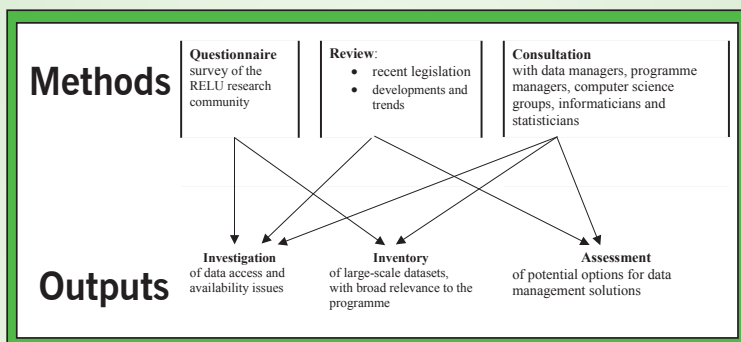


# Data Resources for Rural Sustainability Research: Realising their Combined Potential

A scoping study for RELU, a joint Research Councils programme co-sponsored by Defra and SEERAD. A joint project by CSL, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Countryside and Community Research Unit of the University of Gloucestershire.

## Aims:

- To explore generic and interdisciplinary issues of data management and integration relevant to the aims of the RELU programme
- To provide a wider perspective on the policy and organisation of rural economy and land use data in the UK



## This scoping study will:

- Inform the development of data management strategies for future research programmes
- Inform future developments within and between the Research Councils

## Questionnaire survey: some preliminary results

### Sample

- A questionnaire was e-mailed to 653 addresses (those who had expressed an interest in the RELU first call). A reminder was sent a week later
- So far, 113 completed forms have been received and are being analysed
- Non-respondents were asked to give a reason. Of 153 replying,
  - >62% indicated the form was not relevant
  - >19% indicated lack of time

Table 1. Types of data that are relevant

	N	% of respondents
Land use/Land cover	71	64
Agriculture/horticulture	68	61
Landscape character	53	48
Administrative boundaries	52	47
Wildlife/biodiversity	52	47
Economic activity/diversity	48	43
Soil	48	43
Water quality	47	42
Weather/climate	47	42
Contamination/pollution	44	40
Demography/settlement pattern	41	37
Social attitudes	40	36
Water e.g. hydrology, waterways	39	35
Business/institutions/ governance	37	33
Topography	37	33
Social structure/social exclusion	36	32
Recreation	32	29
Food and drink	29	26
Waste	26	23
Transport	25	23
Air quality	25	23
Disease - plant and animal	23	21
Energy	22	20
Historic/archaeology	21	19
Fisheries	17	15
Coastal	15	14
Radioactive substances	11	10

## Results

- Most respondents were from universities (68%) or government research institutions (19%)
- 73% needed access to external datasets. Of those, 48% had difficulty
- Most discovered datasets from the internet (59%) or colleagues (57%). Libraries (29%) or catalogues (10%) were used less
- Land use/land cover data were most relevant, followed by agriculture/horticulture. Most categories were fairly widely used: 18 of 27 categories were used by 25% or more of respondents, and 15 by a third or more. (Table 1)
- 25% currently integrate data and most use spreadsheets and/or GIS/mapping and statistical software (Table 2)

Table 2. What tools do you use for data management and integration?

	N	% of respondents
Spreadsheets	83	75
Statistical software	54	49
Database software	39	35
Graphical	26	24
Mapping/GIS	58	53
CIS (Countryside Information System)	11	10

## Initial conclusions

External datasets are currently used by a high proportion of researchers, and difficulties with access are a real issue.



Central Science Laboratory



UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
at CHELTENHAM and GLOUCESTER

## Authors

Nigel Boatman  
n.boatman@csl.gov.uk

Helen McKay

Naomi Jones

## Address

Central Science Laboratory,  
Sand Hutton,  
York,  
YO41 1LZ.  
UK.

## Acknowledgement

Thank you to everyone who provided information and completed questionnaires.



RURAL ECONOMY AND LAND USE



RESEARCH COUNCILS UK



Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

CSL is an Executive Agency of Defra