

Cornwall leads the way with a Fresh Start for Agriculture

Following the official launch of Fresh Start here in Cornwall on 22nd March and subsequent widespread publicity, registrations with the initiative have somewhat gathered pace to well over 60.

The matchmaking element of the scheme not only has the details of those wishing to enter the industry but, also of those who are looking to retire and provide an opportunity for others to either take on the running of their farm or enter into some form of joint venture arrangement. This can only confirm that people do see a positive and vibrant future in farming and are considering it as a viable career option. This is something to be proud of and supported.

As an aging industry, many of those remaining in farming may not have the capacity to respond to the recent changes of the CAP reform. Its future is therefore dependant on an infusion of new and young blood to maintain its vitality and address these challenges. But, in order to achieve this, those remaining in the industry and following the age old tradition of dying with their boots on have to acknowledge that the time may have come to retire and get out.

If people aren't willing to move on and out then the holdings won't be available to these new entrants. In this context, Fresh Start offers the industry an opportunity to strengthen itself from the very core by supporting and encouraging new, young men and women in, whilst helping those wishing to leave make a graceful exit.

The range of support measures offered under the scheme include:-

Business support - professional consultancy advice and assistance in the preparation of business plans including tenders for tenancies and joint venture agreements and ongoing consultant's support packages for new businesses.

Retirement and leavers packages - drawing up exit strategies and careful retirement planning.

Mentoring – provision of invaluable support, focus, knowledge, experience and guidance on a one to one basis to enable people to progress successfully.

Training – to enable individuals to develop the necessary skills required to manage a modern farming business or to pursue new ventures or secure non-farm related employment.

It is also hoped to introduce a financial support package at some stage in the future and we are also exploring opportunities for rural housing provision.

If you would like to find out more about the initiative or would like to discuss it in relation to your particular situation please contact Charlotte Woodford on 01872 322837 or email charlotte.woodford@cornwallenterprise.co.uk.



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The importance of Renewable Energy to Cornwall's farmers

A while back the industrial revolution involved the massive development of urban centres and the need to derive power by using the fossil fuel resources available to us, such as coal, oil and gas. Whilst industries and economies continue to expand it would seem that the manner by which our power is generated is undergoing something of a cultural shift.

The cost of continued economic growth has been the onset of climate change. Evidence of this can be seen in the melting ice caps, rising global temperatures and, more locally, in more unpredictable and more extreme weather patterns. It is now widely recognised that human activity has played a significant role in this development and it is, therefore, our responsibility to try to redress the situation.

Sustainability, energy efficiency and renewable energy are three terms that are now more common place in the business strategies and development plans and it is our duty to ensure that this continues. At the FWAG Energy Day held in February it is clear that the agricultural sector is keen to contribute with over 200 farmers in attendance. In recent years there has been a massive increase in 'local produce'. This trend is set to continue as consumers want traceability as well as a reduction in food miles. As well as this form of self sufficiency, so there will be a need for our fuel production to become more localised.

98% of Cornwall's annual fuel bill (a mere £600million) goes up country. Renewable energy is largely about a rural revolution where biomass, anaerobic digestion, wave, tidal and wind can all be harnessed on a scale where it counts. A welcome, if not significant, percentage of that fuel supply can be generated in county.

The rural landscape and that of the grant systems are changing providing opportunities to farmers and land owners who are willing to consider new ways to manage the land for different reasons. Objective One and government grants currently offer support for the installation of some renewable technologies and the establishment of biomass crops. Could this be a time for farmers to become sellers of heat and power? It's a thought. One thing is for certain, if we do nothing then climate change will continue.

William Garnier 01872 322885

Objective One

The last few months have been extremely busy with a steady influx of new enquiries as well as our continued involvement with over 50 projects that are currently under development.

To a degree we are now entering the most exciting stage of the Programme as the time left to approve projects is reducing. The final date for project approvals is December 2006 so the clock is ticking! Anyone with an idea for a project should contact the team as soon as possible for advice about how to proceed.

The reducing timescale also focuses the mind on the increasing need to invest the remaining funds into projects that contribute towards our strategic goals and assist the industry to move forward in this time of change. The competition for investment from the Objective One Programme is now considerable and some hard choices will have to be made.

The team is playing its part in this process by working with the Cornwall Agricultural Council, Government Office South West and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ensure that the partnership is fully informed about projects under development and identifying any gaps in delivery. This information can then be included in the decision making process for the investment of the remaining funds.

As of May 2005 the current position of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee elements of the Objective One Programme are as follows:-

Total investment available (please note this figure may change due to exchange rate fluctuations)	£53,642,671
Total investment committed to projects	£41,192,295 or 76%
Total investment spent by approved projects	£26,007,901 or 50%
Total investment still to be committed to new projects	£12,450,376 or 24%

The position has changed considerably since our conference in October 2004 and changes on a regular basis. For an accurate update contact the team on the numbers below.

Key points to remember are:-

Final Date for project approvals	- December 2006
Final Date for project expenditure	- Mid 2008

Barn Conversions

The Agricultural Development Team often gets enquiries from businesses about the availability of barns suitable for workspace. The Team knows of a quantity of barn space, including 5000ft² at Bugle, 5000ft² nr Zelah, 4000ft² on Goss Moor, and 4000ft² on the eastern edge of Bodmin Moor. All of this is available for conversion. It will be useful for the Team to know of other barns available for workspace conversion and of any businesses seeking a relocation of this kind.

Please contact the Agricultural Development Team on 01872 322 810 or email nicky.garge@cornwallenterprise.co.uk if you have an interest.

CAC Website

The Cornwall Agricultural Council represents the strategic interests of Agriculture, Horticulture, food and the land based sector in Cornwall and as such has developed a website – www.cornwallagriculturalcouncil.org.uk - to allow members quick and easy access to up-to-date information that is affecting the industry.

The site has a range of functions including a networking capacity to encourage greater communication amongst individuals or groups. This has been found to be invaluable amongst, for example, food processors seeking suppliers or for sending out calls for barns needed for converting into office space. Likewise, it can be used for disseminating good practice or arranging meetings, both formal and informal.

A 'Resource' area contains a large number of links to other sites of interest whilst an 'Events' page lists all relevant industry trade shows and activities. The 'Archive' section allows for the storing of documents and information on, for example, grants, strategies and market research.

The site can be accessed by anyone who has an interest in the broad land-based sector and it also offers a secure area for members of the Cornwall Agricultural Council. Each site member is able to contribute to the site either directly or by contacting the administrators.

Certainly not everyone or every business has an apparent need for the internet. However, the industry is 'speeding up', markets are developing quickly, regulations come and go, best practice is being improved. Joining the Cornwall Agricultural Council website will provide swift access to the organisation which holds the industry strategic overview and can notify the sector of relevant alterations and opportunities in that rural landscape.

Deadlines for Miscanthus Establishment Grants

Objective One Grants are available for establishment until the 2007 – 2008 planting season but applications must be in by December 31st 2005. Contact William Garnier (01872 322 885) at least 1 month before the deadline for guidance and application forms.



European
Agricultural
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