

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES: POLICY REPORT 2001 (P.115/2002) - COMMENTS

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by the Finance and Economics Committee**



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Comments

The cost of the proposals as stated in the Policy Report amount to an increase in the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee's budget of £6.922 million over a three year period.

Additional funding is not available in 2003 as cash limits have already been determined and use of the General Reserve is not appropriate as the request is neither urgent nor unforeseen. Accordingly, if the States support the proposals, the earliest that funds could be available would be in 2004, and even then the request could be subject to prioritisation against other Committees' requests. The States have approved maximum net revenue expenditure sums of £394 million in 2003 and £414 million in 2004. The Finance and Economics Committee will not countenance any breach of these limits.

The Finance and Economics Committee is obliged to ensure that public money is spent wisely and that value for money is achieved and it remains unconvinced that the proposed policy is in the best interests of the Agriculture Industry and represents best value for the taxpayers of the Island. The Committee has concerns that increased subsidies from taxpayers is not the best way forward to maintain a viable Agriculture Industry in the medium and longer term.

It does however recognise the important role agriculture plays in Island life and supports the general principle of appropriate financial aid. It is therefore with great reluctance that the Committee is not able to support the financial proposals within the proposed report and proposition of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee.