

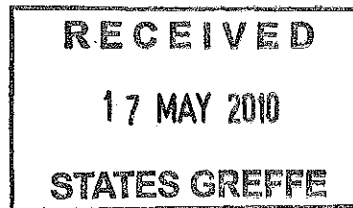


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12<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Rural Economy Strategy Sub- Panel

Your ref: 515.18(5)

Deputy C.F. Labey

Dear Sir,

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit our views on the proposals for the Rural Economy Strategy 2011 – 2015 to the Sub Panel. Our direct involvement on the Island is comparatively recent having opened our new packing facility at St Helier in 2009. We do however already appreciate the need for strong partnerships between the Jersey States and the industry, working together to ensure the future sustainable prosperity of the rural economy on Jersey.

We look forward to giving further evidence at your hearing in June.

Yours sincerely,

Ronnie A. Bartlett



## **Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel**

### **Rural Economy Strategy Sub- Panel**

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit our views on the proposals for the Rural Economy Strategy 2011 – 2015 to the Sub Panel.

### **Albert Bartlett Background**

A family business for over 60 years, Albert Bartlett supplies Britain with over 500,000 tons of fresh potatoes/year. We supply own label and branded lines to retail, wholesale and food service customers. The company slogan, *Naturally grown, Naturally tasty*, underpins everything we do. We strive to provide value, quality and excellence in environmental care, while we continue to innovate to excite and interest the consumer.

### **Operational & Environment Excellence**

Working in partnership with a dedicated grower base of long established Jersey farmers, Albert Bartlett operate a new packing facility on Jersey, washing, hydro cooling and packing Jersey Royals at source. The our site is BRC Global standard Grade A accredited and is currently handling ca 1200 tonnes pre-pack/week, with 170 tonnes loose product /week during the season.

Our dedicated grower base is supported by our technical team. The area under production area currently totals ca 5000 verges. We oversee the entire agronomy process, controlling applications, irrigation, storage conditions and environmental impacts to achieve the desired quality and yield. We value our close partnership with our growers, many of whom have been growing Jersey Royals for over 3 generations.

Our company energy management systems are ISO 14001 accredited. The Building Management system at our Mont Au Pretre site delivers energy efficiency and minimises environmental impact. It is almost entirely self sufficient in water; the on-site water treatment plant harvests and recycles rain water from the roof.

### **Future sustainability**

We believe that further rural economic growth should not be achieved in conflict with environment and that work to ensure the long term sustainability of the potato industry on the island is both urgent and crucial. We are clear that an approach of shared responsibility between the industry and the States of Jersey will be required.

## **Responses to Specific Policy Options:**

### **Policy option IN 1**

#### **Strategic vision**

*States of Jersey and the rural sector to consider the advantages and disadvantages, of extending the scope of the Rural Economy Strategy to encompass a 10, 15 or 20 year strategic vision.*

We would very much welcome a longer term strategic view set around a more detailed 1 – 3 year plan.

### **Policy option PR 2**

#### **Labour productivity**

*States of Jersey, in consultation with the agricultural industry to develop a strategy that promotes both higher productivity per employee through education and training and creates opportunities for new entrants into the rural economy to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.*

We agree that the present growth in agricultural GVA using increasing numbers of migrant labour is unsustainable and have experienced difficulty in finding accommodation to meet our seasonal needs.

Future labour availability is a risk that has to be managed. We welcome action to increase the potential opportunity to address some of our agricultural labour requirement through on-Island recruitment but anticipate having an ongoing need to bring temporary labour on to the island to meet our needs. The cost of temporary accommodation is prohibitive and current planning restriction precludes the building of temporary bunk house accommodation.

This policy option is an area where consultation between the States of Jersey and the agricultural industry may play a vital role in ensuring a viable future for the Island's agricultural sector. Succession issues within existing businesses and the entry of the next generation of farmers and growers are a key element for long-term sustainability of the industry. The development of a rural strategy needs to include a comprehensive and integrated approach which gives a high priority to this policy area.

### **Policy option PR 7**

#### **Environment Plan**

*Any individual or business receiving grants or subsidies within the rural sector will need an "Environment Plan". This will identify where soil and water must be protected and will also highlight opportunities for enhancing key wildlife and landscape features. This will also allow better targeting of support through schemes such as the Countryside Renewal Scheme.*

We strongly support the introduction of Environment Plans and in keeping with our concerns about the long term sustainability of the industry and mitigating its environmental impacts we would further support **Policy Options PE5a and Policy Options PE5b on Climate Change: mitigation and adaption.**

**This links with Policy Option E1, E2, E3 and E4.**

We agree that these are all important elements of The Environmental Plan and that this activity should be supported by Government.

#### **Policy option PR 14**

##### **Organic farming**

*To transfer the support for organic farming from the Countryside Renewal Scheme to the Rural Initiative Scheme in recognition that this is predominantly an economic activity that needs to be market focused and based on long-term business planning.*

We agree that support to develop organic farming should be in response to the market, but need not be ringfenced exclusively for that purpose. Organic production of Jersey Royals is extremely challenging from an agronomic viewpoint and the immediate need is to solve current agronomy and sustainability issues where the solutions are not going to be provided by a shift into organic production.

#### **Policy option PR 17**

##### **Marketing Support for Jersey Produce**

*States of Jersey to work with the rural sector in order to review future marketing needs and roles and responsibilities to ensure a fully coordinated approach.*

Levels of marketing support for Jersey Produce are presently far lower than they have been in the past. Whilst there have been significant changes in the industry in recent years, the States of Jersey should look to continue to support marketing initiatives which are of generic benefit. This will require a coordinated approach, and we would welcome the opportunity to take part in a review of future marketing needs and roles and responsibilities.

#### **Policy option PR 25**

##### **The need for Research and Development**

*States of Jersey and the rural sector to set up a 'priorities board' to develop a long-term research and development strategy in conjunction with stakeholders, with a view to establishing a research programme based on a Public Private Partnership.*

We support this agenda. There is a need for ongoing research and development within the rural sector. There may be opportunities for Public/Private Partnerships to participate on certain projects – especially those which require an Island-wide approach. The setting up of a 'priorities board' to develop strategy will be a positive contribution to this important area.

**Policy options E 6a,b,c**

**Water Catchment Management Pilot Scheme**

*States of Jersey to work with the agricultural industry through the Diffuse Pollution Pilot Project (DPPP) in order to discuss, define and implement agricultural 'best management practices' that are associated with on farm soil and water management measures.*

**Water Catchment Management Pilot Scheme**

*States of Jersey to consider introducing additional components that are specifically designed to tackle diffuse water pollution within the Countryside Renewal Scheme.*

We note the significant correlation between the area of early outdoor royals and nitrate concentration in groundwater and welcome the Diffuse Pollution Pilot Project (DPPP) and will be keen to work with government to address issues of nitrates and indeed any other potential sources of pollution.

**Policy option E 7**

**Codes of Good Agricultural and Environmental Practice**

*States of Jersey to develop Codes of Good Agricultural and Environmental Practice (CGAEP) to include the above and to require documentary evidence from those receiving public support that the CGAEP are being complied with.*

While being support of this measure in principle we would point out that all of our growers have to be compliant with the standards in Assured Produce in order to supply our supermarket customers. We would be keen that any new Code of Practice built logically onto this avoiding unnecessary duplication.

**Policy option E 12a**

**Safeguarding the agricultural land bank**

*States of Jersey to review the current laws and to identify the appropriateness of enabling more land to be made available for bone fide Agriculturalists and Smallholders to ensure a viable agricultural land bank.*

**Policy option E 12b**

**Safeguarding the agricultural land bank**

*Review the eligibility of people who are able to occupy and undertake economic activity on agricultural land including a mechanism to release land formerly occupied by smallholders and bona fide Agriculturalists who no longer meet the eligibility criteria as defined in the Rural Economy Strategy 2005.*

We support these measures. It is clearly an important regulatory function of government to ensure agricultural production areas remain available to the industry.