

## Essex Farm Manager Crowned Top Crop Protection Award Winner



**An Essex farm manager has scooped the prize for being the best candidate of 2012 in the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection.**

Ian Gibson, who works at Radbourne Farms in Aythorpe Roding, received the Barrie Orme Shield from Richard Butler, Chairman of the Voluntary Initiative Steering Group, at a ceremony held at the Farmers Club in London.

Warwickshire-born Mr Gibson manages 530ha of combinable crops and moved to

Radbourne Farms in 2005. He is a graduate of Harper Adams and he spent two years as a trainee manager at Nocton Farms in Lincolnshire.

The award, which is sponsored by the Agricultural Industries Confederation, Nufarm UK and C & J Supplies, recognises technical ability and professionalism in crop protection.

As well as the trophy, Mr Gibson received vouchers for travel to London, a hotel for two nights for two people with theatre tickets and spending money.

With a pass rate of just 75% in 2012, the BASIS Certificate is a difficult qualification to achieve. Mr Gibson was among just 182 who passed the exam last year.

Mr Butler discussed the huge number of organisations that participate in the VI, which is charged with improving pesticide practice on farm, and emphasised the central importance of teamwork in the VI's achievements.

"Teamwork is also a key concept in the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection and Ian's success demonstrates the value of a winning team."

Mr Butler also highlighted the increasing need for the best farmers and farm managers, the best agronomists and the best spray operators who can put science into practice to produce more and impact less.

Mr Gibson passed the FACTS qualification in 2010 and successfully completed the ICM qualification in 2012.

The BASIS qualification is a comprehensive challenge. The assessment involves a written project and Mr Gibson's was a re-design of the farm's chemical handling and sprayer filling area. This is currently being implemented and once completed will be used as a Catchment Sensitive Farming demonstration site. There is also a written exam, a practical identification test and one-to-one questioning in the field from each of three examiners.

## Debbie is a winner too



**BASIS trainer Debbie Wedge, who runs the Chelmsford and West Essex Training Group, has taught an unprecedented four winners of the Barrie**

**Orme shield – the prize awarded annually to the best candidate in the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection exam.**

You've helped train four out of 12 winners for the Barrie Orme Shield, what's your secret? I've got a very good team behind me – it's not just me. I use other people who've been on BASIS courses or people involved in the industry to instruct various sessions

in the specialist areas I am less familiar with. I also run quite severe mock exams to get candidates well prepared for the actual exam. Farmers and agronomists who've done the BASIS training help me to give candidates a good grilling: it's replicating what the exam will be – but tougher!

What's your background and why did you decide to get involved in BASIS? I have a degree in Agriculture and worked for ADAS for eight years, where I received very good in-house training. I was approached to run a training group and took over in the Essex area in 1996.

What courses do you run? I teach BASIS Crop Protection and the Foundation course, FACTS, Advanced Cereals, Nutrient

Management Planning courses and run combinable crop agronomy groups for managers and spray operators. But as a training group we can offer all the BASIS courses for continuing professional development.

How important is BASIS for you as a trainer and your students? BASIS is very important to me as an instructor and training provider as a lot of courses are accredited by BASIS. Its professional qualifications have worldwide recognition and the UK is known as having the best certification schemes. BASIS provides personal development for students, which means they can continue to attend training courses and gain more qualifications.

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## New qualification offers taster in grassland agronomy

**Introduced just last year the BASIS Foundation in Agronomy (Grassland and Forage Crops) is an excellent four-day introduction to grassland agronomy.**

The qualification can either be used as a stepping stone to the full BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection (Grassland and Forage Crops) course, or a standalone qualification for those who need a good level of understanding in grassland agronomy, such as farm and retail staff.

Robin Bentley, Marketing Manager at Dow AgroSciences, says: "It's very important that farmers have access to appropriate advice and support when using pesticides. This is even more the case with the more infrequent adhoc users such as grassland farmers. A simple re-enforcement of the need to read the label in full and ensure the wearing of appropriate PPE is a very valuable exercise. Away from the more intensive arable areas of Britain, it can be a challenge to gain the necessary experience and knowledge and indeed time to undertake the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection.

"The Foundation Course is an excellent building block to start this process and build awareness of the need for better service – particularly for the those who are starting their careers or are keen to build up their credentials through nationally recognised qualifications.

"It will make the transition to the full BASIS Certificate whether for Agriculture



or something more specific – such as Grassland and Forage Crops – an easier exercise and it's from that point they can really help the business to deliver the best levels of specific advice to their farmer client. I would urge people leaders to look at this training opportunity for their staff and help us as an industry gear up the necessary credentials for folks servicing this critical sector of our industry."

The course is a sound introduction to the agronomy, integrated crop protection and crop nutrition of grassland and forage crops.

Topics covered include:

- grassland and forage crop production and systems
- pests, weeds, crop diseases, soil and crop nutrition
- plant protection chemicals and fertiliser products
- protecting people, animals and the environment
- application of plant protection products and fertilisers.

**The course consists of two blocks of two days spread over the calendar year, so that farm crops can be seen at different stages. It is on offer at Harper Adams University, to find out more see the BASIS website.**

## Latest Pesticide Guide now available

**Agronomists have the chance to order the latest UK Pesticide Guide – the only comprehensive printed reference for all products approved for use in agriculture, amenity, forestry and horticulture.**

The guide for 2013 has had nine active ingredient profiles deleted and a total of 11 new ones added in.

Martin Lainsbury, editor of the UK Pesticide Guide, says: "The new actives include some niche products like *Ampelomyces quisqualis* strain AQ10 and it is encouraging to see new

active ingredients being approved, despite the environmental hurdles being set higher."

**This year the UK Pesticide Guide is also available as an eBook from Amazon and Google Play. There's also a comprehensive online version available at [www.plantprotection.co.uk](http://www.plantprotection.co.uk) and three CPD points can be gained by subscribing to the website.**



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promote and develop the professional standards to which you adhere

## Best practice Standard made bigger and better

**BASIS has launched a new bigger and better version of its Amenity Assured scheme. It will be called the Amenity Assured Standard, and aims to ensure the highest standards of practice in the chemical control of weeds, pests and diseases in the amenity sector.**

According to Paul Singleton, Chairman of Amenity Assured, the re-launch is designed to establish the Standard as the benchmark for quality in amenity pesticide application. He says: "We had a number of objectives when we designed the Standard. We wanted to make involvement more cost-effective, while ensuring that the Standard received greater recognition and was more widely adopted."

Mr Singleton continues: "Companies and individuals holding an Amenity Assured certificate will be able to prove that they can provide a quality service supported by an independent audit of their operational practices and qualifications. Those responsible for contracting these services will benefit from knowing that suppliers with this accreditation have reached a certain standard, have the right qualifications and adhere to all the appropriate regulations."

The Standard applies across a wide range of amenity sectors including oil, gas and electricity distribution, roads and pavements, rail, parks, and sports facilities. The Standard involves a two-part process with an initial self-completion questionnaire being followed up through an on-site visit and audit.

Areas covered by the questionnaire and audit include staff qualifications, application information, transport and storage, and client satisfaction.

Those interested in finding out more should look at the BASIS website at [www.basis-reg.com](http://www.basis-reg.com) or ring BASIS on 01335 340851 and speak to one of the team looking after the Amenity Assured Standard.



### Rob's round up



Welcome to the spring edition of the new look BASIS Newsletter. It's certainly set to be an exciting year for BASIS with the launch of the Amenity Assured Standard, the launch of DairyPro and our new Grassland Foundation Award, all of which are featured in this publication.

BASIS is now at the heart of so much that is good in the industry and these initiatives show how we are helping to develop training and accreditation for the new generation.

In the future we are looking to incorporate the Grassland Award into a Diploma, run jointly with BASIS and Harper Adams University. Along with the new DairyPro Register, we are hoping to extend our reach to livestock farmers, as well as all the training offered to our arable colleagues.

BASIS now occupies a unique place in the industry and provides the resources and expertise behind an increasing number of schemes, of which we will be highlighting in future issues of this newsletter.

We still have one or two things coming up including developing our website and materials to reflect our position – so watch this space.

## Agronomists awarded the Harper Adams Diploma



**Agronomists Jane Cambridge, from Agrii West Midlands, and York-based Nic Drever-Smith have been awarded the Harper Adams University College Graduate**

**Diploma in Agronomy with Environmental Management.**

Ms Cambridge started work in the agrochemical supply industry in 1984 and got the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection in 1985. She completed the Legumes & Oilseeds module of Advanced BASIS before completing four modules of Advanced BASIS, FACTS, the Certificate in Integrated Crop Management and the Plant Protection Award, as well as the Soil and Water

Management Certificate. She says: "Throughout my career personal development has always been very important to me – I felt that it gave me the edge to have the latest technical knowledge.

"I can say that over the years I have found all the short courses at Harper very intensive, well taught and enjoyable. Each one has proved to be very beneficial in my work as an agronomist and has helped me to offer a better service to my customers."

Mr Drever-Smith has been farming a 350 acre arable holding near York since completing an HND at Harper Adams in 1989. He says: "I have always been most interested in the agronomy side of farming

but it took me until 2009 to get round to doing the BASIS Certificate. I found the course very rewarding and with a little persuasion from Linda Bower of Landbased Training I continued with the advanced courses over the next few winters.

"Although I meet plenty of people through my other work as a Farm Assurance Auditor for NSF-CMi, farming can be very isolating at times and it was great to see the same group of farmers and advisers each year working towards the BASIS Diploma and I made a few friendships along the way.

"Having finished the Diploma I decided to do one further advanced course which gave me enough credits for the Graduate Diploma."

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## Sensitive Farming helps farmers improve water quality



by Dr Philippa Mansfield, Catchment Sensitive Farming partnerships

**Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) now works with farmers in over 80 river catchments in England to tackle Diffuse Water Pollution from Agriculture on a voluntary basis.**

CSF catchments are targeted where evidence suggests that pollution from farming impacts significantly on water quality and aquatic habitats. CSF operates through a network of Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (CSFOs), national and catchment partnerships, working with specialist agricultural advisers.

CSF advisers can help farm businesses and the local environment by providing free training, advice and capital grants to farmers to reduce water pollution. Training is primarily provided to farmers, working with their agronomists where appropriate,

at workshops or individual farm visits. Training topics are tailored to the farming sector, area and pollution problems but include:

- **Nutrient Management** – soil testing; nutrient management planning using Tried & Tested, PLANET or other systems; fertiliser spreader calibration; manure use
- **Pesticide Management** – pesticide planning and agronomy, pesticide filling and wash-down facilities/procedures; biobeds; sprayer calibration; pesticide application training
- **Soil management** – soil structure assessments; methods to reduce soil compaction, improve structure and reduce soil erosion
- **Farm infrastructure** – farm buildings, yards and track improvements; fencing; manure storage; clean and dirty water separation.

The CSF Capital Grant Scheme offers grants of up to £10,000 to farmers in CSF catchments for 26 items for infrastructure improvements, prioritised according to the expected reduction in water pollution.

Recently CSF have used workshops and newsletters to raise the awareness of the impact of metaldehyde on drinking water quality and offered training on best practice in use of slug pellets and practical solutions, including pellet applicator calibration and biobeds.

Emma Wood, CSFO in the Eastern Rother catchment, says: "Farmers reacted positively when made aware of the impact of even one pellet on water quality and the simple solutions that can help, such as brushing off soil from applicators in the field removes 90% metaldehyde, really showed that everyone can do their part in making a difference."

### A biobed and water harvesting system funded by CSF

Since 2006, over 11,000 farm holdings (covering 1.7M Ha) have received free CSF advice and training and capital grants have been awarded to over 7,000 projects. Feedback shows over 90% farmer satisfaction and 60% of CSF recommendations have been implemented by farmers.

CSF monitoring of water quality in CSF catchments shows reductions in sediment, nitrate and phosphorus in water.

In catchments where CSF and the Voluntary Initiative have worked with agronomists on best practice use of pesticides, monitoring shows the percentage of samples exceeding the 0.1 µg/l (drinking water standard) reduced from 6% to 2% between 2006/7 and 2009/10 crop seasons.

**For more information on Catchment Sensitive Farming see:**

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/csrf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/csrf)

## Nominated Storekeeper Training available on request

Nominated Storekeeper Training enables nominated storekeepers to meet the standards of pesticide storage laid down in the 'Code of Practice for Suppliers of Pesticides to Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry' and Guidance for those affected by the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

There are no pre-requisite qualifications required to attend the two day course that

holds a 99% pass rate with highly experienced and approachable Trainers.

**For companies with a number of staff requiring one day refresher training please contact Sue Mason, [sue@basis-reg.co.uk](mailto:sue@basis-reg.co.uk). Call 01335 340856 to arrange a trainer to come to your premises, or see our website for training dates and venues.**



Only BASIS can . . .  
continue to improve good practice in both amenity and industrial pesticide sectors