



Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society
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Deputy Kirsten Morel
Chairman, Economic & International Affairs Scrutiny Panel
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25th September 2019

Dear Deputy Kirsten

I write in reply to your letter of 20th September requesting a written submission CSP3 – Rural Economy Strategy (RES) section within the Government Plan 2020 - 2023. The Officers of the Agricultural Department of the Society wish to make the following points in this regard:

1. The Government Plan focuses on applying funding to the current RES ('17-'21) for the years 2020 to 2023 maintaining the same suite of policies and resisting the temptation for a wholesale re-write of the RES. This is to be welcomed in providing stability in a period of increasing uncertainty.
2. The overall policy direction is accepted and it is to be welcomed that the Rural Economy Directorate recognises the importance of ensuring that policy objectives are relevant to the island situation rather than duplicates of EU/UK policies.
3. The budget increase is welcomed as vital to invest in the future of an industry that returns significantly more to the island both in tangible financial contribution and intangible delivery of 'public goods'.
4. The industry has seen the States of Jersey agriculture budget decline from some £8.1m in the year 2000 to some £1.8m in 2019. This has had a significant, and arguably, adverse impact on the industry, for example with the number of dairy herds falling from 65 to 15 in that period. For the future viability of the dairy industry in Jersey, and agriculture in general, it is seen as essential to maintain a 'critical mass' of businesses, with the ability to invest in what is a capital intensive activity.
5. There is an increasing ambition to introduce new measures to address environmental issues and market challenges, both to support the growth and/ or consolidation of the remaining businesses, but also to comply with newly imposed regulation; it goes without saying that these investments often add cost to the business without generating additional or immediate returns.
6. Whilst the number of farm units has declined considerably in recent years, the island has an enthusiastic cadre of young entrants to the industry, many of whom have obtained agricultural qualifications at university, and it is vital to retain these skills through the financial viability of the industry.

We would be delighted to discuss our ideas in more detail should the panel consider it appropriate.

Kind regards

Robert Perchard
President