



Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

**Achieving agricultural policies
to meet global challenges**

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Contents	Page Number
Executive Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Global challenges ... what global challenges?	
2.1 "The perfect storm"	4
2.2 Other storm clouds gathering	5
2.3 Time for a policy debate?	6
2.5 Conclusion	8
2.5 Recommendations	9
3.0 Next generation engagement and leadership	
3.1 The North American leadership chain	10
3.2 UK.....playing catch up	11
3.3 What does the next generation think?	14
3.4 Reasons for engagement: 1, 2, 3	14
3.5 Conclusion	16
3.6 Recommendations	16
4.0 Public influence	
4.1 Public influence goes global	17
4.2 An opportunity or a curse?	18
4.3 Why invest in the community? – Close to home	18
4.4 Why invest in the community? – On a broader scale	
4.4.1 The opportunity	20
4.4.2 The challenge	22
4.5 Conclusion	25
4.6 Recommendations	25
5.0 Avoiding unintended consequences	
5.1 Robert K Merton's law of unintended consequences	26
5.2 A science-based approach	27
5.3 The need for independence	28
5.4 Scientific evidence: incorporated but not integrated	29
5.5 An industry call to action	29
5.6 Considering our "sphere of influence"	32
5.7 Are there any doubters still out there?	34
5.8 Conclusion	35
5.9 Recommendations	35
6.0 So what?	36
7.0 So what's next?	38
8.0 Summary of Recommendations	40
9.0 Acknowledgements	42

List of case studies	Page Number
1 Agricultural Builders of Nebraska	7
2 Richard Rominger, stepping outside of the box!	8
3 Young Farmers and Rancher Programme	13
4 The Young Growers Alliance	15
5 Public influence: a global preoccupation	17
6 Experiencing the boot being on the other foot!	18
7 A-FAN speaking out and working with the community	21
8 The Centre for Food Integrity	24
9 European Impact Assessment Board	29
10 The Kiwi sphere of influence	31
11 Eighteen farmers take 1 billion people out of starvation	34

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this report are entirely my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust, or my Sponsor, or of my employers or any other sponsoring body.

Executive summary

The global challenges ahead of us in terms of food, energy and water security in the context of climate change, whilst presenting very real and numerous challenges for land-based industries, also present abundant opportunities. These opportunities however will only be unlocked if progressive agricultural policies are developed that achieve a realistic balance between industry, political and public interests.

Many within the industry feel that it is the preserve and the remit of others to contribute to achieving this balanced and sustainable future. However access to industry leaders, icons and scientists from across Canada, the United States, China, Ireland, New Zealand as well as the UK has provided evidence to show that industry, alongside government leadership, is required. Using case studies from across these five countries, the report considers:

- **Global challenges...what global challenges?** – the concept of the “*perfect storm*” is now well documented and yet our policy framework in the UK and across Europe remains confusing and conflicting. The time is right for a policy debate not just between our industry leaders but one that engages farmers, growers and the consumer at a level at which all can contribute.
- **Next generation engagement and leadership** – with ever more competing demands on younger people’s time, the agricultural industry needs to work harder to engage our next generation of farmers and growers and provide greater access to development opportunities for those who wish to take on a leadership role at whatever level.
- **Public influence** – while this is now a global challenge, it is nevertheless a global opportunity. For both local and more strategic reasons, the industry needs to invest time, energy and commitment into building trust with the consumer.
- **Avoiding unintended consequences** – is tricky! In the UK we have the building blocks, we have an array of scientific advisers and yet policy impact assessments do not appear to fully integrate their advice and evidence. Industry engagement is imperative to “*ground truth*” the assertions adopted by policy makers.

Engage, engage, engage isn’t perhaps the recommendation that busy entrepreneurs from the agricultural and horticultural industries wish to hear. It is however becoming a stark reality that ambitious farmers and growers wishing to respond to global market signals need to build community and political engagement into their business models.

The public are using their democratic right and social media skills to influence the way ahead. Often this is done with limited knowledge and understanding of what is a very complex industry and yet they are gathering momentum which ultimately could lead to changes in political direction. These changes may not be based on sound science but political expediency.

Despite this, public support for the industry remains consistently good and provides incredible building blocks on which to continue to develop trust and understanding. While using social media opportunities alongside more traditional methods to build this trust we need to ensure that it is founded on integrity and shared values.

**The time is right to ask not just what your industry can do to support you
but also what you can do to support your industry.**

Chapter One

Introduction

Although there are farmers in my ancestry by the time that I came along, for various reasons, the links had been severed and I wasn't born into a farming family. From an early age however, I knew that it was the career choice for me. I am not too sure that I can put my finger on exactly why but I like to think that there have remained some farming genes in my makeup which has driven me to not only have the career that I have enjoyed to date but lead the life that I am leading.

I am indebted to a farming friend who, when he overheard me talking about my work and my ambitions, encouraged (some would say almost coerced) me into applying for a Nuffield Farming Scholarship. With only two weeks to go until the application deadline, I entered into a frantic whirlwind of writing an application, speaking to referees and most importantly deciding on a theme for my study.



I am employed by the National Farmers' Union as a Senior Policy Adviser for the West Midlands Region. On the day that I was offered the role three years ago, a friend happened to have called by. He runs a significant poultry and arable enterprise and I knew him to be an NFU member. I asked him what he thought of the job offer and whether or not he got involved in NFU activities. *"I don't"* he replied *"that's why I pay my subs, so that people like you can do it for me"*. A reasonable enough response I thought at the time but three years on, I'm not so sure that his was a wise decision. Those who represent farmers and growers can only do so if they have the confidence of knowing that the industry is behind them. One lesson learnt early on and never to be forgotten is that farmers and growers are much more likely to make a significant impact on policy makers or the customer than those that represent them for the simple reason of *"integrity"*. My most memorable and most successful moments in the job have been when working directly and collectively with farmers and growers, me providing the detail but them providing the colour and reality.

I said in my Nuffield application that my study was all about giving the industry a voice and giving me a voice – I have (almost by chance at times) stuck to that. At the time I wrote my application, I knew what I meant by this but I'm not so certain that I was able to convey it well to others. What I was trying to get at was that I believe we need to find ways of enabling and encouraging the industry to speak and be heard more effectively by policy makers and consumers amongst the loud throng of other and often competing voices and that I wanted to learn more about why this is important. Some may argue that the industry

is already punching above its weight. In many ways I agree but the current challenges and opportunities facing not only the agricultural industry but society at large, mean that there has never been a better moment for farmers and growers to engage in a debate which is just waiting to happen.

When I set out on my first solo trip (which incidentally was my first solo trip anywhere in the world) actually putting my finger on the pulse of exactly what my study would entail was difficult. This situation was both unknown to me and liberating in equal measure. I was going off to experience all, say yes to (almost) every offer that came my way and see what I found and learnt.

By the end of this first trip, the focus of my study was decided:

- Next generation engagement and leadership
- Public influence
- Avoiding unintended consequences

Each of these themes is covered in detail in my report.

My travels took me to Canada, the United States, China, Ireland and New Zealand. My original intention was to include Africa in this list rather than China. I will get there one day, hopefully soon, and the questions I have remaining from the detail of my study make this trip even more imperative. The people I met on these journeys have been awe inspiring and so generous with their time and their help.

At the beginning of the adventure I remember being told to expect the unexpected when you embark on a Nuffield Scholarship. I also remember sitting there thinking “*as if*”. But it is true, unexpected and wonderfully exciting opportunities present themselves if you allow it. So from having lunch with Lord Plumb in the House of Lords discussing his legacy arrangements, to meeting a previous Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture on his farm in California, to being asked to co-write and present a paper at an international congress in New Zealand to finally having an offer of marriage from an Argentinian farmer (which alas I had to turn down), all of these magnificent experiences would not have happened if I hadn’t decided with only two weeks to go until the final deadline that I really must apply.

The thoughts and observations included in this report are mine alone and do not necessarily represent those of the NFU. I am however indebted to the NFU for giving me the flexibility to apply and for enabling me to have this experience.

I am indebted also to the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust for investing in me and supporting me to have and enjoy my Nuffield adventure.

Nuffield has been a tremendous experience for me and I commend it to anyone with a passion for the agricultural or horticultural industry.

Clare Greener N.Sch
July 2011

Chapter Two

Global challenges what global challenges?

2.1 “The perfect storm”

Throughout 2008 and 2009 Sir John Beddington, Chief Scientific Adviser to HM Government and Head of the Government Office for Science, raised the concept of the “*perfect storm*” of food, energy and water security in the context of climate change. He has gained considerable media attention and has raised this concept as a priority in the UK and internationally, not least in early 2011 following the launch of a report entitled: “*The Future of Food and Farming: Challenges and choices for global sustainability*” otherwise known as the **Foresight Report**.

His messages are stark; the introduction to the *Foresight Report* reads:

“The case for urgent action in the global food system is now compelling. We are at a unique moment in history as diverse factors converge to affect the demand, production and distribution of food over the next 20 to 40 years”.

He suggests that: “*this is a unique time in history – humanity is facing a future that is very different from the past. Decisions made now and over the next few decades will disproportionately influence the future*”.



The messages he has been giving at every opportunity to many and varied audiences will be well known to the majority of farmers and growers:

- The global food system will experience an unprecedented confluence of pressures over the next 40 years
- Global population will increase from nearly seven billion today to eight billion by 2030 and probably to over nine billion by 2050
- Many people are likely to be wealthier, creating demand for a more varied, high-quality diet requiring additional resources to produce
- Competition for land, water and energy will intensify
- The effects of climate change will become more apparent
- The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate will become imperative and
- Globalisation will continue, exposing the food system to novel economic and political pressures.

While these messages are heard by non-farming as well as farming audiences, I am not so certain that they are necessarily acted upon by many. In a society where food is so plentiful that we currently throw away an estimated 30% of produce bought and grown, it is hard to imagine the scale of the problem highlighted in the *Foresight Report* of approximately 925 million people experiencing hunger every day.

That was at least until the price of food at the supermarket checkout began to increase and even worse until it began to reach our television screens as it has done recently with the plight of those in Eastern Africa.

2.2 Other storm clouds gathering

I would also argue that while we have heard the much publicised Sir John Beddington definition of a “*perfect storm*”, there are other storm clouds gathering which are closer to home.

This is the storm being created between our policy makers both here in the UK and in Europe and the divergent needs of farmers/growers and consumers with the global challenges such as those presented in the Foresight report adding a third and even more complex dimension into the dialogue mix.

Alongside the discussions of how we respond to these global challenges, we have some weighty policies waiting to be rolled out. I would include in these:

- Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy
- The Water Framework Directive
- The Natural Environment White Paper
- The Localism Bill

There are many others. My job as a policy adviser for the NFU means that I am called upon to collect member views for one consultation or another at regular intervals. However, those policies listed above have the potential to make a real and lasting impact on how farmers and growers are able to farm, grow and develop over the next ten or more years.

The farmers and growers I work with closely are engaged. They understand the importance of working either individually or collectively to help shape policy as it unfolds and also to shape how it is delivered. But for every one farmer or grower that is engaged there are many, many UK farmers and growers who feel that the process of policy making and delivery are beyond their sphere of influence. They despair that despite all of the discussion of increasing demand, farm gate prices still do not cover the cost of production and that Whitehall or Brussels is a world away from their holding or their enterprise. While I have every sympathy, it is still disappointing and perhaps frustrating to hear negativity and lack of

interest from the industry, especially from younger members of our industry, when I know that there is so much to be gained from engagement.

Visiting China was a unique experience for me. While not at all judging the Chinese, everything I experienced was culturally different from the life that I know. Perversely, in China I learnt a lot about what I find most rewarding about the society that I live in and perhaps that I sometimes take our privileges for granted. On the return flight from each of my Nuffield visits, I wrote an article for the West Midlands edition of the *British Farmer and Grower* magazine. Following in the footsteps of Alistair Cooke, these articles were called “A Letter From ...”. In “*A Letter from China*” I try to sum up my observations on how the Chinese community responds to their government. I summarised what I had seen and learnt by saying that they are “*policy takers but rule breakers*”; it is clear that there is little room for policy negotiation in China. It was a sharp reminder to me to value our democracy and to encourage and enable others to do likewise.

2.3 Time for a policy debate?

I would argue that we are at a point in our history where we need to have a “*grown up discussion*” about how our UK and European agricultural policies can assist us to meet these global challenges, where the balances lie between production and conservation, what does the new catch phrase “*sustainable intensification*” mean and what role can farmers, growers and the consumer play. What are the “*right choices*”? To do this successfully and in particular to build consensus, this discussion should not simply be between policy makers at grand conferences in London or Brussels but, in addition, individual farmers and growers as well as consumers should have an opportunity to take part, probably most successfully and meaningfully at a grassroots level.

In Europe we have seen the pendulum swing. This has been between the post war “production at all costs” boom to a European presidency which seems more intent on appeasing the public with funds for what I suspect are ultimately unsustainable stewardship schemes, rather than setting up European agriculture for a competitive yet sustainable future whereby the environment is safeguarded by rote and farmers and growers can make their living from properly functioning markets.

The *Foresight Report* initiates the policy discussion which I can see is overdue. Government is responding – a little slowly maybe. I am concerned however that the outcomes of this discussion will not work if farmers, growers and consumers are not given an opportunity to take part. Rather than having an informed society able to do their bit by making informed choices, we are in danger of simply seeing more “*sticks*” included in our policy frameworks for the industry and consumers alike.

When and how the opportunity arises, farmers and growers need to ensure that they are engaged in this debate to ensure that their “*voice*” is heard. We need Government to value

the industry for the potential that it has to offer in addressing some of these documented challenges by assisting the industry to develop. As the *Foresight Report* reads:

“Decisions about the acceptability of new technologies need to be made in the context of competing risks (rather than by simplistic versions of the precautionary principle); the potential costs of not utilising new technology must be taken into account.”

Case Study 1: Agricultural Builders of Nebraska

When I was in Nebraska, I was lucky enough to spend a day with the “Agricultural Builders of Nebraska”, an organisation dedicated to the improvement and prosperity of Nebraska agriculture. Supper that evening was on a feedlot where amongst the speeches was an impassioned plea from the owners of the premises. They had been targeted by those against the concept of large scale intensive agriculture. There perhaps needed to be a little movement and a lot more listening on both sides of the argument but they were right in their proclamation that while they are large scale, they are still a family business, not the multinational organisation they were being accused of being, and they care about the welfare of their livestock. The scale of the operation was as a result of the family investing, prospering and responding to the opportunities that the market offered them, not as a result of a multi-national buy-out. They feel that their development is a responsible reaction to market signals and they were keen to express the view that “big” or “large scale” does not mean “unsympathetic” or even worse “ruthless”.



Arguing that feedlots are still family enterprises in Nebraska

Case Study 2: Richard Rominger, stepping outside of the box!

In California, I had the honour of spending a day on the 4 000 acre horticultural holding of Richard and Evelyne Rominger. Richard is regarded as being an “icon” in California’s agricultural community and is recognized as a leader in bipartisan efforts to keep American agriculture healthy and sustainable.

Active in farm organizations and cooperatives, Richard served as Deputy Secretary of the United

States Department of Agriculture for eight years during the Clinton Administration, where he worked to improve farm policy. Prior to his term in Washington, DC, he was Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture for six years. He currently serves on the University of California President's Advisory Commission on Agriculture and Natural Resources. He is on the board of directors of the respected American Farmland Trust, the Roots of Change Council, and the Ag Innovations Network, founded to support the emergence of a sustainable food system.

In conversation, I asked him what his greatest challenge had been during his time in office in Washington DC. He thought for a moment and answered that it had been in the introduction of training for pesticide spray operators. Having already met a few American farmers by this

stage, I suggested that that must have been “a tall order”. He told me straight that that was an “understatement”.

A quiet and yet immediately impressive man, Richard clearly has the ability to see into the future, identify forthcoming issues, step outside of box and lead the way to successful policy changes that bring the farmer, the environment and the consumer closer together.



Richard Rominger and his wife Evelyne who in their 70s are still agricultural icons in California



A very special day since I not only got to meet Richard but also AG Kawamungi, who was then the current Californian Agricultural Secretary

2.4 Conclusion

The challenges ahead of us are well documented; there is now no excuse for our industry, society and in particular government not to be responding constructively. And yet our current policy framework is confusing and conflicting. The time for a debate on how we respond to these challenges is now overdue and we need our government to take a significant and responsible leadership role in ensuring that as a society we recognise food, energy and resource security as a priority and prepare to mitigate for their effects strategically and sustainably. It is imperative however that the consumer as well as the industry is given a role in this debate and that consensus building is prioritised.

In the following chapters, I explore ways in which we might assist the industry to engage in a debate and perhaps more importantly ask the question: why? In turn, I consider:

- **Next generation engagement and leadership** – I believe that with ever more competing demands on time, the industry needs to work harder to engage our next generation of farmers and growers and provide greater access to development opportunities for those who wish to take on a leadership role at whatever level.
- **Public influence** – while this is now a global challenge, it is nevertheless a global opportunity. For both local and broader reasons, the industry needs to invest time, energy and commitment into building trust with the consumer.
- **Avoiding unintended consequences** – is tricky! In the UK we have the building blocks and we have an array of scientific advisers, yet policy impact assessments do not appear to fully integrate their advice and evidence. Industry engagement is imperative to “ground truth” the assertions adopted by policy makers

2.5 Recommendations

- That government values the agricultural and horticultural industry not just on current GDP contribution but on its potential contribution to the resolution of food, energy and resource security.
- That in valuing the agricultural and horticultural industry for its potential contribution, policy is prioritised and developed in such a way as to enable the industry to respond individually and collectively.
- That the policy debate on taking forward the challenges highlighted in the *Foresight Report* occurs at a consumer and industry level as well as at a government level.
- That the industry and consumer seek to engage in such a policy debate directly.

Chapter Three

Next generation engagement and leadership

“A great leader’s courage to fulfill his vision comes from passion, not position”

John C Maxwell, 1947

3.1 The North American leadership chain

It wasn’t long after I arrived in Canada on the first leg of my Nuffield study tour, before the subject of *“leadership”* was discussed. It became a regular discussion which intensified throughout the rest of my tour especially in the US. It made me realise that while formal provision for the development of senior agricultural leaders slowly continues to become more accessible and accepted in the UK, the raw enthusiasm and passion of the industry’s next generation has not currently been realised, particularly at its grass roots. Many will argue that *“cream will rise to the top”* and those who want a role in agricultural politics will find a way. I think, however, that with all the competing demands on the time of our next generation of farmers and growers, to leave engagement with this group to chance in the hope that they will come back to it once other areas of their life are less demanding is folly.

For successional, commercial and developmental reasons, we need to hear the views of these younger farmers and growers, an argument I come back to at the end of this chapter. Suffice to say that they are perhaps the best advocates for our industry.

In the UK, the Young Farmers Club provides training and experience in many of the skills needed to enable its members to take on a leadership role, for example, public speaking, chairing meetings, debating and reasoning. However access to opportunities to use these skills diminishes for most at the age of 26 when many young people begin to drift away from club activities. While it can be argued that those between 26 and 35 are at their most preoccupied building businesses and families, evidence gathered from the young people themselves suggests that some are keen to channel their abilities and energy for the benefit of the industry. In addition I would suggest that it is human nature that if you do not have ongoing opportunities to use attained skills, you lose the habit of using them.

In the United States, I followed the leadership development chain from 4H to Junior Farmers and Future Farmers of America and onto the many formats of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Programme. This chain provides a succession of agricultural leadership development from the age of ten through to thirty five or forty and leaves little to chance.

Once past the age of Junior Farmers (US equivalent to Young Farmers) there are many routes to leadership development. Over thirty states in the US have an Advanced Agricultural Leadership Programme. While not so widespread across Canada; the same programme is run in at least three provinces. Additionally, many farming organisations from the general to the sector specific, have their own programme. All have prioritised leadership training as an essential to identify their future organisation leaders but also as a means of attracting the next generation of members. A previous Canadian Nuffield Scholar wrote in her final paper on cultural leadership:

“Leadership competencies and behaviours are an essential component of successful organisations, projects and ventures”.

Gordon, 2006

Payback to the industry is and should be expected from those who participate in and benefit from leadership development in the US and Canada especially since this development not only supports the industry as a whole, but their individual businesses specifically. As a result, a ratio of twenty five to one participants of a leadership programme contributes directly to the industry by fulfilling a leadership role.

3.2 UK playing catch up

In the UK, alongside Nuffield, I am aware of three specific agricultural leadership initiatives: the Institute of Agricultural Management Leadership Course, The Worshipful Company of Farmers (a London Livery Company) has a rural leadership course run by Duchy College, Cornwall for mid-career delegates covering all aspects of rural life and businesses. Finally an advanced leadership programme similar to the model used in Canada and America is delivered by Scottish Enterprise. An analysis of the 62 delegates who have completed the Institute of Agricultural Management Leadership course that has run every other year since 2002 shows that almost all delegates have gone on to make really significant contributions to agriculture both in the UK and abroad.

In addition to the more formal leadership programmes listed above there are other organisation-based schemes. For example, the National Farmers' Union until fairly recently had a “Next Generation Dairy Board”. In operation for two years, thirty applications resulted in the originally proposed eight-strong committee being increased to twelve. Having proved its value, this initiative has now given way to a cross-sector next generation board which was launched in August 2011 and which will be operated at both regional and national levels.

A Nuffield Farming Scholarship provides those lucky enough to be selected with a heady mix of more formal access to some of the great minds working on agricultural policy, in particular through the Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC), along with the tools for self-development in particular through travel and networking. The format of the CSC sets the bar high and encourages scholars to “*think big*”, “*be brave*” and seek out world class leaders with whom to have a discussion about their chosen subject. Following their award, Nuffield Scholars make a tremendous contribution to the development of agricultural policy both in the UK and elsewhere.

Since returning from my travels, it has been noticeable just how many new initiatives for the 26-35 year old farmer have been launched, some of which I have been very pleased to provide information to support, not least the NFU's own initiative. Are we all great minds who are thinking alike and can see the benefits of placing the time, energy, resources and commitment into developing these initiatives or are we all fools who have latched onto the same idea? I prefer to think it is the former and I am very enthusiastic about supporting their development.

With this increase in provision, I have heard that there is a danger of leadership development becoming too accessible or too “*in vogue*”. Some have expressed concerns that it will cease to have the gravitas it requires to appeal to those who are potentially destined to be our next generation of industry champions. I would argue that this is not a productive train of thought since it is clear to me that to rise to the challenges ahead of us,

we will require industry leadership at every level of society. By not increasing the involvement of our next generation of farmers and growers in the UK now, we are missing a trick which is already well established in other parts of the developed world.

Where I do still have concerns however is regarding the accessibility of these initiatives. My concern is that their current delivery means that they will only attract the keenest of individuals who would anyway have found their way onto the existing schemes; this could lead to us underutilising a valuable industry resource. Given the diversity and scale of the challenges ahead for the agricultural sector globally, I would argue that:

- Engagement with our next generation of farmers and growers should be prioritised for delivery at all levels since there are opportunities for younger farmers and growers to make an impact at all levels
- We need to match our capacity for leadership development with the opportunity that currently affords the industry
- We need to be sowing the seeds of engagement and leadership at colleges so that by graduation time our next generation of farmers and growers understands its opportunities and responsibilities
- By not attracting our next generation of industry spokesmen early or by not simply engaging with our next generation of farmers and growers early, we may potentially lose them forever.

Case Study 3: Young Farmers and Rancher Programme (www.fb.org)

The American Farm Bureau established the “*Young Farmer and Rancher Programme*” (YF&R) in 1939.

“Farm Bureau’s YF&R Programme offers the resources and support young farmers, ranchers and agricultural professionals require as they develop into our organisation and industry’s future leaders. The programme gives young agriculturalists the opportunity to gain valuable experience in a number of key areas, ranging from grassroots agricultural advocacy to policy development.”

Will Gilmer, Past Chair, AFBF YF&R Committee

Through an organised annual state-level selection process, young farmers or ranchers between the ages of 18 and 34 are nominated by the Farm Bureau State President. The American Federation of Farm Bureau President then appoints eight positions per annum for a two year tenure.



YF&R Promotional
Material

The programme is focused on personal growth and leadership development in the areas of public speaking, media training, issue advocacy, business development, networking, service leadership and telling the story of agriculture. The objectives of the YF&R Programme are clear:

Growing Through Action:

- Acquiring cutting edge information through participation in educational conferences.
- Building a network with fellow farmers, ranchers and agricultural enthusiasts.
- Earning recognition for achievements in business excellence and leadership success.
- Continuing their professional development and personal growth.

Leading Through Service:

- Providing workable solutions for issues affecting agriculture.
- Influencing public policies that affect agricultural now and in the future.
- Stepping up and telling the story of agriculture.
- Serving their communities by volunteering and making a difference.

The elements of this programme that are most appealing are:

- The programme has a high profile within the organisation, appointments are made firstly by state and then national presidents
- Applications for appointments are competitive
- Programmes involve a mix of personal development with direct organisation responsibilities so that participants feel they “make a difference”
- Participants are expected to be advocates and spokesmen for the industry
- The programme provides succession on to higher leadership roles for those who wish to take on greater responsibilities
- Active in every state and in all sectors of agriculture
- Provides a strategic link between the end of the “Young Farmer” age groups and the “Farm Bureau” active member age group.

3.3 What does the next generation think?

To enable me to take my research forward, I have held numerous meetings with younger farmers and growers who were extremely articulate in what they feel would be useful opportunities for them and how they want to contribute to the industry. When I described the Young Farmer and Rancher Programme to them, their reaction was one of enthusiasm, indeed they went so far as saying that without access to opportunities such as these, the *“voice of the industry will ultimately die”*.

What they told me they would like, is a chance to:

- Speak direct with policy makers and influence development
- Represent and celebrate the industry to the wider public
- Receive training which will equip them both personally and for the wider industry
- Meet other like-minded farmers, growers and those in the allied industries.

These are similar to the objectives of many of the established leadership programmes both here and in North America. However, they are not keen to repeat the training already received during their time in Young Farmers but wish to build on this with media training, political understanding and cross-sectoral visits and study tours. In short they have a desire to become well rounded advocates for the industry.

3.4 Reasons for engagement: 1, 2, 3

The desire to be engaged expressed by some of the younger farmers I spoke to entirely responds to the call to action from the Royal Agricultural Society of England which in 2009 raised the alarm that farming must increase its *“promotional game to attract 60,000 new entrants in the next decade to maintain its current workforce”*. Spedding, 2009

At that time available statistics indicated that a shortfall was being created since only between 50 and 70% of the recruits needed by employers were coming forward from further and higher education. The development of next generation activities is a self-fulfilling prophecy to address some of our succession issues since young adults themselves are the best equipped to promote the industry as an *“attractive, rewarding, career destination”*.

(Reason 1)

Markets, particularly in developed countries such as the UK, can and are manipulated not least by consumer tastes and preferences. A greater understanding of agriculture by the consumer would help to even out some of the worst of these swings in demand. So often marketing of food is done on the basis of nostalgia and yet the recent *Yeo Valley* rapping advert proved that contemporary marketing does work. Better still for the industry, it updates the image of farming to consumers.

The younger adults whom I spoke to are passionate about telling the story of agriculture and horticulture to the wider community. It would make commercial sense to equip them with the skills to enable them to do this. A younger face on the TV and a younger voice on radio are so much more attractive to both the media and the viewer/listener. **(Reason 2)**

The regulatory stick is forever hanging over the farming industry. We have great hopes for the outcome of the recent red tape review; however officials both in the UK and in Brussels will be quick to legislate if they become convinced that down on the farm something is going

very wrong. Providing opportunities for our next generation of farmers to explain everyday farming practices to policy makers with their natural enthusiasm and perhaps greater appreciation for environmental sustainability is likely to make a helpful impact. **(Reason 3)**

Reason enough?

Case Study 4: The Young Growers Alliance (www.younggrowers.org)



If utilising young adults to attract new entrants and to promote the industry to the wider public and policy makers is not enough of a reason to support next generation activities, then there is one other reason to consider. A recurring theme emerges from a study of next generation activities. It is that we need to provide a “safe” place for development, growth, learning and nonjudgmental mistake making. Older generations of farmers can be harsh critics. As a result, the next generation of farmers is often more keen to engage with activities and opportunities that their parents are not involved in. The Young Growers Alliance which operates from Pennsylvania, USA is inspirational. Formed in 2005, an afternoon spent with its members is a reminder of why we love being part of this industry. They put forward as their mantra that the organisation offers:

- A place to learn – year round educational opportunities
- A place to lead – regular engagement with community and agricultural leaders and opportunities to take on leadership roles
- A place to connect – through the creation of a social network.

Working through a process of peer group learning, their chairman suggests that *“when parents aren’t around, they open up. They ask more questions and give more answers. It’s great to be part of a nonjudgmental peer group”*. An important activity of this alliance is their overseas travel. Where lack of resources could potentially curtail this activity, their enthusiasm and ingenuity makes up the shortfall.

So how should we continue to develop our next generation offer in the UK? How do we ensure that involvement is opened up to all sectors of the agricultural industry right across the country? Are we ensuring that next generation activity in the UK is linking up with that across the globe? That is the debate.

What does however need to be established from the start is the language we use and the age limit that we put on this activity.

Talk of “*leadership*” and “*industry champions*” in the UK is not as regularly used amongst our young adults and as easily accepted and responded to as it is in either the US or Canada. Focusing the initial message and marketing of a next generation initiative on the young adults themselves rather than on the organisation leading it, is a critical success factor, at

least in the early days of establishment. The young adults I spoke to were clear, they are not interested in activities which sound like they are more in the domain of their parents.

On the subject of what age group to target any initiatives, this is trickier. Most wisdom would suggest that we should concentrate any next generation initiatives on the 26 to 35 age bracket and in every respect I agree with this. However in practice, I found that since farmers and growers into their 40s still consider themselves to be the next generation of farmers and growers, it is difficult to say “no” should they wish to get involved.

3.5 Conclusion

With fewer people working longer hours on the farm alongside greater business and life demands, there are plenty of reasons why our industry’s next generation of farmers and growers might argue that time and energy is better spent elsewhere than engaging in policy discussions. And yet it is these very discussions which will directly impact on their businesses and therefore their lives. Can they afford not to engage?

For successional, commercial, regulatory and developmental reasons the industry needs to be offering ever more accessible and inspirational ways for our next generation to engage and potentially gain the skills needed to ultimately take on a leadership role. We need to be instilling the need for engagement and leadership in the minds of our younger farmers and growers during their college years and our offer needs to be contemporary, interesting and action orientated.

In terms of our current offer, we are a long way behind our colleagues in Northern America and yet they will assert that they should be doing a lot more.

3.6 Recommendations

- That engaging specifically with the next generation should be an industry priority.
- That rehearsing the needs for engagement and leadership with our next generation should be a priority during college years.
- That those already running next generation activities should assess the accessibility and inclusiveness of those activities.
- That the younger generation should be included in the development of programmes and activities targeted at them.
- That the older generation sees the benefit of encouraging and enabling the next generation to engage.

Chapter 4

Public influence

“Achieving a strong evidence base in controversial areas is not enough to obtain public acceptance and approval – genuine public engagement and discussion needs to play a critical role.”

Foresight Report, 2011

4.1 Public influence goes global

The public reaction to the discussion on the introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops and the consequential policy development is one of the best examples of how the public can and has directly influenced policy and therefore agricultural development. There were many examples before GM and there have been even more since. Whether or not you are for or against it, the development of social media groups, such as “Mumsnet” and “38 Degrees” provides unbelievable power for most to voice an opinion with just a click of a button.

Case Study 5: Public influence: a global preoccupation

When I was in the US, I had the privilege of meeting Mary-Kay Thatcher, Director of Public Policy, American Farm Bureau Federation. I asked her what the number one issue facing American farming is today. Without hesitation she replied that it is public perception and in particular their perception of the livestock industry.



In Canada, it is clear that the public are becoming increasingly concerned regarding the use of pesticides, in particular with reference to potential river pollution and fish stocks. While I was there, Barry Cudmore, Canadian Nuffield Chairman, and my host on Prince Edward Island, was planning an event to which his neighbours would be invited, to talk to them in detail about the use of pesticides, the safety

precautions that spray operators work within and maximum residue limits.

In New Zealand, public concern is being expressed at the introduction of pivot irrigators which is changing the face of some of the traditional dry land habitats and contributing to the drying up of downstream creeks and brooks during the summer months.



4.2 An opportunity or a curse?

Depending on your outlook, the unprecedented interest and awareness of food provenance, safety, animal welfare and environmental stewardship by the vocal minority could either be seen as a massive opportunity or a huge challenge. For many, cost will continue to dominate the scope of their food concerns. However a growing number of others feel justified in demanding much more from our farmers and growers and indeed from the countryside.

As an educated modern day consumer, I am encouraged to have a view and why wouldn't I want to use my voting and buying power to express my preferences and make my choices according to my ethics?

Case Study 6: Experiencing the boot being on the other foot!

The Chinese Government is keen for various reasons, not least to see an improvement in their national diet, to increase the consumption of dairy products. The posters of one of the large milk processors we visited and on the walls of the underground in Beijing depict children from around the globe enjoying milk from cows grazed on meadows.

The reality for most dairy production in China is very different and was a good reminder to me that as a consumer I like to be given the facts and see integrity in the message.



Yili Promotional Material

Some farmers are excellent at capturing public interest and using it as part of their marketing and branding or simply for engaging the consumer in the story of how their goods are produced. Some provide snippets of information about the farming calendar in their local parish magazines and some even go as far as using new media to engage society in a wider debate. Whichever is your own personal preferred method, I believe that from small to large scale enterprises, all will need to embrace this philosophy as part of their business if they want to continue to grow, develop and respond to the challenges society is now presenting them.

4.3 Why invest in the local community? – Close to home

I believe that for those wishing to develop their businesses further or to invest in new technology **without** taking their local community with them, the odds of achieving your goals without a potentially expensive fight are increasingly stacked against you.

“The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today.”

Coalition Agreement, May 2010

The Rt. Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation is quoted as saying:

“We think that the best means of strengthening society is not for central government to try and seize all the power and responsibility for itself. It is to help people and their locally elected representatives to achieve their own ambitions. This is the essence of the Big Society.”

To this end, the Localism Bill was published in December 2010. It sets out a series of proposals with the potential to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. They include:

- New freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- New rights and powers for communities and individuals
- Reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally
- Reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective.

The Government is aware that a good planning system is essential for the economy, environment and society, however it feels that there are *“some significant”* flaws in the planning system as it currently stands. Ministers believe that planning does not give members of the public enough influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives and that too often *“power is exercised by people who are not directly affected by the decisions they are taking.”*

Communities will be expected to draw up a *“neighbourhood development plan”* which will give local communities an opportunity to come together through the local parish council or neighbourhood forum to express where they think new houses or businesses should go and what they should look like.

While in certain respects as a citizen I welcome more power to influence planning decisions, however for the development of the agricultural industry, I have some concerns. The Government is defensive regarding the labelling of this bill as a *“NIMBY’s Charter”* and go so far as to set out in the recently launched draft National Planning Policy Framework that:

“Neighbourhoods should plan positively to support local development” and

“[The bill] provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. However, the ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.”

I can see that in the case of housing, it will be a relatively straightforward procedure to calculate the growth needs of a locality and equally easy for the competent authority to challenge those communities who suggest that no growth is needed. However what is not so clear is how one-off business developments such as wind turbines, anaerobic digestion plants, poultry houses or polytunnels will be either included in the neighbourhood plan or indeed reacted to when going forward for planning permissions.

An unscientific analysis of parish council representation in my neighbourhood would suggest that in the space of 10 years representation of the farming community has reduced from well over 50% to less than 10% and encouraging a younger generation of representatives at a time when greater responsibility is being placed on parish councils is reported as being almost but not quite impossible.

I would suggest that telling the story of agriculture local to home amongst neighbours and those who are soon to be awarded more planning decision power, is fast becoming imperative. Doing this at the point of planning application is too late. Farmers and growers need to work with their local communities to gain trust and support, build consensus and listen and respond to concerns. After all they are not only your neighbours but also your customers.

4.4 Why invest in the community? – on a broader scale

4.4.1 The opportunity

Transforming from an agrarian society into an industrial one, the UK was the first country to industrialise, commencing in the eighteenth century. As a consequence, the British public is perhaps further away from agriculture than any other nation. Despite this however, the public do still have an innate interest in agriculture although at times the images portrayed, from children's story book writers through to PR moguls, are rather irritatingly nostalgic.

Engaging society in a discussion about modern agricultural systems isn't just for the benefit of assuring them that all farmers are no longer called "*Giles*" and that "*smocks*" went out of fashion a long time ago. UK agriculture has a part to play in securing food supplies for the long term. As the EFRA Select Committee recently argued, the UK has a "*moral duty to increase food production, not only to respond to any growth in demand domestically, but also to play a part in meeting growing global demand.*" To do this we need to take our customers with us.

"Empowering individual choice in the global food system has great potential to create multiple benefits for individuals, communities, societies and for the environment. The collective demand of a projected nine billion people in 2050 will exert enormous influence on what kind of food is produced, where it is sourced and how it is grown or harvested."

Foresight Report, 2011

For whatever reason, the public continues to have a view that farming is "*special*" and the opportunity is there for the industry to bring consumers up to date so that they can make good choices on the basis of accurate and timely information.

The danger is that others will prey on our lack of action.

Case Study 7: A-FAN speaking out and working with the community (www.becomea fan.org)

The Alliance for the future of agriculture in Nebraska (A-FAN) is a non-profit organisation formed by the leading agricultural membership groups in Nebraska.



A-FAN helping the next generation work alongside the community

A-FAN formation is recognition that the livestock industry was facing an increasingly challenging climate to operate in and that a concerted effort was needed to create better awareness among the public for the important role livestock industries have in the State's economy.

Their mission is to ensure continued opportunity for growth of Nebraska agriculture in the future. A-FAN goals are:

1. To provide information to the general public and communities about agriculture's contribution to the local and state economy and social well-being and to combat misperceptions about agriculture.
2. To assist livestock and poultry producers seeking to expand or diversify their operations and help them do so in ways that are compatible with the community and the environment.

A-FAN advocates that working with communities will be critical to future success. *"More than ever livestock producers have to be a good neighbour and let communities know what you are doing."*

"If agriculture is going to have a viable future in Nebraska and other states, livestock producers must start educating the public about how they care for their land and livestock. Over the last 20 years, the agriculture industry has done a terrible job of telling others about our stewardship practices. The average American is three generations removed from the farm lack of understanding creates opportunities for activists and detractors. The agricultural industry must tell the complete story convincingly – otherwise misperception becomes reality"

Roger Berry (A-FAN Field Director)

4.4.2 The challenge

Many will argue that we are already doing a lot to communicate with the public and to offer opportunities for engagement. After all there are many current initiatives designed to do just that: Open Farm Sunday, Adopt a Farmer, FACE, to name just a few.

The question is more along the lines of:

“Is it time for a bigger debate within society about food security?”

To recap, my reason for asking the question is how without engaging in a discussion, do we get society to accept new technologies, embrace contemporary agricultural practices, agree an achievable balance between production and the environment and therefore enable Government to propose and adopt visionary as opposed to reflective agricultural policies?

Views on whether or not a debate would be useful are mixed to say the least.

For the purposes of my Nuffield study, I have arranged or hosted numerous interviews and debates and asked my question at every opportunity. The response from interviews with Members of Parliament was an emphatic “yes”, others have been less convinced although a number have repeated the assertion that common guidelines and messages with which farmers and growers could use to talk to the public would be useful to both ensure consistency but also to give confidence to those who decide to have a go.

I was a young child in the 70s, too young to understand the debate on nuclear war but old enough to hear and be alarmed by the television coverage. While discussing with others whether or not a public debate would be appropriate, this story came back to me as a warning – having a debate that is not constructive, purposeful and organised would be destructive.

Reading between the lines of the responses to the question, I think the concern is: who is going to do this and how will it be paid for? But while we debate whether or not to have a debate – others are carrying on without us.

Earlier this year, Dilton Marsh Women’s Institute (W.I.) Wiltshire moved the following resolution for debate and decision at its national AGM on 8 June 2011:

“This meeting abhors the practice of factory farming particularly large animals such as pigs and cows and urges HM Government to ensure planning permission is not granted for such projects.”

The interest in “large scale” farming had been sparked by the planning applications for an 8000 dairy cow unit in Lincolnshire and a 25 000 pig unit in Derbyshire. Although a large scale enterprise for the production of cucumbers and tomatoes passed with limited outcry on the Isle of Thanet, the establishment of large scale animal production enterprises continues to attract substantial media, consumer and political attention.

NFU members and advisers spoke at 110 W.I. groups in the lead up to their national AGM in particular to dispel a few myths and put right many misconceptions and on the day a decision was made not to continue with what could have been a damaging vote from what is considered to be an industry ally.

In early July, the Prince of Wales launched the first “*National Countryside Week*”. An email round robin amongst friends and colleagues highlighted limited awareness of this campaign before it occurred and - it appears - limited engagement. It could be a positive campaign that the industry could join in on but what messages is it giving and is it addressing the real issues? The Prince’s Countryside Fund has at its heart, three commendable goals:

1. To improve the sustainability of British farming and rural communities, targeting the areas of greatest need
2. To reconnect consumers with countryside issues
3. To support farming and rural crisis charities through a dedicated emergency funding stream.

However, I remain unconvinced that the underlying focus of these initiatives is one that will assist the farming community to rise to the challenges that we have before us.

Case Study 8: The Centre for Food Integrity (www.foodintegrity.org)

“As consumers become more interested in how their food is grown, processed and brought to market, the food system must ensure it is doing the right things in a way that builds trust.”

Centre for Food Integrity, 2007

The American Centre for Food Integrity is dedicated to building consumer trust and confidence. It brings together stakeholders at every level of the food chain to reach consumers in meaningful ways with a unified voice and address the issues most critical to them. A non-profit organisation, its members represent each segment of the food chain, including farmers and ranchers, universities, food processors, restaurants, retailers and food companies.

The initiative was established in 2007 following multiple events which led to growing public interest and mounting opposition in particular to large scale livestock enterprises. Critical to their mission formation was a comment by a leading fast food restaurant executive who explained that the industry did not have an “image” problem but had a “trust” problem. In considering this, they responded:

“When countered, the industry has traditionally responded by either attacking the attackers, or using science to justify our practices. We’ve consistently resorted to lobbying attacks, statistics and industry jargon at consumers in an effort to convince them that current production methods are superior to those of the past. Not only are these tactics ineffective, but they can make consumers even more suspicious of how food is produced.”



At the Centre for Food Integrity, it is believed that the heightened level of consumer interest and growing pressure presents a tremendous opportunity. For those willing to take a new approach to building consumer support for today’s food system, redefining the industry is paramount to building consumer trust. *“We need to demonstrate to the rational majority of consumers that even though the size and scale of the industry has grown and our use of technology has changed, our commitment to doing what’s right has never been stronger.”*

Their programme of activities include:

- **Research** – peer reviewed and published, their research programme concentrates on building trust, engagement and communicating shared values. Their resulting innovative delivery models, programmes and messages have created a framework which is increasingly being incorporated into stakeholders’ own strategies.
- **Best Food Facts** – launched in 2009, the “Best Food Facts” website provides media and consumers with balanced, fact-based and unbiased information on food topics to help them make informed choices. Using university experts alongside consumer-friendly language, the website is highly readable and usable for consumers and the media.
- **Farmers Feed Us** – a proactive campaign designed to create greater consumer trust in farmers by communicating shared values in a compelling and believable way.

4.5 Conclusion

The argument for greater engagement with the consumer is becoming ever more compelling. Current activity levels are mixed however; engagement is no longer the preserve of the niche or hobby farmer. Proposed changes to the planning system now require commercial scale enterprises with a desire to develop further, to build trust and support from those that surround them.

Further afield, to get government to advocate the sustainable yet progressive agricultural policies that are needed by the industry to help us meet our global commitments, we need to take society with us.

How we do this is still under discussion. Yet while the industry discusses, others from supermarkets (in particular through their corporate responsibility strategies) through to the W.I., Prince of Wales and the media are taking the lead on these initiatives.

Any forthcoming debate should not and cannot be one sided, we need to listen and respond. No one can operate as an island, not least those who require customers.

4.6 Recommendations

- That the industry adopts a more mainstream approach to community engagement by acknowledging it as an essential element of business development and that this understanding begins in colleges.
- That the current pedigree of farm visit support material, which is not exclusively but often focused on educational visits, be updated and revised to include ideas and support for more localised farm visits.
- That a strategic decision be made soon regarding an industry/whole food chain approach to a public debate on the modernisation of agriculture.
- That clear industry guidelines on key strategic messages be agreed to give confidence to those engaging with the public.
- That we look to engage university expertise to give public access to independent answers to their food-related questions.
- That the industry takes responsibility for ensuring representation at all levels of government, not least at parish councils.

Chapter 5

Avoiding unintended consequences

5.1 Robert K Merton's law of unintended consequences

Robert K Merton, an American sociologist, popularised the "*Law of Unintended Consequences*" in the early twentieth century. Often cited but rarely defined, we use it to describe the outcomes of actions that are not the outcomes intended by a purposeful action. The law frequently provides the basis for many criticisms of government policies.

Merton grouped unintended consequences into three types:

1. A positive, unexpected benefit (serendipity or a windfall)
2. A negative, unexpected detriment occurring in addition to the desired effect of the policy
3. A perverse effect contrary to what was originally intended (when an intended solution makes a problem worse).

It is worth considering these groups not least since it is a good reminder that some unintended consequences are indeed positive.

Throughout my study tours and in particular during interviews back here in the UK, I asked the question:

"Are unintended consequences inevitable in a society that is moving forward?"

I'm not sure that I ever got a straight answer to the question, so I suspect that the answer is "yes". Most however were quick to point out the obvious: that as a society it is up to all of us to do what we can to anticipate and mitigate unintended consequences. While this response may be obvious, it is worthwhile considering for a moment. How many of us complain about the prospect of the introduction of a new policy but how few actually find a way of contributing to its development?

Merton goes further in his analysis by listing five possible causes of unintended consequences:

1. **Ignorance** – it is impossible to anticipate everything, thereby leading to incomplete analysis.
2. **Error** – incorrect analysis of the problem or following habits that worked in the past but may not apply to the current situation.
3. **Immediate Interest**, which may override long-term interests.

4. **Basic values** may require or prohibit certain actions even if the long-term result may be unfavourable. (These long-term consequences may eventually cause changes in basic values).
5. **Self-defeating prophecy** (fear of some consequence drives people to find solutions before the problem occurs, thus the non-occurrence of the problem is unanticipated).

Since his appointment in 2007, Sir John Beddington, Chief Scientific Adviser to HM Government, has repeated his assertion that:

“Climate change, security, pressures on the supply of energy, food and water, health and migration pose unprecedented and inter-connected challenges to the world. Science and engineering are central to identifying, understanding and addressing these challenges. In fact it is difficult to think of a policy area, or a government department, where science cannot make an important contribution. A key element of my role as the Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser is to work across government to embed an evidence-based approach to policy-making.”

For too long agricultural policies both in the UK and in Europe appear to me to have been based on the popular vote and nostalgia rather than being built on scientific evidence. I would assert that by embracing independent scientific evidence direct within the heart of policy development, at least three out of the five causes of unintended consequences listed by Robert K Merton could be mitigated.

5.2 A science-based approach

America provided Europe with a wakeup call when, even before he was sworn in, President Obama confirmed the names of his “dream team” of scientists and announced:

“Science holds the key to our survival as a planet and our security and prosperity as a nation. It is time we once again put science at the top of our agenda.” “The days of Washington dragging its heels are over. My administration will not deny facts; we will be guided by them.”

The good news is that the arguments for a scientific approach put forward by Sir John Beddington since 2007 are working. The UK government now not only has a Chief Scientist but 17 departments across government also have their own scientific adviser. The principle is that these advisers should be “an independent and sometimes irritating voice for ministers, scrutinising policy and if they think it is unworkable, saying so”. We have indeed come a long way in only four years but I believe that we have some distance to travel to fully embrace science as an integral part of policy development.

In Europe also, a Chief Scientific Adviser has at last recently been appointed to the Commission. This is an essential start to achieving the much needed scientifically based evidence approach to European policy development which has been sadly lacking in the past.

Europe however is still trailing behind. Only the UK and Ireland have embraced the need for scientific evidence to play a significant role in the development of policy. We need to be asking where do the governments of the other 25 member states get their information from

prior to voting on policies which will not only impact on their own agricultural industry but also on ours?

5.3 The need for independence

Good policy making should not start with a solution. *The “Principles of Regulation in the Coalition Government”* require that Government will regulate to achieve objectives only “*having demonstrated that satisfactory outcomes cannot be achieved by alternative, self-regulatory, or non-regulatory approaches*” and that “*the regulatory approach is superior by a clear margin*” [to possible alternatives].

Our government uses a process of “*Impact Assessment*” to firstly help policy makers fully think through the reasons for government intervention and then to explore proposals that best achieve the policy objectives while minimising the costs and burdens imposed in achieving the objective.

The guidance for Impact Assessments suggests that available evidence should be used in the development of the assessment and that there should be consultation with relevant stakeholders. While this may all sound reasonable, I have concerns regarding the integrity and independence of the assessment process.

Civil servants exercise a crucial policy role. Long before consultations are undertaken, policy commitments made and laws drafted, they will have been moulding policies into a form that can be put before ministers and the outside world. Critically, they are also responsible for the completion of impact assessments since nowhere in the guidance does it suggest that the assessment should be independent or peer reviewed and yet Sir John Beddington is emphatic that:

“Government learns – and it is really important that the government has advice that is underpinned and peer-reviewed by an independent group”.

In short he suggests in various articles that “*independence and autonomy is key*”, neither of which can be achieved by civil servants undertaking an impact assessment on draft policies which they have also had the responsibility for writing. My view of impact assessments is that they are at best an indication of the thought process of the civil servant proposing the policy and at worst they are merely a “*tick box*” activity.

Case Study 9: European Impact Assessment Board

Established by President Barroso in 2006, the Impact Assessment Board provides independent quality control and quality support for EU Commission impact assessments. It chiefly does this by quality-checking draft Impact Assessments reports and making recommendations for improvement.



Overall, the board believes that the Commission has continued to make progress towards an evidence-informed

approach. However, it emphasises that there is no room for

complacency, as the quality of the impact assessment reports submitted remain inconsistent. It also believes that the Commission needs to keep working to embed a culture of evidence-based policy-making and consultation across all of its services.

An example of their work is a turnaround in the proposal submitted by the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development which considered whether there was merit in having an EU-regulated marketing term for “products of mountain farming”. A review of the impact assessment by the Board concluded that there was no clear cut evidence to suggest that EU action was necessary or feasible not least because a simple EU-wide definition could have eroded the value of existing more stringent national schemes.

5.4 Scientific evidence: incorporated but not integrated

I also have some concerns regarding just how enthusiastically scientific evidence is integrated in the policy making process. Defra put forward a model in their *“Evidence Investment Strategy 2010–2013 and beyond”* which suggests a tandem approach to evidence-based policy development rather than one which is fully integrated. I have had the situation described to me as *“on tap but not on top”*!

5.5 An industry call to action

The 2006 Commons Modernisation Committee report recommended that, whenever possible *“the public should have the opportunity to become involved in the legislative process as active participants”*. While interest groups generally have far more resources to lobby the government with than have individual citizens, research undertaken by the Hansard Society (the UK’s leading independent, non-partisan political research and educational charity) has found that *“being lobbied by constituents can have a greater impact on an MP than being lobbied by a pressure group”*. This correlates exactly with my own experiences whereby briefing sessions with MPs are far more productive when they are led by local and well briefed farmers from the same constituency as the MP than if I lead a discussion. The main reasons for this are that farmers can speak with greater integrity and offer real-life case studies and of course they are prospective voters for the MP in question.

Despite this knowledge, audits of political engagement show that relatively few people get involved and most do not feel that they have a say in how the country is run. An audit completed by the Hansard Society and the Electoral Commission found that:

- Only 20 per cent of interviewees had ever contacted their MP
- 46% of interviewees said that they would be willing to contact their MP
- Only 4% of interviewees had taken part in a governmental or parliamentary consultation
- 14% of interviewees said that they would be willing to take part in a consultation.

Response lists for consultation reports read like a “*who’s who*” of government authorities, quangos and interest groups with very few names of individuals.

And yet, is it reasonable to expect busy people to take time out to get involved in what are often very weighty and heavy-going consultation documents? Surely this is what NFU members pay people like me to do?

I would argue that sometimes an industry call to action is required and it is this action which will help to mitigate the final two of Robert K Merton’s causes of unintended consequences.

The most recent example is the government’s consultation on “*Bovine Tuberculosis: the Government’s approach to tackling the disease and consultation on a badger control policy*”. Some farmers did respond independently. I personally spent hours getting farmers to respond to the consultation ultimately by signing a standard letter as did many of my colleagues and other representative groups and yet in comparison to the number of responses the government received against the proposal, the farming side of the story was in danger of being drowned out. Some will argue that there are far more non farmers than farmers in our society and so the farming side of the argument will always be overwhelmed. This simply isn’t true. Politicians understand the statistics but they are looking for support and to gain confidence by having a clear message of industry support. In some instances, numbers do count.

Case Study 10: The Kiwi “sphere of influence”

Inspirational New Zealand farmer Doug Avery spoke at the International Farm Managers’ Congress. He farms just short of 1700 hectares of predominately dry land at Bonavaree Farm on South Island. He told us about 17 out of 19 years of below average rainfall including eight years of continuous drought and scrub fires. He suggested that a definition of insanity is *“doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result”* and explained that this was his farming methodology until he put things into perspective and started to put his mind to what he called his *“sphere of influence”*.



Doug Avery with “Team Bonavaree”

He used a diagram to show the kinds of concerns such as the weather and the value of the New Zealand dollar which he once worried over but explained that he now realises that these issues are beyond his sphere of influence. His luck started to change when he began to concentrate on issues with which he had influence: such as cropping patterns, soil management, producing high quality products and working closely with his support industries and with customers. He told us that the future now looks *“exciting”* to him and his family.

His was a lesson for all of us, to consider what our own *“sphere of influence”* is.

5.6 Considering our “sphere of influence” – how we can mitigate Robert K Merton’s causes of the law of unintended consequences

Causes of unintended consequence	Discussions	Current Action	What more is needed?
Ignorance	It is entirely reasonable to expect that policy makers will not always have perfect knowledge of each farming system on which the proposed policy will impact. What is not reasonable is if they do not seek to find out or if the industry does not engage to ensure that they understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobbying efforts on behalf of the industry by trade associations such as NFU, CLA, TFA etc. The role of scrutiny such as those actions taken by the EFRA Committee. 	Initial policy development is in the hands of the civil servant rather than the political representative. Educational efforts to ensure practical understanding at this level are required. In Brussels an entrepreneurial farmer provides farm visits for Commission staff. Is it worth questioning how much support do we offer to policy makers to ensure that they have exposure to practical farming systems?
Error	<p>Being human we can forgive – after all we all make errors of judgement. But this situation is not so forgivable if policy development, particularly in the agricultural industry, does not involve scientific support.</p> <p>There is a concern that some of the policies coming from the EU are steeped in nostalgia and respond to popular views rather than responding to the scientific needs of a contemporary industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific advisers now employed by 17 UK government departments. Scientific adviser now employed in European Parliament. Lobbying efforts on behalf of the industry by trade associations. Completion of impact assessments by government department responsible for developing the policy. 	It is unacceptable that the UK and Ireland are investing in scientific assessment of policy development and that the other member states within the EU do not, in particular when their votes impact on UK national agricultural policy. However while this argument is on-going, we need to get our own house in order by ensuring that impact assessments fully integrate scientific evidence in their development and we should call for independent review of UK impact assessments to encourage legitimacy in the process.

Causes of unintended consequences	Discussion	Current Action	What more is needed?
Immediate interest	The fear is always that political interests will override industry interests. Science should always be a major contributor to the process of policy but it is likely that political pragmatism will always trump.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contact with constituency MPs and regional MEPs as organised by representative bodies. 	Face to face meetings with constituency MPs and regional MEPs will continue to be a priority. Over the last twelve months I have introduced a system whereby these meetings can be ever more action orientated. However there are times when it is essential to call for action from the industry, as in the case of Bovine TB. In short we need the industry to give politicians the confidence that their actions are not political suicide.
Basic values	A vocal minority of the public has a set of basis values for the countryside which they are keen to express and in turn ensure that their representatives uphold. Action to build a consensus is required to ensure that industry and consumer needs are equally reflected in policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many existing campaigns designed to bring the consumer closer to food production e.g. Farm Sunday, FACE, Why Farming Matters, Countrytastic. 	This issue is covered in the previous chapter; we need to build trust and support between the consumer and the industry. Assistance from independent sources such as our university system is essential to ensure this process is credible and based on scientific fact. The industry needs to embrace social media to ensure that its values are heard.
Self-defeating prophecy	It is a reality that all governments will be cautious; after all there is always so much at stake not least loss of votes and therefore political power . However it is up to the industry to allay fears and to give our policy makers the confidence to either take action or not as appropriate to the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations such as the NFU spend a lot of time rallying members to respond individually to consultations by writing letters and speaking with their local MP/MEP, i.e. using their democratic right to have and express an opinion. 	As above, we need the industry to react proactively to policy opportunities and challenges. It seems a ridiculous situation that those who are not reliant on the countryside for a living seem to be more engaged in these debates than those that do. Modern media methods make it as easy for the industry to have their say as they do for the consumer.

5.7 Are there any doubters still out there?

If there is anyone reading this report still doubting the power of the collective voice of the industry, perhaps the most outstanding story of my travels will help?

Case Study 11: Eighteen farmers take one billion people out of starvation

Mr. Li is a farmer from the Guangdong Province of China. He explained to us that up until the 1980s the population of China was starving since the Chinese method of collective farming provided little incentive for production capacities to increase.

In 1982 realising that this situation could no longer continue, 18 farmers gathered together in a small village and by pressing their thumb print onto a letter they changed Chinese agricultural policy.

The letter said that if they could run the farms themselves rather than them being run by the state, they promised to increase capacity. With this additional production they would pay a “rice tax” to the government which would help to feed the rest of the nation.



Mr Li, rice and melon farmer

So vehement were they that this was a solution to the hunger crisis in China that they said in the letter that if they failed to pay the rice tax, the Chinese government could imprison them or worse still “kill them” so long as the government promised to look after their children until they were 18.

Fortunately for all, the farmers were proved right and go down in history as eighteen farmers who changed the lives of 1 billion people.

5.8. Conclusion

Significant progress has been made in the UK towards mitigating unintended consequences. We now have every opportunity to embrace science and in particular new science into policy development. However, true progress will not be made in the UK until scientific evidence is fully integrated into policy development and in Europe until scientific advice is available in each member state.

In the UK, we should be questioning our government's guidelines on the completion of impact assessments, in particular their independence, and asking why these documents are not in some way peer reviewed before they are circulated for consultation.

However, in addition to asking what others can do to assist in the mitigation of unintended consequences, the stark reality is that we also need farmers and growers to get involved, identify their "*sphere of influence*" and use it.

5.9 Recommendations

- That we extend a warm welcome to policy developers on to our holdings to ensure exposure to the reality of farming practices.
- That an independent body reviews impact assessments to ensure greater legitimacy in the policy development process.
- That policy developers seek to further integrate scientific evidence into the policy making process, so that it is both "*on tap*" and "*on top*".
- That the industry responds positively to "*calls for action*" and that their representative bodies find increasingly more effective methods of communication.
- That while new forms of social media are embraced to tell the industry side of the story, we use it with integrity and alongside other opportunities to explain the fuller story.
- That farmers and growers use their "*sphere of influence*", in particular with local MPs, MEPs and their representative bodies, to engage in debates on future policy

Chapter 6

So what?

I am a practical person – I like to see action. It has not been enough for me to do the travelling without backing that up with some sort of activity, sometimes to check my views and understanding and sometimes to advance the theory. Below, listed under the chapter headings of this report is a summary of what I have achieved so far:

Global Challenges – What Global Challenges!

Growing Locally: Farming Globally – an arable supply chain event

On Friday 4 March 2011, I organised and delivered an event which heard from leading industry experts of the challenges that lie ahead of us globally. Hot off the press at that time was the Foresight Report and I was very pleased to include Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State for Defra along with Professor Ian Crute, one of the main contributors to the *Foresight Report*, in the lineup of speakers. This event helped to instigate the debate in the region.

A letter from

On the flight home from each of my study tours, I have written an article for the West Midlands edition of the *British Farmer and Grower*. Following in the footsteps of Alistair Cooke, the articles were called a “letter from Canada”, a “letter from America”, a “letter from China” and a “letter from New Zealand”. This has sparked some debate and intrigue by regional farmers and certainly led to many invitations to speak at various events.

An opportunity to use my voice

I have spoken at many meetings and AGMs on my Nuffield study over the last twelve months and more opportunities are already lined up. I am very grateful to have had these invitations since all of them have enabled me to develop my ideas and thoughts further.

Next Generation Engagement and Leadership

Learning directly from our next generation

Rather than assuming I am still in touch with the needs of our next generation, I arranged various opportunities to speak with them direct. At each of these meetings we had a frank exchange of views. The lessons learnt from these meetings have been incorporated into my thinking and any subsequent action.

A legacy for Lord Plumb

As an outcome of speaking at the Warwickshire NFU AGM, I was invited to lunch with Lord Plumb in the House of Lords. He was considering his legacy arrangements which at their heart will support the development of our next generation of farmers. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to contribute to this discussion in a small way, in particular via a discussion on “mentoring”.

International Farm Managers Association Congress

As a direct result of my research into next generation leadership I was invited first to contribute to and then to present a paper on the subject at the IFMA Congress in New Zealand in March 2011. To have an opportunity to contribute to such a prestigious gathering

was thrilling and the response to the paper and presentation was outstanding. In the audience were board members from Nuffield New Zealand who spoke afterwards of their interest in creating mentoring opportunities for Nuffield Scholars.

Herefordshire Next Generation Initiative

On May 26 2011, we were very pleased to launch a Next Generation Initiative in Herefordshire. With the backing and very hands-on support of the Herefordshire NFU County Chairman, we have now held two events, our database of participants is growing and we have found ways of ensuring that our engagement is inclusive with members deciding on the next and future topics for debate. Our objective is to debate issues that are *“beyond the farm gate”* i.e. topics that will stretch the thought process of those present for example farming without oil, public perception of the industry, does political representation work? In so doing, we ensure that we do not duplicate the efforts of the county Fresh Start Academy.

Public Influence

“There is no trouble so great or grave that cannot be much diminished by a nice cup of tea.”

Heroux Bernard-Paul, 1900

For the sake of my Nuffield Farming Scholarship study, I have indeed drunk endless cups of tea and provided numerous cakes for those who have agreed to meet with me to discuss global challenges in the context of should we or shouldn't we call for a public debate on the subject of food security. What good would it do/what damage might it do? Hasn't it already started? How can we assist the public to understand more about agriculture and how can farmers and growers do more to engage with their local communities to ensure dialogue, balance and understanding on both parts? One of these particularly successful sessions concluded that we had only really just begun the debate.....

Avoiding Unintended Consequences

A network of sector link representatives

Farmer and grower engagement in policy development is essential if we are to minimise unintended consequences. As we move into a critical phase of policy development for the industry, it is essential that we find new ways of engaging with the industry even though attendance at many meetings and events is reducing. As such NFU West Midlands has instigated a programme of identifying *“Sector Link Representatives”* from each branch of the NFU network whom we can call upon via email to respond to consultations, policy developments or surveys. As regional advisers we see our role as ensuring those in the network understand their role, minimising the effort needed on the part of the member to respond and ensuring that all responses are fairly and accurately reflected. During the first part of this year we have delivered events throughout the region to spark interest and commitment from the membership for them to play their part in this initiative.

Avoid the duplication – work collectively

I am particularly keen to ensure that duplication of effort on the part of those representing the industry is minimised so that farmers and growers get a more joined up approach to our delivery. As such I have actively sought to create links and work collectively with the regional partners and the levy boards who otherwise do not have regional representation. The focus of this effort is to reduce the burden of engagement on the industry. However there comes a point where we must call for the industry itself to take on the responsibility of engaging.

Chapter 7

So what's next?

Some of the initiatives listed in the previous chapter are time limited while others have only just begun. I was never going to change mindsets in only 18 months but perhaps longer term, I can.

Global Challenges – What Global Challenges?

Continuing to use my voice

With more opportunities to present my Nuffield findings already booked, I can continue the debate. However having worked through the findings and recommendations of my report the debate can intensify.

A letter from the UK.....

A final article for the West Midlands edition of *British Farmer and Grower* will summarise my findings and recommendations and heat up the discussion locally.

Using my report effectively

When I say that I like to see action, what I mean is that I like to see actions that are based on informed decisions. I very much hope that the findings of my study will contribute to this by sparking a reaction from those that read it and that collectively we can take action.

Next generation engagement and leadership

Herefordshire next generation initiative

We have started but we have a long way to go, however with commitment and perseverance we will create an inclusive group of our next generation of farmers and growers with whom to engage.

Worcestershire and Shropshire next generation initiatives

The discussion has already begun as to what is appropriate to run in two more counties of the West Midlands. Working with partners an appropriate solution will be identified and delivered.

NFU next generation regional plan

So as to be strategic in our approach, I have approval from the West Midlands NFU regional board to create a next generation regional plan. The plan will pull together our existing activity with that planned to enable us to take a strategic view which while managing resources will achieve the greatest impact.

NFU national and regional next generation initiative

Bursting with ideas and keen to use my Nuffield learning experience to assist with the development and roll out of the NFU's initiative, I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to do so.

Public Influence

A training module

Keen to bring all of my learning into one place, especially the arguments why greater engagement is necessary longer term, I have started work on a training module for use by Fresh Start Academies, colleges etc. I am particularly keen to ensure that our next generation of farmers and growers understand why and have the tools available to them to successfully engage with communities and customers. To do this successfully, I am on the lookout for inspirational stories of farm/public engagement.

Taking the W.I. debate to the next stage

Working with contacts active in the W.I. we are seeking ways to take their large scale farming debate further. Shropshire W.I. has a history of instigating debates, not least with Mission Milk, who knows we may be able to do it again.

Neighbourhood Plans

I have many opportunities to press for agricultural development to be recognised and incorporated within neighbourhood plans not least during my many meetings with regional MPs but also since two of the pilot plans are located in my own constituency.

Avoiding Unintended Consequences

Independent review of impact assessments

Using the results of my research, there are opportunities to ask further questions regarding what scope there is to see independence being incorporated into the impact assessment regime.

Engagement is key

Actions to develop a network of sector link representatives are well underway; however we need to grow this network further and continue to press the point as to why engagement is necessary.

What I don't have is the monopoly on good ideas or even time to deliver all those that I do have; discussion and action with others is essential. Don't rely on other people having the discussion with me; make contact to offer leadership, ideas, help, support and enthusiasm.

Thank you.

Clare Greener

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Chapter 8

Summary of Recommendations

Global Challenges.....What Global Challenges?

- That government values the agricultural and horticultural industry not just on current GDP contribution but on its potential contribution to the resolution of food, energy and resource security.
- That in valuing the agricultural and horticultural industry for its potential contribution, policy is prioritised and developed in such a way as to enable the industry to respond individually and collectively.
- That the policy debate on taking forward the challenges highlighted in the *Foresight Report* occurs at a consumer and industry level as well as at a government level
- That the industry and consumer seek to engage in such a policy debate directly.

Next generation engagement and leadership

- That engaging specifically with the next generation should be an industry priority.
- That rehearsing the needs for engagement and leadership with our next generation should be a priority during college years.
- That those already running next generation activities should assess the accessibility and inclusiveness of those activities.
- That the younger generation should be included in the development of programmes and activities targeted at them.
- That the older generation sees the benefit of encouraging and enabling the next generation to engage.

Public influence

- That the industry adopts a more mainstream approach to community engagement by acknowledging it as an essential element of business development and that this understanding begins in colleges.
- That the current pedigree of farm visit support material, which is not exclusively but often focused on educational visits, be updated and revised to include ideas and support for more localised farm visits.

- That a strategic decision be made soon regarding an industry/whole food chain approach to a public debate on the modernisation of agriculture.
- That clear industry guidelines on key strategic messages be agreed to give confidence to those engaging with the public.
- That we look to engage university expertise to give public access to independent answers to their food-related questions.
- That the industry takes responsibility for ensuring representation at all levels of government, not least at parish councils.

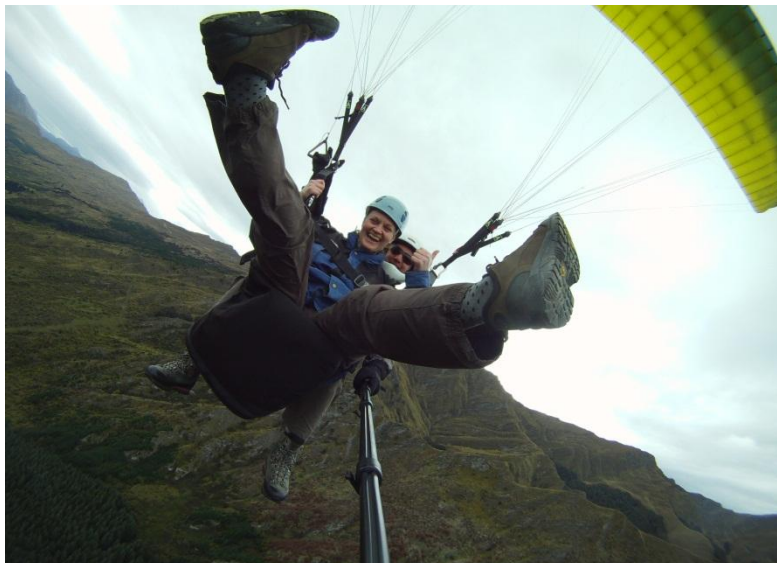
Avoiding unintended consequences

- That we extend a warm welcome to policy developers on to our holdings to ensure exposure to the reality of farming practices.
- That an independent body reviews impact assessments to ensure greater legitimacy in the policy development process.
- That policy developers seek to further integrate scientific evidence into the policy making process, so that it is both “*on tap*” and “*on top*”.
- That the industry responds positively to “*calls for action*” and that their representative bodies find increasingly more effective methods of communication.
- That while new forms of social media are embraced to tell the industry side of the story, we use it with integrity and alongside other opportunities to explain the fuller story.
- That farmers and growers use their “*sphere of influence*”, in particular with local MPs, MEPs and their representative bodies, to engage in debates on future policy.

Chapter 9

Acknowledgements

I am not sure that producing a list of names really does justice to the heartfelt gratitude I feel towards those people who have helped me on my journey. I have met some incredible people, been provided with an unreserved insight into their world, offered some amazing words of wisdom and been given board, lodgings and transport by people who on occasions had never even met me before I landed on their doorstep or more frequently at the nearest airport or train station.



As a result of my Nuffield experience, I feel that the world is a smaller place and that we only have one opportunity to live life to the full. I am enormously grateful to the following people for helping me live my life to the full over the last 18 months:

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