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## RASE launches nationwide survey to probe levels of soil and water management

A nationwide survey of farmers in arable and grassland regions is to be carried out by the Royal Agricultural Society of England as it launches a major initiative to help improve the management of soil and water resources across UK agriculture.

Climate change, rising costs and consumer demand for minimising the environmental impact of food production all make the management of soil and water resources a vital area for farming in the years ahead, says RASE.

The Society has highlighted these issues through a succession of reports from its Practice with Science Group. Now it wishes to help every farmer improve the management of their soil and water resources so boosting farm outputs and ultimately profitability.

“Since RASE published its report on the state of UK soil science in 2008, soil management has risen up the agenda - both in terms of R&D and in farmer awareness of its overall importance. Unless soils are well managed, all other farming activity is under pressure - winters are longer on livestock farms; establishment and autumn cultivation more difficult for arable farmers,” said RASE Chief Executive, Denis Chamberlain.

“RASE is launching two-years of activity in this area with a major, interactive conference planned for autumn of this year, followed by some regional, practical on-farm days in 2013. The research, which will be carried out by telephone and on line, will probe farmers activity in drainage and winter water storage.”

The key areas this research will cover include:

- What the major concerns are for different types of farmers in different parts of the country relating to soil and water management
- Exactly what measures farmers are currently taking to manage their soil and water resources
- How farmers plan to manage the challenges posed by extreme weather patterns
- What drainage investment has been made in the past 15 years
- What plans are in place for drainage, water for irrigation and water storage in future.

“Water has to be treated as a scarce resource. Farming uses a significant share of the UK’s available water so the industry has to make its case that it is managing the resources effectively and doing all within its power to make its use of water sustainable,” said Mr Chamberlain.

RASE are working with a cross-industry group including NFU, Association of Drainage Associations, AHDB, ADAS, the Environment Agency, the National Association of Agricultural Contractors and the newly-formed Soil Centre at Harper Adams University College.

The RASE is asking farmers to spare a few minutes to complete the online survey which can be found on their website [www.rase.org.uk](http://www.rase.org.uk) and will remain open until 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**Ends**

Notes to Editors

1. Press release issued by Catherine Stuart, Membership & Communications Executive, Royal Agricultural Society of England

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2. The Royal Agricultural Society of England plays a leading role in the development of British agriculture and a vibrant rural economy through the uptake of good science and the promotion of best practice. [www.rase.org.uk](http://www.rase.org.uk)