

26th June 2008
**FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY
SUPPORTED FARMING IN DEVON AS A WINNER OF THE
DAME SHEILA MCKECHNIE AWARD**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) announced the first of three winners of the annual Dame Sheila McKechnie Award. Community Supported Farming (CSF), Rural Arts in Science Education (RAISE) was selected from over 40 applications from across the UK by a panel of judges that included the Food Standards Agency's Chair Deirdre Hutton, broadcaster Jon Snow (Channel 4 News) and Professor Tim Lang (on behalf of City University).

The FSA established the annual community food initiative awards in September 2004 to commemorate the contribution that Dame Sheila McKechnie made in helping to set up the Food Standards Agency. Sheila McKechnie was a lifelong consumer champion, having previously been director of Shelter and later the Consumer's Association (now Which?).

Community Supported Farming (CSF), a local voluntary organisation, was set up in 2003 to teach refugees and children how to produce vegetables, herbs, livestock and poultry. It works with over 50 school children, refugees, farmers and the general public. As well as its proven track record in linking communities with local food production, it has helped school communities and refugees to gain greater access to land where they can grow their own food and improve their cross communication skills. It is currently funded by South Devon AONB unit, Naturesave Trust and the UK Premaculture Association.

The initiative will receive £15,000 over a three year period to help develop and expand. £5,000 will be provided by the FSA each year.

Dame Deirdre Hutton, FSA Chair said:

"Sheila was an outspoken campaigner who worked incredibly hard to champion the rights of consumers to tackle the problems of poverty. She would have been particularly proud to see her name associated with Community Supported Farming as she was passionate about providing food access and food education for all. The panel and the Food Standards Agency would like to congratulate this initiative and wish it a continuing success."

Christian Taylor, Community Supported Farming said:

"We are really delighted to have won this award. It is satisfying to know that the achievements of our organisation and the hard work and dedication of the project leaders and local people have been recognised. Thanks to this money we are now able to offer even more to the local community."

Who was Dame Sheila McKechnie?

Sheila McKechnie was instrumental in lobbying Government to establish an agency that would genuinely 'put consumers' first' and allay consumer concern about a range of food related issues.

Sheila was one of the most effective and influential consumer campaigners of her generation and helped to define the consumer movement not only in the UK but also across Europe. Sheila was awarded an OBE in 1995 for services to housing and the homeless, and made a dame in 2001 for services to consumers. Sheila died on 2nd January 2004, aged 55, after a long battle with cancer. The Agency would like to commemorate Sheila's memory by developing an award in her name.

What is this award?

The Board of the Food Standards Agency decided in 2004 to commemorate the contribution that Dame Sheila McKechnie made in helping set up the Agency by running annual awards for community food initiatives. The Agency currently provides a 3 year funding package (£15,000) for two winners of the DSM Community Food Initiative Award. The Awards assist community food initiatives to develop innovative approaches to tackling issues around food inequality and there have been a wide range of activities that have won Awards over the last 4 years e.g. a community café, traditional food co-ops, young mum's healthy eating project and kid's café. The awards are available to any community food initiative in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

What happens after the 3 years?

The Agency will work in partnership with the successful initiatives to evaluate the chosen schemes and make these findings available to other community food initiatives.

How do community food initiatives apply for the award?

Applications for the award can be made between September and December every year. Application forms and information on the award process will be available on the Agency's website in advance: www.food.gov.uk

Who won the awards in 2006?

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative and Sunshine Café were selected from over fifty applications across the UK.