



MEDIA RELEASE

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Farming minister praises VI's ten years of success

Agriculture Minister Jim Paice has praised the Voluntary Initiative for its achievements over the past ten years.

Speaking at a reception hosted by the Crop Protection Association to mark the tenth anniversary of the VI, he said:

“Under VI leadership, industry has stepped up to the mark and shown what can be delivered voluntarily without regulation. It is an excellent example of industry taking responsibility and earning trust.

“The VI has been subject to close scrutiny since it was set up and it continues to stand up well. This is due to the co-operative approach taken by everyone involved in the VI, all of whom are united in the aim of delivering the responsible use of pesticides. The result is a non-regulatory solution that is a credit to all those involved.”

The event also saw the launch of a brochure marking the tenth anniversary and the VI's 2010/11 Annual Report. Jim Paice also took the opportunity to thank outgoing independent chairman Professor Barry Dent, who has stood down after chairing the VI Steering Group from its start in 2001, and welcoming his successor Wiltshire farmer Richard Butler.

“I am pleased that we have been able to maintain the VI's track record for meeting or exceeding major targets for training and sprayer testing,” said Mr Butler. “These remain an important demonstration of the farming industry's commitment to responsible pesticide use. However, we must now look ahead to see how the VI - working with other industry-led schemes - can help minimise the threat of further regulation as the UK implements the Sustainable Use and Water Framework Directives.”

Notes for editors:

1. The VI Tenth Anniversary brochure can be found at:
[http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/ Attachments/Resources/1471_S4.pdf](http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/Attachments/Resources/1471_S4.pdf)
2. The VI annual report can be found at:
[http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/ Attachments/Resources/1472_S4.pdf](http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/Attachments/Resources/1472_S4.pdf)
3. The Voluntary Initiative (VI), which was set up in 2001, is a programme of measures promoting responsible pesticide use.
4. The VI has successfully established the National Sprayer Testing Scheme, the National Register of Sprayer Operators, the use of Crop Protection Management Plans and the BASIS BETA (Biodiversity and Environmental Training for Advisers) qualification as well as trialling and promoting a range of water protection measures. For the year ending March 31 2011 there were 20,359 members of NRoSO, over 14,200 sprayer tests were conducted with coverage of 86.8 per cent of the sprayed area. 1.35 million hectares are covered by a CPMP (including numbers from the LEAF audit) just short of the 1.5 million hectare target. The continued decline is due to CPMPs no longer being an option in the Entry Level Scheme. In addition 847 agronomists have gained the BETA qualification
5. The sponsors of the Voluntary Initiative are the Agricultural Engineers Association, Agricultural Industries Confederation, Country Land and Business Association, Crop Protection Association, National Association of Agricultural Contractors, the NFU, NFU Scotland and the Ulster Farmers Union. To date over £99 million has been invested in the scheme by the agricultural industry.

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