

Dear Sirs,

In response to the question of whether the Government of Jersey should invest £2.8 million in a Rural Initiative Scheme, I believe it should, but only if the support is given to small growers with a true Jersey nexus, not merely considered Jersey by virtue of a local holding company.

Membership of UK farming bodies such as LEAF and Red Tractor should not be a condition of eligibility to apply for funding - the cost of membership to these organisations is extortionate, and is of limited value to those supplying the local market. Having such conditions is a barrier to entry for many small farmers.

Greater transparency about which growers have received funding is also required so that the public can see how their funds are being spent. There is limited information available about agricultural grant awards under schemes implemented by past Governments; support for such initiatives hinges on public by-in.

Furthermore, the Government could consider including support for local organic farmers in terms of assisting with Soil Association Accreditation costs as part of the Rural Initiative - this after all improves the land for the next generation, provided it isn't rezoned and built upon.

With regards to farming diversity, two success stories are undoubtedly Jersey Hemp and The Jersey Tea Company, both of whom grow organically at Warwick Farm, are Soil Association Accredited and were set up by locals. It is a travesty that in times when the Government are looking for ways to achieve zero carbon, that the future of Warwick Farm is considered for anything other than farming. Whilst no individual business has the right to assume an ongoing lease at Warwick Farm, the fact that the Government would consider destroying prime agricultural and organic land, is non-sensical, particularly when there are existing, non-green sites within the island plan that could be considered for housing or bowling greens.

Finally, Organic Tea plants are perfect for sequestration with a plant life of 70 to 100 years. If the Government were truly committed to zero carbon, it would be exploring carbon-offsetting schemes with both Jersey Hemp and The Jersey Tea Company, and not considering proposals to build on this prime agricultural land. One tree removed from Warwick Farm, is one tree too many and makes a mockery of any environmental initiatives the Government proposes thereafter.