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AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

“Supermarkets are fair to their suppliers”

This was the result of the Office of Fair Trading's review of the Supermarket's Code of Practice, which has just been published. I am sure that most beef and dairy farmers will not quite see it that way. How long have farmers been asking for clear labelling so that consumers can have a choice when purchasing their food products?

Next time you are in the supermarket just check some of the labelling. One of our leading supermarkets is currently selling Finest Aberdeen Angus beefburgers, which if you examine the pack, are labelled beef sourced from **either** British **or** Irish **or** South American. Why not say it comes from a beef animal the customer couldn't be less informed. With beef prices languishing at 170p per kilo or so no wonder many beef producers are contemplating their commitment to the industry. Suckler cows in particular look vulnerable. It does not take a genius to see that at current prices most of the Single Payment (when it arrives) will be used up supporting beef enterprises.

What will happen in the next year or so? I believe that many suckler herds will be reduced in size. The number of dairy calves being reared for beef are already declining and even with post August 1996 cattle entering the food chain soon, it is clear that the volume of home produced beef will fall. This could lead to a contraction in the number of abattoirs and processors, given that they will not have enough throughputs to cover their fixed costs. Time will tell. A reduction in supply normally means an increase in price but with the rapidly increasing volumes of beef being produced in South America being purchased by our leading retailers, this looks unlikely.

Do we have to accept a declining UK beef industry or can it fight back? I know that you have heard it all before but there are people who can make good profits from beef by direct selling. A percentage of consumers increasingly look for local products, as do more and more food outlets. Retailing is hard work, it demands new skills but surely it is better to make a good profit on ten cattle than make a significant loss on each of two hundred. Remember if you are selling ten rather than two hundred you will have time that previously you didn't.

Maybe it's an opportunity for a bit of partnership development. Farmer 1 has high quality breed specific suckler beef extensively reared, farmer 2 has a small cutting plant, and farmer 3 is good at marketing and retailing the product. All three could share the work and the profits meaning that all 3 do not have to duplicate investment.

I know that this sounds easy but in reality it takes hard work but the types of labelling described earlier really does give local food a chance to fight back and I haven't even mentioned food miles, destruction of the rain forest, bird flu, foot and mouth and other negatives that can be associated with imports. Meanwhile we have animal welfare, environmental protection, traceability, freshness and many other positives for local production.

Not sure what to do next. Give us a call and I am sure we can find a way to help you with this whether it be butchery training, grant applications, marketing plans, business costings and information. Other than something out of the ordinary, food terrorism, disease, oil at 100\$ a barrel, I really do not see too much changing in the commodity beef market in the near future. It really will be sad if we all have to chew on South American beef burgers.

**Stewart Horne
Manager**

Events Page

Environmental Stewardship Scheme

If you are undecided about making an application, want to know more about the schemes and how they would fit your farm and business, we are running a number of workshops across the region during the evenings.

These meetings are scheduled for 7.30pm unless stated otherwise.

Thursday 8th September – SM Community Information Centre, South Molton

Tuesday 13th September – Foxcombe Farm, Holsworthy – On-farm ELS Meeting (2.00pm start)

Wednesday 14th September – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Tuesday 20th September – Eagle House, Launceston

Thursday 22nd September – Dart Raffe Farm, Witheridge, Tiverton – On-farm ELS Meeting (2.00pm start)

Tuesday 27th September – Woolsery (venue to be confirmed)

Tuesday 4th October – Wiveliscombe House, Wiveliscombe

Thursday 6th October – Penventon Far, East Taphouse, Liskeard – On-farm ELS Meeting (2.00pm start)

We are also running a series of small workshops to assist people putting together applications. We will help with the completion of the forms, maps and points calculation.

Wednesday 14th September – Callington (venue to be confirmed)

Thursday 22nd September – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Thursday 29th September – The Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Monday 3rd October – The George Hotel, South Molton

Other workshops which are taking place during September and October: -

Meet the Planners Workshops – 7.30pm start

Monday 5th September – Follaton House, Totnes

Wednesday 21st September – Ockment Centre, Okehampton

Soil Management Planning Workshops – practical sessions – 11.30am – 3.30pm

Friday 16th September – The Crown and Sceptre, Holsworthy

Monday 19th September – Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington

Friday 30th September – The White Hart, Modbury

Wednesday 5th October – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Marketing your own Meat Workshop – 10.30am – 3.30pm

Tuesday 27th September – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Tuesday 11th October – The White Hart, Modbury

Animal Record Keeping Workshop – 10.30am – 3.30pm

Thursday 29th September – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Tuesday 4th October – Venue to be confirmed

Bookkeeping Workshop – 10.30am – 3.30pm

Monday 26th September – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Monday 3rd October – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Alternative Energy Sources Workshop – 7.30pm

Thursday 29th September – Plume of Feathers, Okehampton

For more information or to book a place on one of these workshops, please call the office on **Freephone 0800 592872**.

Grants and Planning Workshop

There is no subject, which is more likely to cause debate amongst landowners than the possibility of obtaining a grant and the problems, which can be found within the planning system.

In order to clear up some of the misapprehensions surrounding the grants available for the development of new business on farm holdings together with guidance from the local planners, Agri-BIP are hosting a number of workshops which will be attended by a planner, a representative from the Rural Development Service and Agri-BIP.

The format will be short presentations from the three contributing speakers followed by a question and answer session where you will be able to get a clear view on whether your idea is a) grant aidable (including the new redundant building grant in the Objective 2 area of Devon).

And b) will it fit the constraints of the planning system.

Agri-BIP experience is that quite often farmers rush out and obtain planning for a project on their farm without considering the requirements of the grant fund. This means that on many occasions there has been a need for additional expense in changing the planning application, which leads to delays, which could jeopardise the grant.

We hope that these workshops will smooth the way both for the planners and for farmers wishing to develop a new business on the farm. **See the events page for dates.**

Redundant Building Grant

As mentioned in the above article, a new Redundant Building Grant Scheme is shortly to be launched in the South Hams, West Devon, Torridge and North Devon area. The guidelines for the scheme are as follows: -

- The redundant building must be completely unused or unusable in its current state for the purposes for which it is now needed, which means that most types of buildings will be eligible regardless of age.
- The grant aid will be available for building work that provides accommodation for manufacturing services, craft activities, office accommodation, tourism and leisure facilities including licensed establishments, tea rooms, cafes, museums and craft centres. Please note that there will be no support for any additional bed space for self catering accommodation which would increase an already crowded sector.
- Conversion for retail premises may be eligible; this would mean a farm shop for example.
- Applicants can be individuals, partnerships, limited companies or co-op's.
- Agricultural and land based businesses are eligible to apply as long as the project is not related to primary production.
- The level of grant available is up to a maximum of £69,000 with a grant rate of 25%.
- The costs of the project can include the building works, services, access and car parking, landscaping, costs of obtaining planning permission and other professional fees.

If you would like further information on this programme, please contact us in the office and we will be glad to help you with any queries or questions which you may have – Freephone 0800 592872.

Newsletter Distribution

If you have already sent back your reply sheet to the office then you do not need to send it back to us again.

If you have not returned your reply sheet, please, please do as we still need more e-mail addresses and fax numbers.

To return the sheet to the office fax or e-mail to team@bipwestdevon.biz

Starting a New Enterprise?

With support systems changing in farming and low returns from many commodities, farmers are now assessing where their future incomes will be coming from. Many are considering starting a new enterprise.

Often they have an idea of what they would like to do, and have been thinking about it for years. Now they want to put their ideas into action. However, before spending any hard earned money it is imperative that they ask important questions such as:

- What product or service should I provide,
- How will I provide it?
- Will I have customers?
- How much will it cost to start?
- How much return will I get for my efforts?
- How should I advertise – and where?
- How do I get the money to finance it?

To help to turn ideas into a profitable enterprise, whether it is creating workspace, tourism or making cheese, Agri- BIP is running a series of free workshops for farmers and land based industries in the Objective 2 areas of North and West Devon, Torridge, and the South Hams.

The workshops will be held from 10.00am until 3.00pm on the following days -

Tuesday 27th September at The George Hotel, 1 Broad Street, South Molton

Tuesday 4th October at West Devon Business Information Point, Okehampton

Tuesday 11th October at The Crown and Sceptre, Holsworthy

Tuesday 18th October at the Seven Stars in Totnes

Specialised workshops for farmers interested in adding value to red meat are also being scheduled; please register your interest now. Numbers will be limited, so please phone us in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872** to book a place and for more information.

Bookkeeping, Cashflow and VAT Workshops

Over recent weeks we have been running a number of workshops on the above subjects. Participants have enjoyed getting to grips with these rather dry subjects. One thing, which has emerged, is the wide range of fees that businesses pay to their accountants.

Part of this range can be linked to the presentation of to the figures to the accountant before he can start work on producing a set of accounts. Participants at these workshops have left with a **free** simple spreadsheet to keep their financial records using a computer.

This very simple system has been well received and many of the participants are now implementing this into their farm businesses. When you consider that these workshops are free of charge, and could bring significant savings and efficiencies in the time and costs of having your accounts prepared, this day is well worthwhile.

To this end we are proposing to re-run these workshops throughout the region on demand. As you will find in the events page of the newsletter a number of sessions have been arranged over the coming weeks, so please book in and I am sure you will find that you will learn something to your advantage should you attend.

Diversification - premises wanted

One of our farmer clients is looking for premises to carry out a diversification project in the North / Mid Devon area. The requirement is for a building with an electricity supply and good vehicular access.

All planning permissions and licences would be sought by our farmer.

Therefore, if you have a spare building and are looking for extra cash let us know and we will pass on your interest.

Contact David Hinshelwood in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872**.

WANTED - STORAGE ROOM

A community organisation is seeking an area of land with suitable buildings to store a number of kayaks which are used to provide outdoor activities for young people and adults by a number of voluntary staff.

If anyone in the Tavistock or surrounding district has such space please contact the office and we will put you in touch with the Chairman of the Tavistock & District Outdoor Education Forum.

IT Training

Learn how to use and manage Windows and Office applications, with step-by-step guidance. Master the basics of word processing, e-mail and the Internet, spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing and presentations.

Working at your own pace with support and guidance from our IT Trainer, Deborah Turner these courses will enable you to work through realistic examples and complete exercises for each unit. All course material and assessments will be in line with New Clait, the Level 1 Computer Literacy and Information Technology qualification, managed by OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA examinations).

These courses are FREE, subject to meeting eligibility criteria and achieving a qualification.

Courses are available every Wednesday through September in Okehampton and on Thursdays at Healthfield, Newton Abbot on 15th September, 6th October, 20th October and 3rd November. Further dates for North Devon are to be confirmed.

To book a place or discuss your IT training needs with Deborah please call on **Freephone 0800 592872**.

DISCLAIMER

Every effort has been taken to ensure the information contained in these notes is correct, however, West Devon Business Information Point will not be liable for any loss arising from the use of these notes or any omissions or errors contained within.

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