

STATES OF JERSEY

Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel Rural Economy Strategy 2011-2015 Review

TUESDAY, 15th JUNE 2010

Panel:

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville (Chairman)
Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of St. Saviour
Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary

Witnesses:

Mr. J. Vautier (Albert Bartlett)
Mr. C. Mourant (Albert Bartlett)

Also Present:

Dr. J. Jones (Panel Adviser)
Mr. D. Scott (Scrutiny Officer)

[14:00]

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville (Chairman):

Welcome to this Rural Economy Strategy hearing. I do not know if either of you have been to a Scrutiny hearing before. There are certain things that you ought to know, the first of which is that notice there. If you just want to read it, and there is one on public protocols, heckling, and things. Everything is going to be recorded by Rebecca at the back and then you will receive the transcripts in a week, or something like that, for you to look at to make sure that you happy with what they say and what you think they should say. I will give you the opportunity of going into private session if you want to, because these are open to the public but if you feel that there are things that you would feel more comfortable saying in a private session we would do that at the end, if you feel it is necessary. But we only have an hour so it would have to come out of your hour. So if you could indicate to me before then, then I can

sort of judge the timing accordingly. We have to introduce ourselves for the purposes of the tape. I am Carolyn Labey. I am chairing the Rural Strategy Scrutiny Review. I am Deputy of Grouville.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of St. Saviour:

Roy Le Hérisier, Deputy of St. Saviour.

Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary:

Daniel Wimberley, Deputy of St. Mary.

Dr. J. Jones (Adviser):

James Jones, from the Royal Agricultural College. I am the adviser.

Mr. D. Scott (Scrutiny Officer)

Scrutiny Officer, Darren Scott.

The Deputy of Grouville:

And Rebecca at the back taking notes. Again, for the purposes of the tape, because obviously we have your submission here, but could you just briefly explain Bartlett and what it does and how many people you employ and that sort of thing, just a bit of background. I am so sorry, you have got to introduce yourself as well for the purposes of the tape.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I am the Technical Manager for Albert Bartlett (Jersey) Limited.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I am presently a crop agronomy consultant to Albert Bartlett.

The Deputy of Grouville:

I will just explain for the tape. Tim Ward was going to be here but his wife has just had a baby so he is visiting her.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Albert Bartlett have been supplied by the Island's growers for a number of years from various marketing organisations and a few years ago they decided that they would like to improve the standard of produce for sale mainly to the U.K. (United Kingdom) supermarkets so they started on a long process of searching for sites and coming into the Island with a view to building a facility that could wash and pack potatoes on the day of lifting or as close to as possible. Bartletts currently supply about half a million tonnes of potatoes within the U.K. market, some own brand, some varieties that they have branded themselves and bought the exclusive rights to. In the Island we employ about 70, I think, people during the potato season and we have 4 or 5 full-time local employees.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Four or 5 out of 70?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

No, of the full-time permanent staff. The vast majority of the others are temporary seasonal labour, some of whom are recruited locally. Adverts go in prior to the season so we do a local recruitment drive and the people we cannot find locally are drafted in from wherever we can find them really.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Is that usually Poland?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

There are some people Poland, there are people who come down from the main factory in Airdrie and from the sub-site in Boston. So they are the experienced line operatives and load planners and so on, and they come just for the season and then they go back to their full-time jobs.

The Deputy of Grouville:

I know I am going to digress here before you have even got going, but do you have a problem with accommodating your workers?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes. It is an added concern because when we find the staff obviously they have got to have accommodation as well when they are sourced from other areas, and that is an additional headache. But this year, for the second year the factory has been operational over here, we have found accommodation for everybody but by the skin of our teeth really.

Dr. J. Jones:

Is that the same sort of issue for the seasonal workers as it is for the supervisory staff that you bring over?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes. Everyone who comes into the Island has to be housed somewhere. We do not have any onsite accommodation.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Sorry, I interrupted you.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

We are now in our second year of operation, it has been another challenging growing season but the process which was put in place to enhance the shelf-life of the potatoes is having its effect despite various quality issues that arise with frosts and the cold spring we have had, the need for irrigation have proved their worth yet again.

The Deputy of Grouville:

How has your process improved the life and the shelf-life of the potato compared to what was being done before?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Typically before potatoes were washed generally in the Island they would be lifted and shipped to a packer, such as Bartletts, in the U.K. So you had your normal timescale of, for example, harvesting today, very often you would be asked to pre-

cool them which could take a further 24 hours on the Island to get the field heat out of them, and they could then be graded, packed into whatever packaging you were sending them in bulk to the washers and packers on the mainland. Then once it arrived with them, so we are talking probably up to 72 hours after harvesting. The stock became their issue and their stock control they would have to order in advance to make sure they covered all possible vagaries of orders going up or conversely going down, where they could be left with stock and, on occasion, potatoes may not have been washed in the past until they were a week old. So, in the main, we are now washing and hydro-cooling, which is the process by which they take the field heat out very, very quickly, potatoes having been washed pass under a belt, water it, plus 4 degrees plus 3 degrees and it brings the temperature right down and it stops the respiration or almost stops the respiration of the potato. It prevents it browning and greening and deteriorating, softening.

The Deputy of Grouville:

This may be an unfair question but does the other group do the same process?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

They do not do the hydro-cooling but there is another U.K. packer on the Island who use the other group's premises to wash and hydro-cool from Marks & Spencer. That has been going for some years now, so a very small proportion of what comes from the other group is washed and hydro-cooled on the Island but exclusively for Marks & Spencer, so the other group simply wash in ambient water.

The Deputy of Grouville:

That is very interesting background. It gives us ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I just ask about the accommodation? You say that all the people who come in have to be housed, whether they are supervisory or not, what sort of role do you play in that in terms of how much time does it tie up to get that sorted, because obviously it has got to be sorted each time they come in?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes. It is pre-season so the negotiations with growers who have got staff who would otherwise be returning to their native country for a break will, between the growers' own crops, will come and work for us for the period of our season. So, in a lot of cases it is their existing accommodation that we then take on paying for through the workers themselves.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

With some sort of agreement about the state that it is in because you are taking over effectively somebody else's house?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Turning to the Green Paper, and I know you have made your submission but again if you would like to highlight what areas the Green Paper you are supportive of and also which policies you have particular concerns about?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Can I just, before we start talking specifically about policy, give you a quick résumé of my background, just to put you in the picture because I used to be ... I left school in 1986, I have been involved in agriculture since then really, apart from the latter period. I ran my own farm business until 2001, I have done a couple of other things since then, including a degree course which Deputy Le Hérissier might be aware of. The dissertation of that which I completed last year was looking specifically at Jersey's agricultural policy since the negotiation of the Treaty of Rome, so that is the paper I worked on.

The Deputy of Grouville:

That is very interesting because I have got a few questions. **[Laughter]**

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

My services have been taken on this year on a part-time basis by the company Albert Bartlett to assist them with one area in particular which is of concern in terms of the crop agronomy. It is a concern with a particular pest of the potato crop, an eelworm pest, and withdrawal of chemicals which were used to control that pest. That brings about a number of other issues, not only related to the crop agronomy but also sustainability of the crop and looking to the longer terms to how Jersey agriculture will respond to withdrawal of chemical products from the marketplace and how we

have to shift away from a dependency of the industrialised process which we have been led down over the last few years, and there maybe needs to be a rethink about how the Island goes about producing crops in the future.

The Deputy of Grouville:

We will certainly come on to that later.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That was a commission you were given by Bartletts basically?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

In fact, as a joint commission with Bartletts and the chemical company DuPont. So, I had a meeting in Airdrie a couple of weeks ago with the head guys from DuPont, U.K. and European representative. It is a joint initiative and in fact one of the principal chemicals that we have been looking at in this part of the trial work, which I am overseeing, is manufactured by DuPont and it is their interest. Jersey has relevance because we have the unique agriculture system which they recognise with our monocropping techniques of using the Jersey Royal, which is really not found anywhere else, almost at a global level. So I think they are thinking if they can find some answers over here and get it right here, then there are a lot of lessons can be applied elsewhere and because of the intensity of our production methods it is a good place for them to carry out these studies.

[14:15]

The Deputy of Grouville:

Would this be an area where intellectual property would kick in?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

This knowledge could be exported.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Potentially but I say that a little bit cautiously at the moment, but there was a meeting yesterday, in fact, where we were discussing ... I do not want to digress by too much, but biological control methods and potentially that sort of thing that would be then ... intellectual property would be gained from that knowledge and the acquisition of that knowledge over a period. There is no simple quick answer to this and a lot of it in the initial period is going to be about extending our knowledge base because there are some answers that we really do not know. We do not know at the moment, there are some questions that we need to be asking. We are not sure what the questions are let alone what the answers are.

The Deputy of Grouville:

That is very interesting.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Are you working for Bartletts or for DuPont, or both? How does that work?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Directly for Bartlett but DuPont funding part of the ...

Dr. J. Jones:

Could you clarify that the chemicals being withdrawn rather than ... that it is retailer pressure to not use it?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

What has happened, the chemical that controls P.C.N. (potato cyst nematode) historically there have been 2 or 3 different products. One of the chemicals is called Telone, which is injected after harvest. It is something that I used to use on my farm holding. That has been banned now at a European level, it is not allowed to be used anymore, apart from the French managed to get derogation last year to allow their growers to use it, but that is the French. So that leaves another product which is a nematicide called Vydate, which is manufactured by DuPont, and again with these things being looked at a European level the maximum residue level 2 years ago was reduced significantly and there was a case where a potato that was put into one of the retailers was found to be in exceedance of that maximum residue level for Vydate. I think this caused some consternation with the chemical company because they were not aware that their product could find its way into the crop. Last year, you may have been aware, there were a number of problems whereby Bartletts put in place a procedure to only positively release a product once it had been tested for this residue and there were a number of areas of crop where it almost did not happen. Where the product had been used the potatoes remained in exceedance of the M.R.L. (maximum residue limits), so they could not be harvested and could not be sold. What we are looking at this year specifically is a range of trials whereby we are trying to better understand the interaction of the product, the crop and the soil and find some

solutions to either, in the first instance, be able to use that product safely and, in the second instance, and perhaps more importantly, to look at alternatives in the longer term because it is a serious risk for the industry this particular pest. If it is not controlled it could have some severe financial implications.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Just to go back to the original question. I mean, that was really interesting and I am sure we could ... depending where this goes we might want to sort of come back to that in another session. About the Green Paper, what aspects are you supportive of or have concerns about?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

If we start off and work through the paper we put together, it is probably the easiest way, and we can start looking at the strategic vision.

The Deputy of Grouville:

We have your submission, so obviously we have that detail that is ... if you have anything that you want to pull out and ...

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I mean that is the first thing I would like to elaborate on really. We are supportive of that strategic vision. One of the things, and I need to be a bit careful in terms of I am a representative of the levels that carry that study so I have my own views, but we have discussed this in the office today so I am on fairly safe ground. We need to make sure that the strategic vision is linked in with realistic funding levels and in my

studies of the agriculture policy over, say, the last 20-30 years there seems to be a lot of cases where that has not happened, which is a bit disappointing. If you look back and just pull out a figures as an illustration of how the industry ... because the industry continues to train and evolve, and we would like to think that Government can keep pace with the change and the policies that are put in place are shaping the way the market is driving business so we can work together. One of the principal issues, and you read through every policy document - I have got copies here going back to 1993 policy report 2001, 2005 and the latest - and they all talk about economic diversification and diversification within the agricultural industry itself, and looking at creating opportunities for diversification of different crops. If you compare that to what has happened, you look back at 1986 - coincidentally the year I started my agriculture career - there were 13,500 vergées of outdoor Royals grown and 16,500 vergées of other outdoor crops. By 1996, 10 years on, just over 18,000 vergées of Royals and only 5,000 vergées of other outdoor crops, and 2008 you are looking at just under 15,000 vergées of Royals and 2,500 vergées of other outdoor crops. That is run alongside the stated policy of diversification.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Do you think it is diversification of crops or diversification of use?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think it can be both. I think we cannot close our minds off and say it only has to be crops. I think we have seen a diversification of use. We have had the equine industry as an example of more recently included in the agriculture economy or the rural economy, as we call it now. There are other livestock as well that have come into the

Island latterly but fairly small scale. Again, looking at my pick about my studies, the other big shift that has taken place Europe-wide, we had a Single European Act 1986 and Maastricht in 1992, and a much closer integration of the European Union countries in a single market coupled with their common agriculture policy, and if you look at the funding levels in common agriculture policy, in fact, it is stated in our rural economy paper, it states that potatoes are the only commodity which remain outside the European fruit and vegetable regime, and it seems potatoes are the only commodity which we have which is economically competitive. I do not think it is a coincidence. At the same time as funding, when we look at some of the more recent changes in agricultural policy the Rural Initiative Scheme was proposed as one of the central pillars of assisting rural economy and when it was originally proposed and funding level was proposed, I have seen a paper, it was Maclean at the time, saying this fund could be introduced at around about £800,000 a year. The next paper came out and the £800,000 was £500,000. The £500,000 now has been used to ... part of it has been used to subsidise the school milk scheme, so that is £200,000-odd out of that, and now it looks like that might disappear as well. So, originally here we have a strategic policy which says Rural Initiative Scheme, great idea, it is going to help the industry £800,000 and now we are looking at maybe £300,000 left in the pot. So is that policy going to achieve what it set out to do without the funding? There is no funding mentioned in the Green Paper, perhaps purposely, looking at the Economic Development Department's 2012 Business Plan. They are looking to slice another chunk off the rural economy budget. It is not mentioned in here. To my mind that is irrelevant, the 2 parts are linked. I am not saying that we should have more money for the rural economy, so please do not misinterpret me saying that we need more money.

I am saying we need to be realistic about the funding that there is and is going to be and make sure it is targeted in the most effective areas.

The Deputy of Grouville:

You do not think the agricultural section needs more money?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think there is a case to be made to suggest there is, and I am not at the moment saying whether it is or is not. I am saying you would have to make the case and you have got to make it in light of everything else that is happening in not only the Island's economy, the global economy. What I am saying, we need to be aware of what the implications are if we do not fund the policy that has been set out correctly.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

While we are on that, are there other examples, apart from the R.I.S. (Rural Initiative Scheme) where you feel that the money was promised or half-promised or committed or was it policy dependent on funding, and then it did not happen?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think you could make a case that the industry has been ... when one looks back to 2001, for example, there is a policy put forward which was passed in the States, a lot of work went into it. There was a vote taken in the States to approve the policy. There was a secondary vote taken which then refused to fund it. I think the proposal was to increase the funding from around £8-9 million to about £11 million over a 4 year period whereas in fact we have seen a reduction to around £3 million. We had a

sort of limbo situation through 2001-2005, the next policy, where we were working to this policy without funding. I mean it does not work. So if the industry is looking to Government to make some sort of contribution the first thing we have to do is to establish a realistic level of funding and work to that, whatever that is going to be. So we could make the case that it has to be increased. Isle of Man managed to fund their Agricultural Department in 2007 to the tune of £17 million, I think. We are a long way adrift of that but it might be a good thing.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

For the record, the 2001 policy is what, because I was not around then? I was around but I was not in the States.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

It is the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee, as it was in the day, their policy report.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Just to summarise. Your main concern is that there is no funding aspect in this paper so ...

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

There needs to be a strategic provision but it has to be linked in with a realistic assessment of the funding that is available to deliver that vision.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Turning to the Green Paper 2011-2015, do you think that it has successfully identified the issues of the rural sector?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Yes, I think it has successfully identified a number of the issues. We are particularly supportive of the environmental policies that were proposed, again coming back to Bartletts, and keeping with their ethos of how their business runs. As I say, this need for sustainable for the future. Perhaps I can then go on to tying that in with the need for research and development, which I think you see is the most important element of where Government can make a difference, particularly at the present time with the pressures that the industry will be under.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Research as in what kind of research?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Research and development in terms of, as we just mentioned specifically with the potato crop, with this issue with this one chemical, for example.

The Deputy of Grouville:

So you would say that there is still a need for the trials?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

There is a need for work to be carried out and we would favour a sort of public-private partnership in this respect because I do not think it is fair to just turn around to

Government and say: “We have got a problem, sort it out please.” It is the partnership agreement whereby all parties have to take part in that and be fully open about ... so whether it is Bartletts, whether it is the growers, whether it is the chemical company DuPont and Government, to my mind, all have a role to play.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Because there is a sector of the agricultural industry that feel that the trial section at Howard Davis Farm are a complete waste of time. I have had that view expressed to me many times.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think it grows ... it is an easy pot to take when you are under pressure and there are other things going on in your business, but I think there is still a need for, and I think I should mention, the guys that I have been talking to in the last sort of 6 months since I have been working on this project recognise a need for somebody to be doing something.

The Deputy of Grouville:

So it is not a case of the multiples are doing the trials?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

No.

The Deputy of Grouville:

And leaving it to them?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

No.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The work would not necessarily be done in Jersey, this theoretical P.P.P. (public-private partnership) hypothetical “our contract research” with whoever provided this targeted the way you want it.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Yes. We had discussions yesterday, in fact, as an example, we have got a tomato producer working off the Isle of Wight and in Portugal, looking to do some sort of joint initiative, so that is really to biological control, and there is something there that that could be gains in relation to intellectual property, that there are gains there that could possibly be made further down the line.

The Deputy of Grouville:

I interrupted you when you were speaking about research and development.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Not really, it was just to say that we see that need still there but in a slightly different guise. So rather than necessarily a whole load of trials going on in the department, which are not as directly related to the sharp end of the industry as they need to be.

[14:30]

We have seen the illustrated figures, we sort of move away from other crops to focus on the Jersey Royal. I mean that has happened because of economic drivers but we are in a position now where we need to make sure that we protect the Jersey Royal because it is the main stay of the industry. If that goes then there is not much else and where we get an issue that is happening at the moment with this particular eelworm issue, I mean it is something that could threaten the very existence of the Royal industry. Then the Island has more difficult issues maybe to deal with in terms of management of the countryside if it is not being actively farmed in a manner which is attracting sufficient economic return and the participants who were involved.

Dr. J. Jones:

Is what you are proposing that resources should be available to try and make sure that Jersey participates in Europe-wide or U.K.-based research programmes to combat this problem or are you suggesting that the Jersey Royal is sufficiently specific that it is necessary to have your own trials here?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think there is a combination. I think we are looking at specific trials which relate to Jersey Royal crop but then I think there are also areas where some sort of partial agreement would be beneficial to both parties. It is again just trying to look at opportunities in terms of if we were, for example, in some of the discussions we have been having recently, if we were working with DuPont as a chemical manufacturer and another producer who is growing tomatoes but experiencing similar problems, that there are technical solutions that may be found which suit both parties because we

are not in a competitive situation with the other people we are working with, then it would make sense to work together. There is an opportunity maybe for Government to be a part of that in terms of work which is done in consultation with not only people in Jersey but also from elsewhere.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

We have heard the plea of course many times over the years to retain or to enhance the subsidies and the argument was always used that on the entry to treaty we get the same level of subsidy. Does your company feel that the subsidies are still required or are they happy with the environmental subsidies which have allegedly decoupled subsidies from productivity, which we were told time after time was leading to perverse consequences at the massive expansion of the dairy herd, the massive expansion of the growth of Jersey Royals. Does your company approve of the decoupling of productivity and the environmental incentives?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Personally I think the massive expansion in the work of the Jersey Royals I do not think was as a direct result of the direct aid that was given to Jersey Royals. I think there you have to look further back and you have to look at the consequences of common agricultural policy, the integration of the European market and the reduction in all the other output crops that were growing, and the bottom line was growers had nowhere else to go but to rely on Jersey Royals. I sort of come back to the point that is made in here that potatoes are outside their fruit and vegetable regime so do not attract directly subsidies, and it is the only product that we can compete with. We know we can grow anything over here but it is that competition. I do not think there

was ever enough funding put towards any of those crops to make a difference because the first point I was making in terms of it is fine to have policy but if you cannot fund that policy properly to have the desired effect then the funding is inconsequential and I think it was more that level. Just to go back, in my own view, I think the situation we have got now with a direct support mechanism related to area you could argue all that has done has increased land rentals. I have heard a number of landlords just turn round and say: “Well, it is my £35 or £38 vergée” or whatever it is. It has been capitalised as part of the land bank so I am not sure how much good it is doing in that manner. We might bring up that little chestnut or maybe we are better off not paying harbour dues on exported crops and we are not a million miles away from the amount that is being paid per vergée and the Government saves administration money on pulling both schemes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I mean on the land bank issue, the land rentals and the relationship between that and the availability of land; any comments on that? Is there any constraint on Bartletts in terms of land availability?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think the last 2 years in particular. As a consequence of Bartletts entering the market, there are opportunities for some of the growers to be getting back into farming, which some of them have done, or to increase their businesses. So there has been more pressure on land in the last couple of years which has resulted in increase rentals. So growers are finding it difficult and I think over the last 5 or 6 years when the area of Royals fell, the dairy herd reduced significantly in size, there were areas of

land that were left fallow, in fact my farm, for example, up at Rozelle, I had it 2 years where nobody wanted to rent it. I was doing environmental crops, and was happy doing that, it was fine but it was almost sort of taken out of agriculture because nobody wanted it, there simply was not the demand and the area of Royals grown went down to 12,700 vergées or something like that, in 2007, I think it was. This is a return to the early 1980s in terms of area, and that was a fall from 20,000 vergées in 2000-2001 and it was not taken up, that 7-8,000 vergées was not taken up by any other crops because there are not any, so there was more equine use, which is an issue. But I think our growers are looking for more land now that Bartletts has started and the demand from the marketplace has perhaps picked up again in terms of Royals. It is a difficult one because it still needs to be controlled, it still needs to be made available to agriculturists but we have gone through the shift of almost surplus to shortage again within a 5-year period.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So if it is a yo-yo what role can Government have in steadying and making sure the land is available to match the demand for agriculture? It is going to be very difficult for Government to intervene if you are on a yo-yo, so is there any solution to that?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Any sort of intervention is difficult. The only thing I would say is that in the longer term it still needs to be protected. Because in the longer term we all need to eat. Food production and food securities are important in the longer term.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So it is the longer vision, why you support the cause for a longer term.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Would you say that is being appreciated at the moment, food shortages by the Government?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

By Government? I do not know.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

It does not feature in here other than under the need to safeguard the land bank.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, they have not spelt it out. They just say there is a need to safeguard.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think in our society that in a way it has evolved in the last 20 or 30 years, we have become quite complacent in terms of food availability, lack of seasons, so produce is available when you want it, as you want it, and relatively cheaply despite the demands for third supermarkets, and it is all very expensive. Actually, in relative terms, we are paying less for food in society, in percentage terms to income, than we ever have had before. So there is a complacency. Things might change and then at that point it becomes important to still have, at that leads on actually it is not only about land it is also about succession issues which we mentioned and the skills that have been lost. I have a 17 year-old son who has been working 2 years now on a farm in his spare time,

or whatever, and he has left school and he is working on a farm, that is what he wants to do, that is his career choice. So I am able to encourage him back into the industry. But there is also a sense that somebody has to do it and it is passing those skills on as well.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Do you think those issues are enough in here, would you want them to do more? Are they high enough up the agenda in this document, those sorts of issues?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

There have been so many changes in the last 10 years even. It is difficult to assess how you encourage that next generation. I mean our generation is almost a lost generation in terms that a lot of people my age who come out of the industry perhaps should have had our careers still farming but because of the economic drivers and all the other things that are going on in the Island we have come out of the industry. So there has been a massive change to how you encourage people back. I think it is down to the individual as much as anything and their desire to do it. It is not really economic motivation that is going to make them do it, it is recognition that perhaps there are other things in life that are more important than that in terms of lifestyle, the sort of lifestyle they want to lead.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The question for Government would be should the Government make that more possible and more attractive? Is that a goal for policy or do we just let it run according to whether people want to take that option on?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

My concern is can Government afford to make the difference and it comes back to this having a policy that you can afford, and I am not sure it can. It can encourage but I am not sure that it can because the Island has taken a different route and international finance is where it wants to be, it needs to be to pay the bills, et cetera, and this becomes somewhat sidelined, so I am not sure whether you can ever quite overcome that. The opportunities are out there for school leavers that we have got unemployed at the moment, but the opportunities out there for school leavers to earn an easier leaving from that sector is such that I do not know that Government could ever put inducements in place ... and it is certain individuals who make that lifestyle choice.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Talking about school leavers, do you think the Government can do more, say, with unemployment rising, especially school leavers in some cases, not huge amounts of skills, should ... I put this question to James, should they be sort of doing something at the Job Centre/Social Security to encourage some of those youngsters on the farm? I know it is different to sort of pushing a pen in a bank but to some youngsters it might be more attractive. Is there enough being done, in your opinion, to sort of get some of your labour from the local market as opposed to sort of forking out for accommodation?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

We are actively searching in the Island for staff now for the factory. So it is not such a huge leap really if some of them are interested who apply for the job with us to then possibly get a further interest and get involved in agricultural/horticulture from that aspect.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Do you consider getting your labour ... you know, putting notices up on ...

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

We do.

The Deputy of Grouville:

You do?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes, at the beginning of the season we advertised in the *Evening Post* and in the Job Centre. We interviewed tens of people, I could not tell you how many.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

What are the advantages of that for you?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I suppose that it relieves pressure on getting the bulk of the people with accommodation because the accommodation is already there. But Bartlett's is a company that are very keen to employ local people and reduce the reliance on people

coming into the Island, albeit it in Airdrie and Boston, local people who have a pride in the local job and are not there temporarily.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

In a way we are looking at what you might call the operatives, but of course the traditional path for farming in Jersey has been inheritance and it is very hard ... there have been a few exceptions, people have cracked the system or have been tenant farmers and we may be meeting one today, I think. It has been very hard. How can we keep farming if that inheritance route is removed and you make a fortune by selling your farm, become a millionaire or trillionaire overnight? How can we keep farming going with that sort of backcloth?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I do not know, with difficulty. But I think the diversification that John spoke about earlier with people being allowed to introduce other animals, other crops. I think it has been shown that is not viable currently but I think that is exciting and interesting people generally and the interest in allotments is starting to sort of interest people in growing per se. That will just grow, I feel. With the availability of land, which there is not at the moment, but should it come then the difficulty is setting up as a grower in terms of accommodation, packing facilities, storage for machinery, et cetera, and somewhere to live on the land. If the main farming unit is sold without its land, the old farmhouses, then it is very difficult to set up and make that your base.

[14:45]

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is one possible for tourists?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes, it is certainly working well in the U.K. and across Europe. Maybe not solely tourism but a sort of agriculture-based tourism. It is a possibility to fund schemes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

They are fairly dismissive about it in here.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Right.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I just wonder whether, from your experience of Jersey growers, which is quite a small package, are there any others thinking like that or whether they wish there was more support or whether it is an idea?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I guess it is an idea. It is working in the U.K. in a lot of areas but perhaps the farming is more mixed over there; staying on a farm which is producing potatoes from 5.00 a.m. in the morning until 9.00 p.m. at night is not attractive and not long term.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

That is one of the other issues, you are talking about employment, going to look at the social shift that is occurring, it has been occurring for a number of years, the shift in work ethic, and farming is pretty hard work. It is long hours, it can be physical, it is not great pay and there are easier alternatives out there for people and when we stop somehow the family farm using French and immigrant Breton labour, and it would have been 1990, we had a core team who were still willing to come over and work because they wanted the work, but it became impossible to recruit sufficient staff because it was easier for them to stay at home on social welfare within their social welfare system. There is an expectation that Government was going to provide and I think on the Island while you want to employ as many local people as you can we are also in a situation where there are perhaps easier alternatives for people and ones that they are looking to instead of employment opportunities that are offered by the industry as a whole and Bartletts doing farming as a whole.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Have you got any examples from Bartlett's other operations in sort of places like Lincolnshire, Scotland, Cambridgeshire, where they have had what you might see as a very win-win kind of relationship with farmers in such a way that it sustains the local farming industry and the farmers are just not the clients and there is not this sort of panic about ... when the owner sort of moves on to retirement there is not this panic about will there be anyone to succeed us? Are there any models where they operate elsewhere?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I do not know the grower base up in Airdrie very well but it looks to me, by looking at the website, that a lot of them are father and son teams still which is less and less in the Island but has been encouraged by Bartletts coming in. There are a few father and son teams now within our growers supplying us, and I think if people are treated fairly and can make a living out of it then that should encourage and up in Airdrie the Scottish grower base have been with Bartletts for tens of years, so that sort of loyalty and responsibility to both sides of the parties would be encouraging.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

You certainly do have the impression that they are looking at a long term and sustainable relationship, so business succession by the suppliers is an important area. They do not have contracts with their growers, it is gentlemen's agreements, but they are gentlemen and they stick to their agreements, so there is loyalty both ways through that system.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

How do you involve growers in the process, what sort of things are they regularly consulted on, for example?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

They are pretty much left to grow how they want to grow, manage their land as they see fit with advice and prompting, particularly they turn to us for advice over the issue of P.C.N. They recognise they need help but we also recognise that we cannot farm their land as well as they can and we have no desire to do so. If that answers your question ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

What about the codes of practice, codes of good agricultural and environmental practice; is that a dialogue or does that mainly come from the department those sorts of compliance issues or from the supermarkets? How does that mediate? How does that work?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

On a basic level a prerequisite of supplying us is the full membership of the Assured bodies, which is a protocol that was put together by the major retailers mainly and where a grower's holding and his operation is audited annually.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

By ...?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

By independent bodies who are selected by the Assured Produce Association.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It is not yourselves?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Not it is third party auditors, in a similar way to our packing facilities are audited by the British Retail Consortium.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Moving on to a related issue about agricultural codes of practice and sustainability of the land itself; where does sewerage sludge fit in and where does compost fit in to maintaining the balance of the land fertility?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

That is part of the discussions we were having yesterday with this organic tomato grower. It is a challenge to maintain fertility in a monoculture and maintain ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The potatoes.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes. We have been looking at the compost that is provided by the green waste facility and there are just some question marks over its suitability for agricultural use because it has not got the accreditation that is required by a lot of customers for compost, being the PAS100.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can you explain all that? The supermarkets or the customers, somebody else? Because you have got this third party accreditation so who would come on to the compost and say that is okay or that is not okay? Would it be the individual farmer, I think not?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

No, it would be the customer mainly. The sort of basic protocol is the Assured Produce and then on top of that we have to adhere to certain bolt-on requirements, upgrades if you like, that are the particular hobby horses of the customer.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Particular groups?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Waitrose or whatever?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes, exactly. In this case the Soil Association are the ones who drive the requirement for a standard for compost.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Presumably what matters is whether Waitrose is happy with T.T.S.'s (Transport and Technical Services) compost, not whether the Soil Association is. Or do Waitrose subcontract that to the Soil Association?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

It will be a sort of knowledge base where everyone looks at each other's standards and ends up going for the highest level really in a lot of cases.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Would this problem be solved if that compost problem of ... as a difficulty of using it, be solved if somebody did accredit it and did say: “Okay, that is PAS100”?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

From what I understand the fraction of the compost that is available for use in smaller quantities is graded down to 10 millimetres and that is PAS accredited. The larger, graded down to 40 millimetres, is not. It was only really this morning that I started speaking about this and so I am trying to find out what the reason is for one portion of it not being accredited and wonder whether it might be as simple as 40 millimetres would still leave a potential for contamination with glass or brittle plastics, whereas the finer screened material would have to be less.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

And then sewerage sludge; how does that fit in?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Again, it is a policy of supermarkets to ... the last time I was involved in anything like that we needed a 10 month gap. That, without the rotation, or the luxury of rotation, it is very difficult to do.

The Deputy of Grouville:

That leads on to the land values.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

We sort of talked about that. I suppose the question would be do you have any ideas to give us about how Government could protect the land bank through something like ... I will not give you the answer, but do you have suggestions because it is a pretty key issue?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think one of the things that was raised was about having some sort of evaluation scheme for land, but I think that already exists, and it is the rental market. That gives you a good example of how land is valued and how it is rated.

The Deputy of Grouville:

You think that is a good idea?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Whether that is a good idea or the scheme is a good idea or what is happening at the moment?

The Deputy of Grouville:

The grading now or is it not all valuable?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I do not know that it is going to achieve an awful lot other than keep somebody busy trying to evaluate it.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The question was how do you protect the land bank assuming that would have an impact on the rental values and also on how many vergées you can get, you know, people supplying them.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

I think the model based on what we have had in terms of control on land use and uses is probably the nearest Government is going to get to assist in that in terms of making sure that *bona fide* agriculturists are occupying the land and that it cannot be taken out of production. Obviously from a development viewpoint and planning viewpoint greenfield sites must be protected as greenfield sites as far as we need to.

The Deputy of Grouville:

But what if they move to sort of cricket fields and botanic gardens?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I think it is a slow erosion of the land bank as that goes. It is not to say if there is no structure put on it, that it can be turned up to agriculture at some point in the future. But just sort of subjectively driving round the Island one does see a bit more land being turned into various other ...

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

It is also about being realistic about Government's societal needs in terms of land use and recognising that there is going to be a demand to take a proportion, or a very small proportion out. But again it is the strategic view of what you need to keep and

what you do not, so I appreciate, yes, a greater system would help in that regard but then also a system that we have got at the moment in terms of rental and whether it has been used or not is a market indicator for the use of land, depending if somebody buys it and says: “Well, nobody is going to use it” then that distorts the picture but I think that is fairly easy to determine pretty much.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Just a couple if I may? Sorry ...

Dr. J. Jones:

Just sort of going back to the knock-on effects of the eelworm problems, inwardly in the short run one solution is to use land that has not previously grown potatoes, or not recently, so does that then create a 2-tier market in land rentals for land that is sort of available for potato growing and land that is contaminated.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

The sort of short answer to that is the growers are finding all the land they can to grow potatoes, so there is not a surplus at the moment that is readily available to have any sort of rotation. We have had a system of growing potatoes year in year out for the last 130 years since the Royal was discovered, which is fairly unusual, and all the land that is available is used, so growers do not have that luxury unfortunately of a rotation. But I think we are going to have to get to the point where that has to be considered as one of the control measures.

Dr. J. Jones:

But it does not start upping the ante to compete with alternative uses like horses or fallow, and so forth? What you are saying really is that that land really is not capable of growing potatoes. Everything that is capable of growing potatoes has been doing so and that is it, so you are stuck with the eelworm problem?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Yes.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

We are going to look at a multi-pronged attack on P.C.N., which will maybe involve some chemical treatment with the knowledge we are going to gain from the last 2 years of trials as to how we can more reliably ensure that the M.R.L.s are not within the tubers and we are going to look at biological controls, trap cropping with other crops and possibly with a sacrificial potato crop, but also some rotation on some land might end up being inevitable but one is looking at a minimum of 8 years out of potato production to start seeing a decrease in the levels that can cause damage to the crop. So that is a long time to find it. In some countries it is longer.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

The life cycle of the P.C.N. once it is in a cyst, which is a hardened shell, it is 30 years. It is a considerable problem.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It is surprising we have a crop at all.

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

I mean every year ... I used to be a grower as well but every year one is just amazed by the resilience of the Royal crop, and other crops. If the balance is right with the soil and the fertiliser and the treatment it is given, they can survive a lot and the crop will still yield. But it is reduced yields and reduced marketability because the P.C.N. will actually damage the tuber and make it brown from excessive feeding marks when it is in a stolon form, so when that stolon becomes a tuber you can see the pockmark pitting of the feeding on it. We have seen some of that this year.

[15:00]

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

It was a particular problem in the Fens(?). From what I recall it was varietal choice that helped restrict it. That is the problem, of course, you know, no way, hands off.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Well, you have got plans. I mean there are strains, are there not?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Presumably some strains are more resistant than others.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

The Jersey Royal variety, whether it is strains or clones has the same impact. It is a totally different variety. There are 3 mechanisms of rotation. Everybody arrived at the point where that is not really practical. There are varieties, so you have got a completely different variety but that is not what we want to be doing either. Of course the nematicides is the other option and we are struggling with those. So that is the recognised method of dealing with it and saying, for heaven's sake, step back and consider all the various elements of production, how it fits together and go back to basics almost and sort of redefine a strategy which is going to look at a number of different areas. There is no single answer to this. There are a number of different areas in terms of management and that is where the growers need their assistance, so we need to be able to do research and development to further that knowledge and assist them in managing the problem and look at things on a field by field basis.

Dr. J. Jones:

The faster the growth and the earlier you harvest are they susceptible?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Yes.

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

Yes, it can break the life cycle if you are harvesting within a certain period although the P.C.N. do adapt to that.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Okay, we are going to have to wrap up because we have run out of time unfortunately. So, I would ask you, do you have anything you would like to specifically add to your submission?

Crop Agronomy Consultant, Albert Bartlett:

The only comment I would like to add is just in terms of marketing support which we notice reduced the budget of around £1 million at one stage, I think last year was £10,000, this year it is £20,000. In our view £20,000 is perfect. It achieves what it needs to in terms of P.R. (public relations) activity. It has been quite noticeable this year to see Sainsbury's, Tesco, M.&S. all promoting Jersey Royals on television. It is great for the industry, great for the business, good for the Island, and they are doing it. It is a good example of an initiative which Government set up 10 years ago, maybe, they put money into some things, they set a precedent and was one of the first fresh produce products to go nationally advertising in that way, and it is being supported now by the multiples. The work that is being done in terms of P.R. we see is still vital and like to play our part in that. That still needs to be done with good consultation between Government and business, and the other businesses that are involved in marketing. But I think it is working well.

The Deputy of Grouville:

I am just going to ask a final question. Do you feel that agriculture has a champion within the States of Jersey? Do you feel represented?

Technical Manager, Albert Bartlett:

Personally I sort of ... no, not in the way of the older ways where it was a bigger industry, it was better represented. It was more talked about in the press. **[Laughter]** That is just my own personal view. The view of the company, I do not know. Coming here today has been encouraging. I have never been involved in this sort of thing before.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you for your time. As I said, the transcripts will be sent to you in a week, normally is the turnaround.

[15:04]