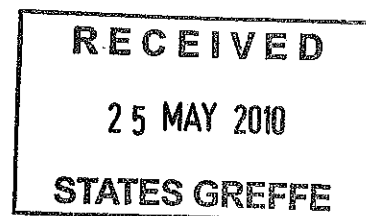


Deputy C.F. Labey
Chairman
Rural Economy Strategy
Scrutiny Sub-Panel
States Greffe
Morier House
St Helier
JE1 1DD



Dear Caroline

RURAL ECONOMY STRATEGY 2011 – 2015

Following your request for comment from the Society on the above I have now had an opportunity to study the proposals and I pass comment on the areas in which we are most involved as follows:-

(Please note I have already indicated my willingness to appear in front of your Panel to Darren Scott).

Issue PR 11/12/13 Rural Initiative Scheme

In an era of ever rising concerns over future food production, indeed over future "Food Security" it is essential that the Island develops a policy that protects what we already have and indeed does what it can to maximise our potential for sensible in-Island food production going forward.

Although there are some detractors the evidence of Climate Change seems obvious to the Society and we have taken positive steps through sponsoring such events as The Slow Food Group's session led by Patrick Holden of the Soil Association to highlight the potential risks to "Food Security" we are likely to face going forward, something that is now supported by all the foremost UK and International advisors in this field.

Indeed Professor John Beddington, the UK Government's Chief Scientific Advisor is quoted as stating "Food Security will present a growing challenge in the decades ahead. Recent food price volatility highlights the impacts we face if we do not respond effectively now to prepare our response.

There is a potential for a full food security crisis in the future. The growing global population combined with changing consumption patterns and increased urbanisation, set against the background of a changing climate, means we cannot continue with 'business as usual'.

Grand Marché locale **en route** homemaker travelmaker **totalsport**

Research and investment is crucial to find ways to sustainably meet the increase in demand for food, and to support healthier diets. This means we need multidisciplinary approaches to increase production sustainably, to ensure a secure supply of healthy, affordable food from less land, less water, fewer inputs and producing less waste and emissions”.

Of course the Island can never be self-sufficient in terms of food production but we can, indeed must do better in the face of such challenges hence the Society's long-term (we are not recent converts) to the need to “Buy Local” and support local production of allsorts where we can. We of course support Policy Options 11/12/13A and B as detailed in the Green Paper but feel these go no-where near far enough. We feel a much more aggressive alliance between the Agricultural Industry, Government and indeed “Responsible Retailers” such as our-selves can significantly increase the Island's potential for greater food self-sufficiency.

As an example, although we have had discussion with Government Departments and worked hard to increase our ability to source and sell much larger quantities of locally produced protein (meat) we along with our colleagues in the retail trade were not invited to become involved with the recently formed Abattoir User Group thus leaving much in the way of potential market suppliers out of the equation. (We have no problem with farm-shops and direct selling but these cannot be the total answer).

Our stance in this area is to identify local producers of allsorts and to work with them to maximise their potential in the production of the appropriate range of products in-Island that they can produce profitably and enable us to onward market at a fair but not necessarily the cheapest price to our huge local potential member/ customer base. We are currently far from maximising potential in this area.

Issue PR 14 Organic Farming

We would as a matter of fact advise caution in the area of Organic production particularly in the current economic circumstances. Organic Sales, unlike Fairtrade, have been the big loser as economic pressures have mounted and this volatility gives concern going forward. This does not mean that the sector should not be supported but we do feel there should be realism here in terms of what can be achieved.

Issue PR 16/17 Jersey Enterprise Grants

The Society does favour “Generic Marketing Support” for Jersey product of allsorts but whilst accepting the spin-off benefits to tourism of external marketing would prefer a more aggressive and joined-up approach to in-Island focus beyond the current “Buy Local” campaign. The real opportunities for export, beyond “Jersey Royals”, are limited and essentially “niche” and a more structured approach from producer to consumer locally is the key to boosting in-Island production. We are determined to develop partnership arrangements with local producers to the benefit of all and hope to have the continued support of “Genuine Jersey” in this process.

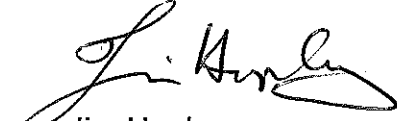
Issue PR 24 – The Future of Processing and Added Value From Food Waste

As part of our philosophy of expanding the range of local products sold any effort to expand food processing and waste reduction are of course to be applauded. Again the key is partnership between producers and consumers facilitated by the likes of ourselves as retailers working in conjunction with Government to assist with funding to kick-start projects. Without a guaranteed market, which we are prepared to support, potential producers will not get projects off the ground.

The section on working together and collaboration adequately explains this concept and how it might be taken forward.

I hope this response proves useful and again I indicate we have restricted our observations to the key areas in which we are involved. I have already expressed my willingness to appear in front of the Panel if desirable.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Hopley