

Introduction

The Applied Research Forum identified a cross-sector need to engage farmers with new soil regulations, and in particular highlight the benefits that improved soil management could bring.

This was to be delivered through the Soil Information Gateway, a new, web-based resource that would bring together 17 case studies from across the farming spectrum. This would sit within a framework of soil-related advice.

Objective

As part of the wider project that was led by the British Potato Council, Mistral was asked to develop and implement a PR plan that would deliver the case studies and promote the Gateway. The aim was to ensure farmers were not only made aware of the new resource, but were also motivated to use it.

Strategy

Working with all the levy bodies, a number of soil consultants and with the farmers themselves, Mistral developed a template to ensure the relevant information was gathered from all the case study farmers. The information was then edited into short, punchy bullet points, following a set single page pdf format. Mistral guided all 17 case studies through a complicated approval process that co-ordinated the wishes of all the project partners.

Mistral developed the concept of soil champion to promote the case studies and engage farmers. We worked with *Farmers Weekly* and adapted its Academy approach to incorporate case studies.

We worked up five case studies into academies on different soil-related topics. These were carried as branded, double-page spread articles in consecutive issues of *Farmers Weekly* in September and October 2007.

We launched the Gateway to the target farming media with a press release that was backed up with promotion to individual publications to ensure good uptake. The tone reflected the soil champion concept, highlighting the benefits for individual farm businesses. We also took advantage of opportunities to write opinion pieces and letters.

Results

The *Farmers Weekly* academy series alone generated coverage with an AEV of £100,000. The academy also ran as an interactive tool on *FWi* with BASIS points available for farmers.

Coverage was also achieved in all the leading farming publications; a letter was published in *The Times* and an opinion piece in *Commercial Grower*.

