

East Midlands Study Group Meeting 2008

Debate and discussion at the East Midlands group meeting

Debate and discussion were the key ingredients of the Nuffield East Midlands Group autumn meeting, organised by John Strawson and Pamela Gladwin.

Hosted by Paul Clegg, of Syston Park Farm Shop, Grantham, Lincolnshire, the lively programme included a presentation by Neil Rowe NSch on 'Precision Livestock Farming', plus reports from Scholars Ben Stanley and Nick Ward, who had recently returned from their study travels.

After supper, the programme turned to a hotly contested debate: "This house believes that British agriculture was more profitable when wheat was £80/tonne". In truth, since organising the event, 2008 wheat prices had unfortunately backed from £130 to £90 per tonne. As a consequence, the debate focussed on: "At today's prices of inputs and commodities, should UK agriculture crop or fallow?".

Our thanks go to Matt Swain of the Nuffield Business Group, and to John Pelham of Andersons for supplying budgets and financial data.

The evening was enjoyed by all and going through the financial information led to some very interesting debate. The main outcome was that John Strawson and Andrew Scoley (the newly elected East Midlands chairman) felt that they should be following. In contrast, Ambrose Fowler put forward the counter argument and said that 'they were stupid to fallow and still lived in the middle ages!' John Strawson conceded that Ambrose is rarely wrong and looked forward to commodity prices rising in 2009; having himself gone for fallow!

Matt reported: "At present, commodity prices mean that we are back to the margins of ten years ago. Or, looking at it another way of looking, because of land price increases, I need more than a 10% rise on commodity prices (03.10.08) to even reach the return on investment we had ten years ago."

John Strawson thanks all those who helped organise and take part in this most successful event, and especially the event hosts, Paul and Trish Clegg.

[EM_Nuffield_Group_handout](#)

Syston Park Farm Shop and Fruit Farm is situated just four miles from Grantham on the A607. The farm shop and restaurant sells locally sourced meat, vegetables, pies, cakes and cheeses, specialising in locally-sourced produce and home-cooked food.



Would-be Scholars (f/l): Emma Garrod, Andrew Nelstrop, Paul Clegg and Keith Challen.

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Neil Rowe on his feet speaking about 'Precision Livestock Farming'.



Ben Stanley and Nick Ward.