

Dear Mr. Johnson

Thank you for your request for my input in your current scrutiny enquiry.

As you may be aware, I currently have an application for the cultivation of medicinal cannabis, this is pending with Green Island Growers Ltd. I am also a long standing member of Jersey's protected crop farming community and member of the Jersey Farmers Union.

Recently we have been working to adhere to the application guidance, created by the Government of Jersey, to be granted a licence for the cultivation of medicinal cannabis. We have had the aid of both Chief Pharmacist, Paul McCabe and Head of Bio Security, Scott Meadows during this process.

Our initial intention for pursuing this new sector of horticulture, is as an extension to our long running family business. To enable us to secure the business that we already operate and allow the potential for reinvestment into it's infrastructure, which is not possible operating in its current model.

The cultivation processes for cannabis are similar in both climatic conditions and grow systems of that of which we already grow, thus making diversification relatively simple from a cultivation perspective.

We have diversified before, in the early 2000's when the export of locally produced tomatoes became unviable with increased costs of production and logistics. At this time we adapted our cultivation areas into other varieties of produce for the local market.

Even so with high productions costs on island we still have to compete with cheaper imported, heavily subsidised produce from Europe resulting in margins of locally produced produce being small.

This new sector has the potential for us to diversify yet again and if successful reinvest some profits into our sites for the cultivation of produce and going someway to ensuring the islands food security.

If handled correctly this new sector of horticulture could help revive the export market for the rural economy, help educate and employ local people, as well as bringing investment to many of our disused glasshouse and agricultural sites that may otherwise be lost from agriculture to the housing sector.

Please find my views to your questions below

1. If grown in an open vented glasshouse environment the impact of energy would be much the same as traditionally grown protected crops. The main issue with this choice of facility is the potential of cross pollination from field grown hemp crops. If the pollen from these crops crosses with that of a protected crop cannabis facility it will pollinate the cannabis rendering it useless. Government can help to overcome this however, through policy.

Firstly by adding exclusion zones round cannabis facilities stipulating that hemp cannot be grown within a certain radius of these cultivations.

Secondly would be insisting hemp cultivators only grow from feminised seeds. This would prevent male plants growing in open fields and thus pollination. It would also create greater opportunities for outdoor cultivation of hemp varieties for extraction purposes.

If protected crop cannabis cultivators do choose to grow in a fully enclosed environment the electricity requirement for this would be far greater than that of a glasshouse facility due to lighting and HVAC programs required. However it would offer better controls of a facilities environment.

Concerning water usage if substrate is chosen carefully and with good crop husbandry, we believe we can grow the crop with little to no run off. This is largely due to the short crop cycle of cannabis. Excess run off can be either diluted and spreads on alternative crops or reintroduced to crops via a water recycling system

2. The low crime rate and lack of organised crime on the island I believe is what makes Jersey such an attractive place for this new sector. Marry this with our agricultural history and strong reputation for regulation and this is most likely why established LPs are looking to invest here. I do not see how security or monitoring systems could affect other traditional agriculture on island.

However private security services are needed to produce a risk assessment that sites applying for licences need as part of the application process and these are verified by the States of Jersey Police, and will be reviewed and approved by both the UK Home Office and Jersey Government. The security requirements we have to adhere to mirror that of the UK Home Office guidance.

Background checks such as Enhanced DBS checks are also required for responsible persons, as application guidance advises.

3. Naturally areas may be reallocated for more profitable crops. As export of large quantity/ low value produce no longer makes economic sense. It would seem the only future of Jersey farming, for export, will be producing low quantity/ high value goods which could be shipped easily.

If Jersey Government were to keep the traditional Jersey farming exports viable they need to support the industry with a grant system similar to the EU where farmers receive grants of circa 40% of turnover and this would go some way to making competition fairer.

Farmers looking at diversifying into this sector will have to make substantial investment into facilities in order to be able to cultivate to the consistency and quality demanded by the medicinal market.

Also the skillsets required to cultivate cannabis is better linked to the protected crop industry of which there are few left operating on island.

These factors would make diversification for many unlikely, without government support.

With this in mind a balance may need to be struck, if large overseas corporations are allowed to invest vast sums within the island to set up these operations, local entities will struggle to compete for the few sites that are viable.

The best skilled agriculturalists will also naturally gravitate from other areas of agriculture. This could also be seen as a positive scenario, preventing unemployment as other sectors of agriculture struggling to compete with exports.

4. Vehicle traffic to and from cultivation sites I would see to potentially decrease compared to that of a traditional protected crop nursery. Raw materials/inputs for grows would be similar but the end product would be dried and cured on site making it less perishable than traditional agricultural products and thus the time in which we have to get product to market longer.

This allows a greater ability to store and consolidate batches of product and reduce shipping frequencies. I hope you find this a balanced appraisal of the questions you have asked from both my position as a lifetime horticulturalist on Island and a farmer attempting to diversify into an exciting new sector of the industry.

Kindest Regards

David Blake

Three oaks Vineries Ltd.