

Creation Time Resources 2014

God, Whose Farm is All Creation



Background Information and Additional Resources

For Creation Time 2014 an ecumenical group brought together by Eco Congregation Scotland, has prepared material to support worship leaders, responding to the UN International year of Family Farming, and using a lectionary produced by the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Creation Time

Creation Time started in the Orthodox Church in 1989 and has been supported by a growing number of churches across Europe since then. The European Christian Environmental Network has urged churches to adopt a Time for Creation stretching from 1 September to the feast of St Francis on 4 October. This was endorsed at the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania in 2007, when it was agreed that Creation Time "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change".

Family farming

Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities, and it is linked to several areas of rural development. Family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's.

Both in developing and developed countries, family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in the food production sector. **The International Year of Family Farming**

The 2014 International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) aims to raise the profile of family farming and smallholder farming by focusing world attention on its significant role in eradicating hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, protecting the environment, and achieving sustainable development, in particular in rural areas. The goal of the 2014 IYFF is to reposition family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies in the national agendas by identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards a more equal and balanced development.

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Taken from <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/what-is-family-farming/en/>

For information on the main messages of IYFF go to <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/about/main-messages/en/>

Drumness Farm, Perthshire: one example of family farming in Scotland today.

Drumness Farm is owned by Sandy and Helen May Bayne and family and is situated between the villages of Muthill and Auchterarder in Perthshire. The Bayne family have farmed in the area for well over a hundred years and Sandy and Helen-May's son Andrew is now managing the business so continuing the family tradition.

In the past century the size of the operation has increased both through the purchase of additional land and leasing from other landowners and is now over 700 acres.

The farm produces both livestock and crops. There is a herd of seventy suckler cows, and there are also 400 sheep. Crops grown include barley, wheat, potatoes, swedes and carrots.

Productivity and Compliance

Sandy stresses the need for the farm to be run productively in the current business environment. In this process the supermarkets play a huge role. Tesco's programme of farm compliance, called 'Nature's Choice' requires the farmer to draw up policies and provide supporting evidence on a range of issues including use of fertilisers and plant protection products; pollution prevention; wildlife and landscape conservation; energy use and recycling; and health and safety. The fat file of paperwork Helen-May must keep up to date demonstrates the paper trail that this compliance demands. At the same time the supermarkets keep a firm lid on prices with the consequence, according to Sandy, that supermarket shoppers in Britain continue to get vegetables at a relatively low price.

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Growing potatoes for supermarkets

The potato crop at Drumness illustrates the scale at which farmers supplying supermarkets now operate. There are four large storage sheds on site each holding up to 2000 tonnes of spuds. Potatoes are entirely planted and picked by machine. 'Tattie howking', the back breaking work that once gave seasonal work to a small army of casual labourers including children, was replaced by machinery over twenty years ago, reducing the need for labour on the farm but increasing its carbon footprint. The farm now has a self-propelled potato harvester, which although expensive, goes a long way in inclement weather to protect the soil structure of the fields in which it works.

On the farm potatoes are graded by size on a long conveyor, then stored in one tonne wooden pallets boxes and, when they are needed, shipped by truck to packers such as Albert Bartlett for packing and onward delivery to supermarkets – some of Sandy's spuds may end up on your local supermarket shelves. Sandy noted that supermarkets are now using more produce from Britain and that imports of produce including potatoes from European countries such as Portugal had declined.

The farm is not organic and spraying, which is carefully applied using a sophisticated GPS system, is carried out with fungicides to control disease (e.g. potato blight) and for weed control. At the same time other techniques of pest control such as swede nets, rolled out over the growing crop, preventing the attack by turnip flea beetle and cabbage white butterfly, are employed on the farm to reduce the need for spraying. Recent years have also seen the introduction of GPS controlled fertilizer application to improve accuracy and reduce waste.

A family farm in a time of change

Sandy is clearly proud of the operation of the farm, which has been able to thrive at a time of great uncertainty and when some other local producers have faced serious financial difficulties. He employs five staff including two seasonal workers from Slovakia. The quality of farm produce has met the high quality standards required by the supermarkets but at the same time this is no agricultural desert. The farm is set in beautiful rolling well wooded countryside and was alive with wildlife on the March day we visited: we saw hares, buzzards and roe deer. But there is large carbon footprint associated with this form of agriculture. Storing the spuds to keep them in shelf condition requires refrigeration units to keep four large barns at two degrees

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Celsius. However a 50KW array of solar panels has been installed on a shed roof. A large proportion of the electricity generated is used by the farm for refrigeration and running the potato grading line.

Additional Resources – articles, information and resources

United Nations 2014 International Year of Family Farming

UN website <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/>

Main messages of the International Year

<http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/main-messages/en/>

Scottish-based material and UK-based material

Short article from the Scottish Tenant farmers Association

<http://www.tfascotland.org.uk/2014-international-year-of-the-family-farm/>

Guardian article, 'Corporate stranglehold of farmland a risk to world food security, study says' <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/may/28/farmland-food-security-small-farmers>

Article from *The Scotsman* 'Family farms can fight global food crisis'

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/family-farms-can-fight-global-food-crisis-1-3346996>

Lectionary used for Creation Time 2014 materials

http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/assets/downloads/Environment/24.%20Creation_Time_Lectionary_DRO.pdf

Material from Christian Aid

Christian Aid's harvest materials here www.christianaid.org.uk/harvest

Details of Agribusiness and the commodification of food on world markets can be found in the Hungry for Justice report here

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/hungry-for-justice.pdf>

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A report advocating for small scale farming as a solution to world hunger can be found here <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/healthy-harvests-report.pdf>

Hunger for Justice: Hymns and songs to change the world.
http://www.musicroom.com/se/id_no/079198/details.html

The Writing Group

This material has been written by an ecumenical group:

John Butterfield is a Methodist minister who has also worked for the United Reformed Church. He is vice convenor of ACTS and was formerly a founding trustee of Eco Congregation Scotland.

Trevor Jamison is the Environmental Chaplain for Eco Congregation Scotland. He is a United Reformed Church Minister.

Richard Murray is a Lay Reader in the Scottish Episcopal Church with a responsibility for a small rural church at All Saints, Whiterashes, a member of the Aberdeen & Orkney diocesan Mission and Ministry Board and SEC provincial Church in Society Committee, where he has a focus on environmental issues.

Wendy Young co-ordinates the Christian Aid worship and theology collective, the group responsible for the worship material for the seasons and moments of the Christian year on the Christian Aid's website. From Northern Ireland, attends Kelvinside Hillhead Church of Scotland church in the West End of Glasgow, brought up in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.