

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES: POLICY REPORT 2001 (P.126/2001) - COMMENTS

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by the Finance and Economics Committee**



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Comments

The Finance and Economics Committee has the following comment on the financial aspects of the Report and Proposition.

The cost of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee's proposal amounts to £10.7 million over a three-year period and amounts to £15.29 million over a five-year period, which includes the funding of Organic Waste Recycling and Enterprise Support.

The amendment put forward by the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee requests funds of £10.7 million to commence in 2002. Funding is not available in 2002 as Cash Limits have already been determined by the States and the General Reserve cannot sustain a withdrawal of this amount. Accordingly, if the States support the proposals, funds will need to be drawn from the 2003 Cash Limits and be subject to prioritisation against requests from other Committees.

The Finance and Economics Committee wishes to emphasise that it is very sympathetic to the plight of the Industry and fully recognises there is an urgent need to deal with the current issues facing the Industry. It is therefore with great regret that it is unable to accept the current proposals of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee.

The Finance and Economics Committee has a duty to ensure that public money is being spent wisely and that value for money is being achieved. 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 alternative, less costly proposals including those in respect of the Agri-Environment Scheme, have not been thoroughly investigated, and it remains uncertain that the proposed strategy represents the best way forward for the Industry as the objectives and how they will be measured are unclear.

It is therefore with great reluctance that the Committee is not able to support the proposed report and proposition of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee. It is, however, sympathetic to the plight of the Industry and regrets that the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee has not presented proposals it feels able to accept. The Finance and Economics Committee strongly believes that the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee should, as a matter of urgency, bring forward alternative strategies, incorporating elements currently proposed which enhance the sustainability and viability of the Industry whilst providing the taxpayer with greater value for money.