****News release

For immediate use

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**Environmental and productivity ‘win-wins’ on Scottish Livestock farms**

Livestock productivity and environmental delivery can go hand in hand, and a brand-new project enlisting the support of Scottish farmers, is going to prove just that.

Sheep and beef specialists from SAC Consulting, Poppy Frater and Lesley Wylie, will be leading a project with four farmers across Scotland this year, looking at how they can combine efficient livestock production with biodiversity and climate change benefits.

The project runs until December 2022, and will deliver factsheets, case studies and an open farm meeting this summer, which will be free for anyone to attend.

Poppy Frater surmised: “Often, environmental-based approaches to farming come with a negative impact on agricultural production – we either leave land for biodiversity or might compromise production per hectare with lighter stocking rates or slower growth rates for environmental reasons.

“However, food production is still an important public service. We are running this project to question whether we can ‘have it all’, by using methods such as agroforestry, deferred grazing and diverse pasture swards.”

One of the four participating farms, Oakwood Mill, run by Giles and Stuart Henry, boasts fantastic wildflower and insect populations on deferred grazing land, yet the cows are outwintered cost-effectively and the majority of youngstock sold finished at 19 months, off grass.

‘’The judicious grazing of our hill by cows in the winter has dramatically changed the biodiversity of the area,” reported Giles. “From an area that was previously over grazed in the summer and early winter, we now have a complete community of flora and fauna along with all the living creatures this brings of every size and description. The change has been dramatic and the benefit to our environment is immeasurable. It has also allowed us to maintain a herd of cows whose wintering costs are the envy of many.‘’

The other farmers involved with the project include: David Whiteford, of Logan of Maxwelston in Ayrshire; Jock Gibson, of Edinvale Farms in Moray; and SRUC’s Hill and Mountain Research Centre in Crianlarich.

Poppy concluded: “While we might not be able to provide all the answers, we want to understand what is currently practiced that demonstrates good environmental and production outcomes, whilst holding honest discussions about potential negative consequences too.”

Researchers and advisers will be assigned to cross disciplines, to address the challenge of meeting the increasing public requirements from farming. The project benefits from the input of ecologists Dr John Holland and Dr Lorna Cole, alongside researchers involved in livestock production and greenhouse gas research, Dr Carol-Anne Duthie, Dr Nicola Lambe and Dr Spiridoula Athanasiadou, and soil researcher Dr Paul Hargreaves.

This project has been funded through the Scottish Government University Innovation Fund.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors:**

Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) was established in 2012 through the merger of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) with Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge Colleges. Through these institutions, we can trace our lineage back over 100 years.

Today, SRUC is on a journey to become Scotland’s enterprise university at the heart of our sustainable natural economy.

Our mission is to create and mobilise knowledge and talent – partnering locally and globally to benefit Scotland’s natural economy.

To achieve this, we draw upon SRUC’s longstanding strengths in world-class and sector-leading research, learning and teaching, skills and training and consultancy (through SAC Consulting).

A natural economy is fuelled by responsible use of our natural resources: people, land, energy, water, animals and plants. It is an n interlinked, shared, living system that creates opportunities and prosperity. It is multi-scale, dynamic and resilient through creative management and mindful custodianship.

By focussing on the sustainable natural economy, SRUC will strive to lead the way in delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all, in Scotland, and beyond.