SOUTH WEST DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Farming, labour and landscape in post-Brexit Britain

This project is led by the ERSC-funded South West Doctoral Training Partnership (SWDTP), in partnership with the BBSRC-funded SWBio DTP.

Supervisory team:
Main supervisor: Prof Jane Wills (University of Exeter)
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Collaborators: National Farmers Union (NFU), Natural England

Host institution: University of Exeter (Penryn)

Project description:
Agriculture is on the frontline of changes following from Brexit in 2020. This proposed PhD project aims to document the current practices and ambitions of famers and policy-makers who are now able to contribute to the development of a British Agricultural Policy (BAP) to replace the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Based on a partnership with key stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union, Natural England and local land owners with whom we already have partnerships (e.g. Riviera Produce), the project will explore possible farming futures in Cornwall, focusing on current farming inputs, outputs and labour supplies, and the geographical spread and potential change in relation to Brexit. The research will include a number of different types of farm, with a view to modelling a variety of possible outcomes in a post-Brexit agricultural economy. Collected via interviews, surveys and the analysis of farm records over repeated visits, data will be mapped using GIS to illustrate the geography of current inputs, markets and labour supplies. The studentship will provide the opportunity to then collate models of farm management, labour supply, economics and ecosystem service provision that are currently available, with the aim of combining them into a model that can examine the trade-offs between economic and environmental goals, as driven by policy changes. The data will provide an important benchmark that will be modelled for possible futures by testing the impact of different regulatory decisions in the new BAP on economic, social and environmental activities. These models will also be used to discuss the preferred options of farmers and policy-makers in the region, looking at different ways to balance economic and landscape management outcomes. The project is designed so that the data provides a definitive baseline that can be revisited in order to measure the subsequent impact of Brexit and the emerging BAP at regular intervals over the coming decades.