

Public Submissions

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the rural economy strategy. I have farmed all my working life firstly with my Father and now with my wife. Together we run St Lawrence Growers Limited trading as Farm Fresh Organics. We are the oldest established commercial poultry farm on the island. We farm 6,000 barn layers and 600 free range Organic hens. We sell our eggs locally to the supermarkets and many other shops and catering outlets. We also farm 220 verges of Organic land on which we grow many different types of vegetables for the local and export market.

There are THREE issues I would like to comment on regarding the new rural strategy.

(1) PR5 Land classification

If land is to be classified it should not be on quality because all land is valuable to different farmers. If a meadow is not suitable for potatoes it may be excellent for sheltered grazing for a dairy farmer.

If land is to be classified it should be for environmental reasons. We all know that the nitrates in the island water supply in the Spring are too high due to the amount of inorganic fertilizer applied to the land for growing Jersey Royals. I believe a better system would be to only allow LOW NITROGEN INPUTS on land in water catchment areas then allow normal rates on land not in these areas. Growers with land in these areas would have (as a condition of the single area payment) to show records and proof of the amount of fertilizer applied.

(2) PR9 Quality Milk Payment

The approval of the relocation of the dairy from Five Oaks to the Howard Davis Farm was supposed to clear Jersey Milk Debts and build a new efficient dairy that could pay the dairy farmers a higher price per litre of milk. As a poultry farmer we produce, grade, pack and deliver our eggs within the island and there has never been a subsidy available to us either based on production or headage. we import over 120 tonnes of feed per year and do not even have our harbour dues subsidised. Dairy farmers may not be to blame for the mis-management at the dairy that led to the large debt.

I propose that the quality milk payment be stopped as soon as the new dairy comes on line and the money then be used to support all farmers.

(3) PR 14 Organic Farming

for the last five years the countryside renewal scheme has provided rental subsidies for land entered into Organic conversion together with a small amount for converted land. This has led to a large area of land through out the island becoming certified as organic either for vegetable growing or for the dairy.

the vague paragraph in the green paper says that there is some evidence that Organic Farming is good for certain wild life shows that the author has little concept of what organic farming actually achieves. By rotating our land we grow a range of crops that are sold locally or exported. we do not MONO crop potatoes causing a build up of Eel worm or blight spores. we do not throw tonnes of inorganic fertilizer on to our land to pollute the water courses nor do we use harmful pesticides. Our land is left fallow with grass clover leys to build natural fertility. this land encourages wild life and birds. we are unfortunately being squeezed by the potato land grab that is driving land rentals up to levels that we cannot afford. We are already seeing land returned to conventional farming due to the high rentals now being offered to our landlords.

I believe the land in conversion payment and the converted land payment should remain at the level they were set at 5 years ago either as a permanent component of the C.R.S or as a stand alone fund. To transfer the support for organic farming to the rural initiative scheme would only discourage continued organic activity due to the bureaucratic nature of the R.I.S. – **Mr Carter**

The country side is very important to me and my family and should be protected.

Mrs O'Neil

Reference Rural Economic Strategy

Without the facility to drive/walk around the Jersey countryside and see cows grazing the fields as well as agricultural activity by the farmers, Jersey would be bereft of its 'soul'. As an Englishman living and working in London in the 1960's, I had a mental image of the Channel Islands as being a place of natural beauty, unspoilt by overdevelopment. When I arrived in 1977 I was not overly disappointed as the countryside still matched that vision. Since the partial demise of tourism in the island I have watched year on year the gradual erosion of what was to me a natural paradise. Any further loss of the rural nature would not only sadden me but would also be a legacy that would affect our children and future generations to come. I believe that Jersey should give the maximum support to the farming community and less to developers whose main interest is in personal gain. When I first came to the island I felt that many (but not all) of the hotels and guesthouses were run by people whose main interest was in generating income. Whilst this is important it was often to the detriment of the experiences gained by visitors and I believe this in part caused the decline in that industry. **Mr Bond**

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the Rural Economy Strategy. Personal circumstances have prevented me from making the detailed comments as I would so liked to have done.

The timescale of the strategy is a concern. 5 years may be adequate in fast moving industries, but when it takes perhaps a decade to grow a top fruit orchard to any significant production, we start to see the need to put a longer term context and strategy in place.

And in the longer term there are significant challenges to food production and hence the rural economy. Globally we anticipate increased population, perhaps to 9 billion or more and changes in diet resulting in much increased demand for food. Simultaneous we see stressed water resource for irrigation, changes in the climate and a peak in oil availability to drive machinery, produce artificial fertilizers and run the food distribution systems. Many of those who have studied this future, such as the Transition Town movement, have concluded that localisation of food supply and distribution is the only rational answer.

For us in Jersey the key strategic decision over the next couple of decades is whether we adapt to this produce for the local market and improve our food security, or do we persist in having one principal cash earning export crop. The difficulties Royal growers have had this year show the high risk this all or nothing one crop approach can bring.

If we did have a long term strategy to look to a localised food security approach, we will require storage and season extension growing techniques. Thus, retaining barns and (unheated) greenhouses for food production becomes critical important.

All of this is predicated of course on having growers and farmers in a generation or two's time. Where are tomorrow's growers to be found? I do not know the demographics of growers in Jersey, but the UK situation is frightening, with the average age of farmers now around 60, and a significant percentage leaving the industry each year.

But it is not enough to have farmers and growers, they must have farms and holdings too. How do we ensure units are available at affordable prices to new entrants? Although many counties have no sold their farms to raise cash, the system of county farms in the UK did a good job of providing a viable route into the industry for those who did not come from a farming or growing background.

Mr Forskitt