müsse. Außerdem gehöre eine Begeisterung, sowohl für die Landwirtschaft als auch für die Natur zu den unabdingbaren Eigenschaften eines guten Naturschutzberaters. Da es in Deutschland kaum große Naturschutzberatungsorganisationen mit mehreren Beratern gibt, bzw. in vielen Fällen Beratungsstrukturen erst noch aufgebaut werden müssen, wird es oft der Fall sein, dass ein Naturschutzberater alleine arbeitet. Dies Person muss dann sowohl die Gunst des Landwirtes, als auch die Unterstützung der Naturschutzvertreter und potenzieller Sponsoren gewinnen. Dafür sollte der Berater eine Reihe von Fähigkeiten haben:

- Für den Kontakt mit den Landwirten sind ein gutes landwirtschaftliches Verständnis sowie gute Kommunikationsfähigkeiten notwendig. Um naturschutzfachlich glaubwürdig zu sein, muss der Berater ein gründliches naturschutzfachliches Wissen haben. Organisationsfähigkeit ist notwendig, um Projekte zu planen, deren Fortgang und Ergebnisse zu dokumentieren und um Finanzmittel zu akquirieren.

### **Der Naturschutzberater als ein Dienstleister mit verschiedenen Finanzquellen**

Momentan liegt der Schwerpunkt der Diskussion von Finanzierungsmöglichkeiten der Naturschutzberatung in Deutschland darauf, welche Finanzmöglichkeiten im Rahmen der Agrar-Umwelt Programme (AUP) bestehen, und wie diese am besten genutzt werden können. Die neue ELER Verordnung 1698/2005 wird für eine Finanzierung durch die Agrar-Umwelt

Programme bessere Voraussetzungen bieten und ab 2007 könnte den Landwirten eine an die Programme gekoppelte Naturschutzberatung in einigen Bundesländern angeboten werden (WICKE 2006, pers. comm.). Die Organisationen, die diese Beratung anbieten, müssen sich allerdings nicht allein auf die öffentlichen Gelder verlassen. Aufgrund der bei FWAG vorherrschenden Praxis, mit verschiedenen Geldgeber zusammen zu arbeiten, wird folgende Empfehlung abgeleitet:

- Die Finanzierung von Naturschutzberatungsorganisationen sollte auf verschiedenen Einkommensquellen beruhen. Die Organisationen sind so weniger empfindlich gegenüber dem Ausfall eines Geldgebers. Anbieter von Naturschutzberatung sollten sich selber als Dienstleister für verschiedene Kunden sehen, die von ihrer Beratung profitieren können. Dieses Selbstverständnis öffnet Möglichkeiten für eine sehr breite Anwendung von Naturschutzberatung. Partner können, wie die lange Liste der mit FWAG zusammen arbeitenden Partner zeigt, neben Naturschutzbehörden und – vereinen Firmen aus dem Handel, der Nahrungs- und Landwirtschaftsindustrie, verschiedene Behörden, Tourismusverbände, Jagt- oder Fischereigruppen und viele mehr sein.

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## Glossary

**(NGO-) Conservation organisations**,: non-government charitable conservation organisations, like the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts.

**Cab-cards**: A particularly farmer focussed form of information material. The ‘cab-cards’ should be taken into the tractor cabin. These small portable weatherproof diagrams were prepared to illustrate best practice on the farm and help to guarantee that staff and contractors, too, became involved in the conservation work

**Conservation agencies**: Term which was ‘created’ for this thesis: The government departments and agencies with particular responsibility for the environment and for nature conservation, namely the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Environment Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Service (RDS). There was no common term found which comprises all the four organisation, therefore the author decided to create a term.

**Conservationists**: In this thesis, the officials working in the conservation agencies are called conservationists when it shall be expressed that they are one party which differs from the party of the farmers. In some cases, representatives from NGO-conservation organisations, such as the RSPB, are included in this. FWAG advisers are not referred to as conservationists.

**Cross Compliance**: A list of standards with regard to Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions and specified legal requirements, which all farmers, who claim subsidies of the Single Payment Scheme have to comply with (DEFRA 2004a).

**English Nature**: The specialist agency with statutory responsibility for nature conservation in England. English Nature has the responsibility about the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (LETTS 2005, pers. comm.).

**Environment Agency**: The authority that deals with water, soil and air quality, emissions, flood management and alleviation, and waste management (LETTS 2005, pers. comm.).

**Farm Biodiversity Action Plan**: A plan on the farm level which gives the farmer information on how to enhance four target species or habitats. The FWAG advisers draw up the plan for the farmer.

**Environmental Stewardship**: The new english agri-environment scheme. It comprises two part, the

**Entry Level Stewardship**, which is a broad and shallow scheme into which all farmers who want can enter. And the

**Higher Level Stewardship**, which rewards farmers for targeted conservation works in priority conservation areas.

**Quality Assurance Schemes**: These schemes are run by retailer or firms of the food industry. The aim is to display a high food quality to customers in the shops. To ensure high standards, farmers have to comply with different standards with regard to environment and food safety. In return someschemes offer premium prices.

**Single Payment Scheme**: The scheme which regulates the subsidy payments for the farmers after the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (DEFRA 2004a).



**Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):** highest priority designation for a protected area.

## Abbreviations

ADAS	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CLA	Country Landowners' and Business Association
CSS	Countryside Stewardship Scheme (a former agri-environment scheme)
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (successor of MAFF)
ELS	Entry Level Scheme
EN	English Nature, the institution with statutory responsibility for nature conservation in England.
ES	Environmental Stewardship
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Areas (a former agri-environment scheme)
Farm-BAP	Farm Biodiversity Action Plan
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
HLS	Higher Level Scheme
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (predecessor of DEFRA)
NFU	National Farmers Union
RDS	Rural Development Service
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest