

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 16th MARCH 2004, BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN**

Question

Would the President inform members –

- (a) whether the Committee is aware of any disquiet within the farming community over the possible merger of five larger growers, and, if so, to what extent is the Committee involving itself with the industry in this matter?
- (b) whether the Committee will consider cutting all funding to the agriculture/horticulture industry and review how these funds could be otherwise spent, and, if not, the reasons why?
- (c) whether the Committee has agreed to provide financial support to a group of potato growers seeking to promote a vodka factory, and, if so, can the President identify the land involved?

Answer

- (a) Yes, the Committee is aware of the concern felt by some potato growers over the possible merger of some of the larger growers. The Committee is being informed of developments by the President of the Jersey Farmers' Union and the Chairman of the Jersey Potato Export Marketing Board. The position is that privately owned businesses and individuals have decided to merge to form one large farming and marketing organisation and have given notice to some of the other, usually smaller, growers that the new group will not want to market their potatoes next year. Those involved in the new venture are naturally free to organise their affairs as they wish and the Economic Development Committee is powerless to prevent this; furthermore, the Jersey Potato Export Marketing Scheme is under a stay of the Royal Court, withdrawing powers that the Committee would have to become involved in the contractual arrangements between growers and the marketing organisations.
- (b) No, the Committee is not considering cutting funding to the Industry. However, a new agricultural strategy is about to be developed with the help of the Agricultural Advisory Board, when funding, along with other current policies will be reviewed.
- (c) The Jersey Potato Export Marketing Board was granted a total of £90,000 in 2003 under the Marketing Support Scheme to enable the Board to carry out a full-scale feasibility investigation into all aspects of the production of vodka from Jersey Royal potatoes. The investigation covered availability of raw material, identification of the optimal manufacturing process, requirements for a site and building requirements for machinery and equipment. As far as I am aware no site has been identified.