

2019.03.12

9 Deputy R. Labey of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the hemp-growing contract at Warwick Farm: [OQ.59/2019]

Has the hemp-growing contract in respect of Warwick Farm been extended from 9 years and, if so, what break clause applies to the contract?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

The 9-year lease on Warwick Farm to I.H.P. (Industrial Hemp Partnership) Limited commenced on January 2018 and has not been varied.

Deputy R. Labey:

Is there a break clause in the contract?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

There is a break clause. The lease is a fully repairing and insuring lease and there is a break in January 2023, subject to a 6-month written notification.

6.9.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

For a few years now, the Environment Department has prioritised the growing of a diversity of new crops in the Island and we have goji berries, we are growing tea in fields now, but by far the outstanding and most prevalent one is the growing of hemp in many of our potato fields. Is the Minister aware that this is just the sort of initiative that we need to diversify our countryside and keep some business in our fields?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed and I fully support the diversification of crops here.

6.9.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister believe that there is a lack of joined-up policy that would underpin such decisions as to whether, or not, to extend such contracts when it comes to the hemp industry in Jersey and what it can be used for across the piece?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am in regular contact, obviously, with colleagues but, as I say, I am all in favour of diversity of crops growing. I am not sure if the Deputy could be a little more specific.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am happy to. I think I am possibly testing the bounds of this question, but I think that ...

The Bailiff:

I think you might be, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

... the first supplementary seemed to get a welcome answer from the Minister. Is it a contradiction that we are pushing ahead with the production of hemp, some of which will be for medicinal cannabis export, no doubt? Yet, when it comes to Jersey, we passed laws that allow G.P.s (General Practitioners) in the Island to prescribe cannabis, but locals cannot seem to get their hands on

effective remedies. Does there need to be some joined-up thinking when it comes to the administration of such contracts and leases given for the growing of hemp?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I think that ...

The Bailiff:

Sorry, Minister. Can you just explain how that relates to the Minister for Infrastructure?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, Sir. Because I think that, in order for, obviously, hemp to be grown in the Island, and Warwick Farm is the place where it is grown on States land, I think there needs to be a joined-up policy with our new One Gov programme, to make sure that when we are allowing our land to be used, it is used for joined-up purposes and that this policy underlies the administration and the granting of those leases.

The Bailiff:

Deputy, you have made your point and it is definitely not in order. Thank you. **[Laughter]**

6.9.3 Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier:

May I ask the Minister whether there is any clause in the contract that may cause a break, if there is damage to the health of the soil, which, with any form of monoculture, can be adversely affected?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would need to take advice on that, but I have mentioned previously, there is a 6-month break clause from 2023. The soil up there is in very good condition and, if I may add, it is not for exports. I believe the hemp, itself, is extremely low in T.H.C. (tetrahydrocannabinol), so there is no cannabis element to this; it is purely a hemp product.

6.9.4 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Starting up a business from scratch is always challenging and never more so in the agricultural industry, where premises are very difficult to come by. Does the Minister appreciate the need for long leases for some of these start-up agricultural businesses, in order to borrow money and service debt?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I agree with the Deputy. I think it is extremely brave of people to take on a relatively new product; gaining leases is quite difficult, suitable premises are quite difficult, also getting loans for specialist machinery. It is usual to have a 9-year lease, as you are aware, so I wish them well.

The Bailiff:

Final supplementary? No? Thank you very much.