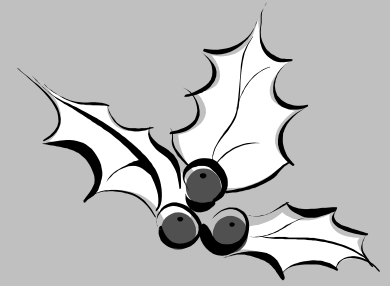


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AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

AGRI-BIP ACTIVITY EARLY 2007

2006 Activity

Many of you will know that Agri-BIP has been delivering support to farmers and rural businesses since 1999. This has been possible due to successful applications for funding to a wide range of funding bodies.

Currently the major source of Agri-BIP funding is the European Social Fund; this project ends in a few days time at the end of December 2006. The project has been very successful supporting almost 650 people compared to our original estimate of 450.

The project has offered a wide range of support and training including;

- Butchery
- Handlers
- Computers
- Marketing
- Business Analysis
- Grant applications
- Game Meat Hygiene
- Etc etc!

Future Plans

We have submitted a number of applications to funding bodies to continue the type of activity detailed above. We are expecting to hear whether we are successful during February – fingers crossed but until we secure the funding much of the above activity will be unavailable.

2007 Activity

The good news is that we have secured funding for other varied activity which will commence in the New Year that will be available to readers of this newsletter.

- Red Meat Industry Forum – Farm Business Clubs and Benchmarking throughout the South West, for details see article later in newsletter.
- Business Support and Training for diversified farm businesses, tourism, retail, manufacture etc located in West Devon, Torridge and North Devon.
- Support for applications to the Redundant Building Grant available from Devon Renaissance
- Vocational Training for farmers and landowners in Cornwall.

Continued over the page

It is possible that we will be assisting with the delivery of the England Catchments Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative in Devon and Cornwall, having been awarded preferred contractor status. Any events under this initiative will be published in the Western Morning News and local press closer to the time.

The Agri-BIP newsletter has been sent monthly for as long as I can remember, it now reaches over 3000 farms which of course is a time consuming and costly procedure. Until we secure further funding it is proposed to publish on a more intermittent schedule when sending by post. Fax and e-mail can continue monthly given the minimum distribution costs.

We will resume a monthly postal newsletter as soon as funds are available, in the meantime if you do not receive by e-mail and would like to continue with a monthly communication send an e-mail to team@bipwestdevon.biz and we will add you to our e-mail list.

Information and Advice

Many of you contact us for information and advice, please feel free to continue, we are able to suggest solutions to problems via ourselves or by referring to other organisations.

Consultancy

Over the past couple of years we have, when required, undertaken commercial activity on a fee basis. If you need assistance with business planning, grant applications, Single Payment Applications, Soil Management Plans, Waste Management, Stewardship Applications etc give us a call and we will happily quote you to undertake the task.

Hill Farm Allowances and Environmental Stewardship

Defra have made announcements regarding the above schemes.

HFA payments will continue for another three years before being replaced by an Uplands Environmental Stewardship scheme. However from 2008 disadvantaged areas will no longer be eligible for payments, the funding being focused in the SDA areas.

This change for Less Favoured Areas is tempered by changes to the ELS scheme in the these areas, the most advantageous change being the availability of the mixed stocking option which was previously only available in the lowlands.

Environmental Payments

Due to changes introduced as part of the change to Natural England, many farmers have found their CSS, HLS and ELS payments being delayed; we understand that the majority of payments have now been made.

Reductions in Red tape

Defra minister David Milliband recently announced areas which DEFRA are tackling with the aim of reducing red tape. These include the following;

- Removal of set-aside during the CAP Health Check 2008
- 2007 Single Farm Payment claim forms to be pre-populated to reduce time taken to complete
- Simplification of cross-compliance scheme literature
- 2007 June Census form to be sent to fewer farmers and questions to be reduced.
- Negotiating the removal of the need for Fruit, Vegetable and Potato (FVP) growers to hold authorised entitlements
- Amendments to the Cattle Identification Records to allow passports to be issued for late applications where supported by a DNA test

March 2007 Deadline for application for Farm Business Advice Service – Knowing Your Options

Have you taken advantage of the free on farm consultancy available under the Farm Business Advice Service yet? Time is running out as the scheme only runs until March 2007, so please take a few minutes to consider how it can help you.

Business advice on a one to one basis will offer you the opportunity to review your own business, to gain a better understanding of the impact of the Single Payment Scheme and to look at alternatives which will help secure your farming future.

The main issues discussed to date have included:-

- Improved technical performance
- Alternative options including
 - alternative enterprises e.g. does it make sense for me to give up dairy farming or grow more corn or keep more beef cattle or retire?
 - conversion of buildings to alternative uses
 - wider diversification options
- Consideration of joint ventures, share farming, renting out the land bearing in mind the Agricultural Property Relief position
- Benefits of the Entry Level Scheme and eligibility for entry to HLS
- A high level of signposting to additional services, schemes etc.
- Planned exit of the industry

The critical factor is that the review is based on your individual circumstances, focusing on your particular concerns. Importantly you choose the consultant you would like to work with (as long as they are approved by Business Link to deliver FBAS) and you can be assured that they will focus on your own personal needs and aspirations. This service is confidential to you.

**To register or to find out further details please contact Business Link Devon & Cornwall on
0845 600 99 66.**

The WDBIP team wish all clients, colleagues and friends a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



CHRISTMAS OPENING TIMES

The office will be closed from 4.00pm on Friday the 22nd of December until Tuesday 2nd January. The answer phone will be on over the festive season and will carry contact details for emergencies.

Opportunity Calls

If any farmer adjacent to the A30 between Launceston and Exeter has premises available to rent to a local company please make contact with Stewart in the office.

In the longer term the owners of this successful company would like to retire and would consider a proposition where the farmer or preferably farmer's son/daughter could take over the business.

For someone this could be an excellent opportunity to learn new skills and secure their future.

Please call Free Phone 0800 592872 for more information.

RED MEAT INDUSTRY FORUM

Who is it for?

The RMIF Farm Business Clubs are for all producers of red meat (beef, sheep or pigs) regardless of their production system (e.g. hill farmers, organic, outdoor pigs etc).

What will it do for me?

The aim of the Farm Business Clubs is to bring together like-minded producers who see that there is a future in farming but realise the need to adapt in order to succeed. Regular meetings are held in local areas and are strictly by farmers for farmers. There is a network of Farm Business Clubs across the country and the numbers are continually rising.

Through benchmarking in the Farm Business Clubs producers can see how their business is performing, physically and financially, against similar farms both locally and nationally and also find out their true cost of production.

The Club network offers the level of communication that has fallen in recent times and allows participants to 'look over the garden fence', but in a confidential way. This way, members find solutions to shared challenges.

The objective of this is to offer producers accurate, confidential and up-to-the-minute analysis of physical and financial performance measures within their red meat enterprise(s). It identifies opportunities and savings, and thus improves long-term sustainability within the business.

Why should I join a Farm Business Club?

Producers of red meat, particularly beef and lamb face serious challenges with the introduction of the Single Payment Scheme and the move to a flat rate payment. Successful businesses will need to obtain their profits from the marketplace.

Although the market place is harsh, individual producers vary widely in their ability to make profits within similar production systems. Producers who want to improve profits find talking to other producers invaluable in learning new solutions to problems.

Why should I Benchmark my Business?

If you consider that operating a business is like travelling a journey, then benchmarking determines the starting point of the journey. The next stage is to plan your route to increased profits. With the support of the business clubs and the facilitators' progress can be made quite quickly. Existing participants of business clubs have increased their profits by 10 % in a short time.

What support do I receive?

Each Club has the support of a "facilitator", in this case an Agri-BIP staff member who will organise the meetings for the group. This would include, booking venues and specialist speakers, research of information and general support offered by RMIF.

What does it cost me?

Nothing, except your time at the group meetings, which will focus on issues that are important to you and your business.

What should I do next?

If you are interested as an individual or in a group of taking part in the formation of a RMIF Farm Business Club, call Stewart, David or Catherine for more information on **Free phone 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.

Sponsored by The European Social Fund, Devon Renaissance/SWRDA, West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Lantra and East Devon ANOB (Sustainable Development Fund).