



## A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

# CSF enables an award-winning New Markets project

Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) has been working together with farmers since 2006. In partnership with South East Water, CSF is working with farmers in Hampshire to add value to farm production whilst reducing nitrates.

The Farmer-led Woodgarston Markets project began in winter 2018. The project looks at the potential for new market opportunities in Woodgarston, farm business enterprises, and supply chain development. **It explores ways to add value** to existing farm production and sustainable farming practices **whilst reducing diffuse water pollution.**

The Woodgarston groundwater catchment has historically been **badly affected by high nitrate concentrations** above the drinking water standard set by the European Union. Investigations identified **the main source as agricultural operations**, particularly arable land use.

CSF in partnership with South East Water brought farmers together in the catchment to trial a range of techniques to address the impacts from farming. **The farmer-led steering group is routinely attended by 78% of local land holders.** They explored effective use of cover crops in rotations, regenerative agriculture to improve soil quality and horizon-scanning new opportunities to increase profitability of their produce. This last aspect forms the basis of the Market Study.

South East Water and Catchment Sensitive Farming commissioned supply chain consultants to work with farmers in the group. Together they identified market



Summerdown Mint, one of the farms involved in the study

opportunities that would help both increase the economic sustainability of farm businesses and reduce impacts on groundwater from farming systems.

David Burton, Catchment Sensitive Farming said:

“The primary focus was on nitrate reduction, but **the farmers also wanted to deliver wider environment, social and business benefits.** Working together on all levels is key for a sustainable and profitable future, whether it’s for water supply or food production.”

The Markets Study explored several options with farmers, identifying ideas to share specialist equipment and develop agricultural partnerships.

Possible new opportunities include:

- low nitrogen organic/precision farming;
- a collaborative farm shop;
- growing spring barley for ethanol distillation and an on-site distillery;
- collaborating with researchers and universities;
- developing a visitor centre for school visits, tourism and selling local products like herb oils.

**The future of agriculture is changing** in light of recent policy developments and farms will have to adapt to the changing economic climate. Catchment Sensitive Farming is helping to rise to this challenge by enabling initiatives like the Woodgarston Markets project. Collaboration across supply chains helps farms and the businesses they supply become more resilient to both economic and environmental change.

Graham Earl, from South East Water said about the Woodgarston Markets project:

“This is just the beginning of an exciting, collaborative and innovative approach for **achieving sustainable and profitable farming enterprises**. We are aiming to create resilient catchments by focusing on nutrient efficiency, which **reduces nitrate levels in groundwater, and protects water quality and the environment.**”

**In November 2019 the farmer-led project won a bronze award** at the internationally recognised [Green Apple Environment Awards](#) for Environmental Best Practice 2019. The awards recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice around the world. It is unusual for an early-stage project like the new markets study to receive a Green Apple Award. **The judges were particularly impressed with the innovative foresight and high level of business to business collaboration** Woodgarston farmers, CSF and South East Water displayed.



Summerdown Mint Produce's warehouse

The project is now moving forward to the strategic stage of implementation.

For more information contact David Burton, CSF Business Development Lead: [david.burton@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:david.burton@naturalengland.org.uk)

**Get in touch with your local CSFO for advice, support or access to funding.** Search GOV.UK for Catchment Sensitive Farming.